

Worcestershire Homelessness Review 2022

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Introduction

This homelessness review has been carried out to inform future homelessness services. In accordance with the Homelessness Act 2002, the comprehensive assessment of the nature and extent of homelessness across the County will enable the six Worcestershire districts to develop and deliver services in partnership with the aim of preventing and managing homelessness.

The purpose of the review is to:-

- Establish the extent of homelessness in the County
- Assess its likely extent in the future
- Identify what is currently being done, by whom
- Identify what level of resources are available, to prevent and tackle homelessness.

The Review gives an overview of data available on homelessness in Worcestershire, including details of applications made to the Council by homeless households and those threatened with homelessness under the prevention and relief duties.

It draws on additional sources of information to explore the specific risks to households and demands on related services.

We also consider the impact of different services and actions taken to prevent or relieve homelessness, including rough sleeping, the views of stakeholders and those with lived experiences and mapping of services across the county to better identify gaps.

This review began prior to the commencement of war in Ukraine and the increase in cost of living that were a feature by the time the strategy went out to consultation.

The review has also utilised data also captured in the draft Worcestershire Housing Strategy.

National and local legislation and policy

National legislation

Localism Act 2011 and the Housing Register

The Localism Act brought many opportunities for local authorities giving them greater control over their allocation policies. Changes were made across Worcestershire to restrict access to the housing register to focus more on those in the greatest housing need and with a local connection. At the time this had an affect on reducing the number of households on the register but this has subsequently increased.

The Localism Act gave Local Authorities (LAs) a general power of competence which, along with earlier legislation including the Local Government Act 2003 and Local Government Act 1972 give LAs the discretion to borrow and invest provided it is doing so for a purpose within its functions, as part of the prudent management of its financial affairs and within its affordable borrowing limit. These greater freedoms have led to the rise of local authority housing companies which are increasing the supply of housing.

Welfare Reform (Universal Credit, Bedroom Tax, Shared Room Rate, Benefit Cap)

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 made changes to the rules concerning a number of welfare benefits including the introduction of Universal Credit which replaced a combined six benefits for working age people who have a low household income – Employment and Support Allowance, Income -based Job Seekers Allowance and Income Support, Child Tax Credit, Working Tax Credit and Housing Benefit. It also introduced An ‘underoccupancy penalty’ which reduced the amount of benefit paid to claimants in social housing if they are deemed to have more bedrooms than their household size required and limited the total amount of money available to benefit claimants and the total benefits paid to a single person may not now exceed £350pw, the maximum available to families is £500pw including housing costs. This created a number of challenges to existing tenants under occupying social housing in meeting making up the rent shortfall and for those with larger families to afford their rent.

In the Spending Review 2021 the Government announced an adjustment to the taper rate of Universal Credit and the increase in the work allowance to support recovery from the pandemic and to help mitigate some of the impact of ending the Universal Credit uplift. Other mitigations including the Household Support Fund and Homelessness Prevention Grant to support vulnerable private renters will target those unable to work or facing additional pressures and will positive support housing, health and employment.

Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022

The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022, was enacted on the 28th April 2022 and includes duties to collaborate and plan to prevent and reduce serious violence (Part 2, Prevention, Investigation and Prosecution of Crime, Clauses 7-12 that will require more resources from agencies. It strengthens police powers to tackle unauthorised encampments (Part 4) which may adversely impact on rough sleepers and Gypsy and Traveller’s, and proposes to ensure children are only remanded to custody where this is genuinely the only option in respect of youth remand (Part 8, Clause 132). This approach necessitates more innovative solutions to meet the housing needs of this cohort.

Care Act 2014

This introduced the duty to provide care assessments and care plans. The care assessment should include a 'plan of action' which shows what services are going to be provided, who is going to provide them, and when.

Local authority and health care bodies/other agencies (such as housing) must work together to deliver services and in addition, local authorities must also provide information and advice to people about accessing support services, even where those needs are not going to be directly met by the local authority.

Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

This legislation extended the duties on LA to prevent homelessness within 56 days and for those already homeless, to try to relieve homelessness for 56 days regardless of whether the household was in priority need or not. There has also been a widening of the Priority Need definitions including to victims of Domestic Abuse and Rough Sleepers who have underlying health conditions and therefore vulnerable to Covid.

Domestic Act 2021 Part IV

This has given LA further duties in relation to homelessness, undertaking a needs assessment, providing appropriate accommodation (with a new accommodation standard) and the provision of Domestic Abuse support. It also imposes a duty on LA to have a Local Partnership Board and to work in partnership with Local Housing Authorities 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 legislation also refers to assessing what other duties are owed to the survivor presenting as homeless, under other homeless legislation. Survivors should always be considered as homeless where there is a significant risk of harm should they remain in their property, and appropriate support should be offered.

Renter 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, thus meaning serving and ex service personnel, and their families must be fairly assessed when processing housing and homelessness applications.

The strategic housing partnership has been signed up to the Covenant since 2012 and are committed to the ongoing duties the legislation brings about.

Comprehensive Spending Review

Whilst the majority of proposed changes to the way local government is funded has been deferred for a further year changes relating to homelessness include a further years allocation of Homelessness Prevention Grant (which includes a small amount of new burdens funding for Domestic Abuse) and the announcement of Rough Sleeper Initiative 2022-25 funding.

Equalities Act 2010

The equalities legislation includes three main duties all public authorities must do to comply with the duty;

- eliminate unlawful discrimination.
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't.
- foster or encourage good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't.

Ending Rough Sleeping For Good 2022

At the end of the review process the government published the new Rough Sleeper strategy. This document gives an explicit commitment to end rough sleeping with the four key strands of prevention, intervention, recovery and a transparent and joined up system. 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.

Local Policy, Strategy and Projects

Worcestershire Housing Strategy

The strategy focuses on 4 key themes; Economic Growth and Jobs, Quality and Standards, Health, Wellbeing and Inclusion and Net-zero carbon and sustainability. There is a list of priority actions for the next five years but also longer term priorities to achieve up until 2040. This has been developed in conjunction with partners including from health, county council and the Local Enterprise Partnership.

Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) funding and Rough Sleeper Action Plans

The Worcestershire councils have successfully obtained several years of RSI funding to support outreach, housing first and housing led projects, emergency accommodation, personalisation budgets and support to access the private rented sector to help get rough sleepers off the street.

Local Authorities submitted Rough Sleeper Action Plans, with targets for reducing rough sleeping, as part of Rough Sleeper grant application.

Emergency Provision for Rough Sleepers

The provision of RSI funding has enabled some councils within the county to switch emergency temporary accommodation provision to No First Night Out. All other authorities provide No Second Night Out accommodation to Rough Sleepers to provide them with an opportunity to assess accommodation and support needs and look for longer term solutions.

Between November and March all the local Authorities provide Severe Winter Emergency Provision on the coldest. Due to Covid this provision has moved to predominantly self-contained accommodation and this will continue to be the position going forward subject to resources

Services for rough sleepers

The "Everyone In" initiative commenced in March 2020 during Covid restrictions to provide accommodation to everyone in need including those not normally entitled to assistance under homelessness legislation. This scheme enabled councils to work with clients who had previously not engaged with housing and support services. We have learnt lessons along the way, and this has resulted in different working practices, being more person focused with a greater understanding of the complexities behind rough sleeping and the cycle of repeat homelessness.

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. This builds on the approach with Neighbourhood Teams where teams of health and social care professionals have been brought together.

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 Strategic Housing Partnership).

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 its best areas.

Health and Wellbeing Strategy

The Health and Wellbeing Strategy "Being Well in Worcestershire" has now been adopted. This strategy has a particular focus on good mental health and wellbeing. Under this main priority are three sub-priorities of healthy living at all ages and stages of life; safe, thriving and healthy homes; communities and places and quality local jobs and opportunities. The second of these three sub-priorities is particularly relevant to this Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, with its focus on tackling health inequalities.

Employment and Financial Assistance

Welfare Reform led to greater partnerships between DWP and local authorities in order to tackle worklessness and also in a recognition that changes to the way benefits are paid may impact on tenancy sustainment and homelessness.

Local welfare assistance schemes have been transferred from DWP to local authorities and budgets are small and for emergency support targeted at utilities and food provision. Food banks have been established in all areas by a number of charitable organisations and were able to step up following increased demand during the Covid 19 pandemic to help those affected to isolate or stay safe.

Building Better Opportunities supports those furthest away from employment to gain relevant qualifications including around literacy, numeracy and digital / IT as well as employment skills like CV writing.

Young people

The Councils in Worcestershire have a history of some partnership working in relation to 16+ young people and care leavers. The councils collaborate through the Post 16 Group who work together to commission and oversee the young people support, the joint protocols and the

work of the young people pathway workers (YPPW) (who support young people and help them access accommodation). However, the County Council has now withdrawn funding for the YPPW posts from April 2023 which may lead to an increase in homelessness and into the requirement for statutory intervention through the Childrens Act.

Supported accommodation for young people is available throughout the county including accommodation for young parents.

Prison Leavers

In Worcestershire there is a lack of suitable accommodation which undermines the ability of individual involved in the Criminal Justice system to settle and increases the future likelihood of their reoffending, this impacts on their health and wellbeing and employment chances. The Worcestershire local authorities have conducted a review of the Criminal Justice Housing Pathway and Worcestershire Strategic Housing Partnership have delegated the development of the Criminal Justice Housing and Support Protocol to the Reducing Re-offending Group.

Partners are committed in principle to the development of a new model utilising existing services, assets, and capacity and to modify approaches as necessary to provide a more joined up pathway. Real change (recovery and desistance) begins with a trusting relationship and is supported by partnership working because it is unlikely that one person or one agency can meet all support needs effectively. The key therefore to successful rehabilitation begins with a trusting relationship and is then supported by a coordinated and collaborative approach by the key agencies working with that person.

Our ambition for Worcestershire is that the Criminal Justice Housing and Support Pathway will bring together the full range of partners to provide a bespoke response to individuals that will enable rehabilitation and prevent or tackle homelessness. It will identify how an individual involved in the criminal justice process has their housing needs assessed at the start of a period in custody and will help to identify the key stages through custody and into accommodation, identifying the strengths and weaknesses of current systems including current outcomes and gap analysis to ensure constructive resettlement approach and positive pathway into accommodation is developed.

Domestic Abuse

The Domestic Abuse Partnership Board have developed a Domestic Abuse Strategy, which covers issues in relation to the Part IV duties in the legislation but also go wider to include community domestic abuse services and will utilise data from the needs assessment. In the future the strategy will help inform future commissioning and delivery of services. The councils have previously jointly commissioned services for survivors and there is partnership working with the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and other partners around commissioning of “Drive” Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) and training.

Housing Register and Allocation Policies

The Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the 2002 Homelessness Act and the Localism Act 2011) requires local authorities to make all allocations and nominations in accordance with an Allocations Scheme.

The Housing Act 1996, (as amended) requires local authorities to give Reasonable Preference in their allocations policies to people with high levels of assessed housing need. This includes homeless people, those who need to move on welfare or medical grounds, people living in unsatisfactory housing and those who would face hardship unless they moved to a particular locality within the local authority's area.

There are three housing register and allocations systems in place across the County.

1. Home Choice Plus is a choice based lettings scheme which operates across the partnership area of Bromsgrove, Stratford on Avon and Wyre Forest.
2. Redditch Homes is a choice based lettings scheme for Redditch Borough area
3. Housing for You is a choice based lettings scheme operates across the south Worcestershire authorities of Malvern Hills Worcester Wychavon,

Worcestershire Armed Forces Covenant Partnership

Worcestershire signed the Armed Forces Covenant in 2012 and is committed to ensure that those who serve or who have served in the Armed Forces, and their families, are treated fairly. The Worcestershire Armed Forces Covenant Partnership works collaboratively to strengthen local delivery of the Covenant, and in particular, to support Worcestershire veterans who are experiencing problems either in transition or future years. Worcestershire housing allocations policies recognise the contribution of ex forces personnel and are framed to ensure that they are not disadvantaged by not having a local connection and that they receive some additional preference within their housing band by the award of extra waiting time on the housing register. Post traumatic stress disorder is also recognised under the definition of medical need for accommodation.

Safeguarding

Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 places a statutory obligation on District Councils to ensure they have in place, suitable arrangements to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children (either directly or via their families) who may access or use Council services. The Act requires the Council to ensure that:

- a) its functions are discharged with due regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children; and
- b) through working with others, arrangements are put in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

The Worcestershire Children First Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures issued by the WLCSB (now known as WSCP) sets out how authorities will work together. Further information and the guidelines can be accessed via the following web link:

<http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/worcestershirechildrenfirst/>

The Worcestershire Local Safeguarding Children's Board created a guidance document for everyone who works with children and their families in Worcestershire. 'Multi-Agency Levels of Need: Guidance to help support children, young people and families in Worcestershire. The focus is

on four levels of need which aim is to put the child and their family at the centre of discussion, providing effective support to help them solve problems and find solutions at an early stage. <https://www.safeguardingworcestershires.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Levelsof-Need-Document.pdf>

The Adult Safeguarding Board is a multi-agency partnership including Local Housing Authority representation. The Board oversee the serious case reviews and the Rough Sleeper Thematic Review action plan, which was developed following the death of a number of rough sleepers. The Board has a number of sub-groups including one around self-neglect that has established a self neglect policy and a hoarding protocol.

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 or are threatened with 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.safeguardingworcestershires.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).

Stakeholder Experiences

Preventing rough sleeping - stakeholder views

As part of the preparation for the Government's Rough Sleeper Initiative 5 funding opportunity, each of the 6 local housing authorities in Worcestershire carried out a stakeholder survey to seek the views of key partners to inform bid proposals.

Stakeholders were asked for their comments on the "building blocks" (see below) required to tackle and prevent rough sleeping in the 4 key areas:

- Homelessness prevention
- Intervention
- Recovery
- Systems support.

They were asked to identify the strengths and gaps in the local service pathway for each of the building blocks, and what they thought the Council's ambition for preventing and tackling rough sleeping over the next three years should be e.g., what service offers, improved systems and holistic processes they would like to see.

Homelessness Prevention: activities to stop people sleeping rough for the first time

Building Block 1:	Building Block 2:	Building Block 3:
People at risk of rough sleeping are identified at the earliest opportunity and their needs are understood.	People at risk of rough sleeping receive targeted support and advice to maintain their accommodation or find appropriate alternative.	People at risk receive a personalised and holistic offer to best support them to integrate into their community.

Intervention: support for those currently sleeping rough to move off the streets

<p>Building Block 1:</p> <p>All people sleeping rough are identified on first night out and have their individual needs assessed using a holistic single assessment tool.</p>	<p>Building Block 2:</p> <p>Resources ensure a personalised and immediate offer, and sufficient capacity to respond to flow throughout the year.</p>	<p>Building Block 3:</p> <p>Strong collaboration with community groups and general public so that responses to people sleeping rough are informed, coordinated and integrated.</p>
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Recovery: support for those who have slept rough to ensure they do not return to the streets

<p>Building Block 1:</p> <p>Longer term needs of people with a history of sleeping rough are identified and plans developed to respond to them.</p>	<p>Building Block 2:</p> <p>A personalised offer to meet every individual's needs, and sufficient capacity to maintain flow through a pathway of services.</p>	<p>Building Block 3:</p> <p>A personalised and holistic offer to best support someone with a history of sleeping rough be integrated into their community.</p>
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Systems Support: systems and structure to embed change and monitor progress

<p>Building Block 1</p> <p>Clear and evidenced commitment from senior leaders to end rough sleeping.</p>	<p>Building Block 2</p> <p>Partnership response in place which reflects the complexity and diversity of the needs of people sleeping rough/at risk.</p>	<p>Building Block 3</p> <p>Service design and delivery is influenced by the insight and expertise of people with experience of homelessness and sleeping rough.</p>	<p>Building Block 4</p> <p>The response to rough sleeping is informed by evidence of what works.</p>
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The key themes arising out of the stakeholder engagement were:

Strengths

- Outreach officers working out in the community and linking in rough sleepers with local support organisations
- Good joint working between local housing teams and voluntary and community organisations
- Countywide single homelessness prevention service
- Commitment from senior managers to end rough sleeping
- No First Night Out emergency bed spaces
- Homelessness partnership meetings
- Good relationships with registered providers to accommodate rough sleepers
- Willingness of housing teams to help with support needs, not just accommodation
- Housing First/Housing Led initiatives
- Multi agency meetings, specific rough sleeper meetings
- Rough sleeper navigators
- Rough sleeper coordinator
- Assertive outreach
- Basement/Nightstop support for young people
- Severe Weather Emergency (SWEP) accommodation (night shelter)
- Personalisation budgets – allowing bespoke support to be put in place for rough sleepers, based on individual needs
- Peer support workers
- YMCA provision for 16–18-year-olds.
- Young persons supported accommodation in Evesham
- Worcester Cares WhatsApp and 'Streetlink' used to communicate regarding potential rough sleepers
- Homeless hospital discharge service will liaise with services to prevent people returning to the street
- Accessing charity funding to provide bespoke support for rough sleepers
- Good provision of hostel and daycentre provision in the City. This is supported by adequate provision for street/soup kitchens who are linked into other services through Worcester cares WhatsApp
- Regular early morning outreach walks and regular meetings to discuss clients and pathways including input from street/soup kitchens and day services.
- Access to day centres in Worcester and Malvern which link in with outreach and all other agencies for personalised support.
- Harm reduction specialist working alongside other services and trained to dispense Naloxin.

- Maggs Accommodation Project provides people with temporary accommodation to teach the skills to maintain a home independently then referred for longer term housing. Holistic approach to support- engaging with the right agencies for the person including courses/hobbies and interests.
- Worcestershire Homeless Charter and Worcester Cares.
- Good level of referrals through the Duty to Refer
- People with lived experience consulted which assists service design

Gaps

- More accommodation for young people
- More supported accommodation
- More supported temporary and emergency accommodation
- Increased accommodation provision in the private rented sector
- Flexible bespoke accommodation approach to support those with complex needs
- Overcoming the barriers to accessing accommodation e.g., poor tenancy history, complex needs, offending history, lack of support, being referred out of area due to lack of temporary accommodation locally, length of time to be housed via housing registers, difficulty accessing affordable private rented sector accommodation
- Better access to mental and physical health care, particularly into mental health and substance misuse services
- More resource needed to provide the intensive support that rough sleepers need
- Additional funding for initiatives like No First Night Out
- Increased preventative work required e.g., tenancy sustainment programmes
- Increased presence and visibility of housing advice across the districts, more preventative work in the community
- Improved awareness of the service pathway and what services are available
- Review the way we measure the effectiveness of homelessness prevention activities, and ensure they provide value for money
- Improved services around social isolation, substance misuse, unmet health needs, debt, literacy, daytime activities, counselling, life skills, personal development
- Training flats
- Improved sharing of best practice and “what works”
- Consistency in services across the county
- Specialised early intervention teams
- Gaps in outreach provision on Sundays, bank holidays and whilst SWEP activated

- Improved links with street cafes etc. could undertake more prevention with those groups who aren't just currently homeless but on the margins.
- Improved discharge from services so that people do not return to the street – particularly prison release
- Lack of rehab facilities and support once detoxed in the community to prevent cycle of addiction
- Housing related floating support – there is provision via Housing First, Maggs and local housing authorities, but more support is needed to ensure that people maintain their homes via practical tenancy support but also psychological and trauma informed support to prevent the cycle.
- Ensure 'Streetlink' notifications are responded to effectively
- Partnership working would be improved by a shared data base which all organisations could access or a co-ordinator who would prevent duplication and speed up 'Streetlink' referrals.
- Improved responses for the small number of people locally who have no recourse to public funds
- Consider if a wellbeing worker could be appointed (similar to harm reduction worker) to provide support and to prevent the cycle of addiction to achieve more positive outcomes to be achieved
- Need to review service pathway to ensure there is no duplication of services and incorrect configuration, need to make best use of funding.
- The charity sector could be better harnessed to bring in more resources, assist in governance and share good practice
- Standardised outcome reporting and coordination across agencies would help to avoid duplication
- Additional training on key themes for people working with rough sleepers/those at risk of rough sleeping
- Difficulties generally with recruitment and retention of staff across all organisations

Lived Experience

Introduction

To support our understanding of services currently provided to homeless households and rough sleepers the councils undertook questionnaires. This helped to inform our understanding of routes into homelessness, what services homeless households and rough sleepers had found helpful and in turn informed the bid for Rough Sleeper Initiative funding.

Length and re-occurrence of homelessness

The vast majority of applicants who could detail their length of homelessness have a period of homelessness lasting more than 6 months and in half of cases over 12 months.

Approximately 50% of respondents weren't able to identify how long they were homeless. The reasons for this are unknown but could be due to not knowing the nature of homelessness, believing sofa surfing or staying with someone on an insecure basis counted, or health and other issues causing difficulties with memory.

Reasons for homelessness

Many respondents reported that drug and alcohol misuse contributed to their homeless situation indicating self awareness on the homeless population that the affect of substance misuse can have.

In regards to the actual reason for homelessness most respondents cited relationship breakdowns, or being asked to leave by friends or family.

This is despite the fact that over 80% respondents indicated they had experience of a tenancy, either assisted or not assisted.

This may indicate that individuals are approaching too late, losing tenancies and going to friends and family and approaching once this placement has broken down.

Due to data recording being focused on the last period of accommodation such as friends and family, this means we do not have a full picture as to why the initial tenancies are failing.

Health issues

Over half of applicants surveyed reported mental health contributing to homelessness. Approximately a quarter also indicated drug and alcohol misuse contributing to their housing situation.

Registrations with GP are high with virtually all respondents being registered with a GP.

Many of the applicants report difficulty in accessing services. Though many report that once they have been assessed and accepted the process does become easier. But the initial referrals and being accepted onto services do prove to be difficult and substance abuse is highlighted as a factor that can make access particularly difficult.

Very few people take part in health screenings.

Support

The majority of respondents, when asked what support they received, reported that their primary support was the housing options team with a few not being able to access support and others receiving support from foodbanks, GP's and other referral agencies.

Those interviewed in Redditch responded differently with individuals stating their primary support was foodbanks and other referral services.

Uncertainty of what help was available was a large barrier for Redditch applicants amongst all applicants and support whilst in temporary accommodation was the largest support deemed to be missing.

When asked what other support was available, family and friends were deemed to be the most important, indicating difficulties for those isolated or estranged from friends and family or those who have difficulty making and sustaining relationships.

Temporary Accommodation

The minority of applicants felt that temporary accommodation was a beneficial experience with many feeling that there was not enough support whilst in temporary accommodation or that it wasn't provided for long enough.

The experience in Worcester seems to be a bit different with people being more ambivalent feeling it served its purpose and was better than expected.

Approximately one third of applicants across all districts reported that it had a negative affect on the relationship with children who were less able to understand what was happening or cope with change.

Future accommodation

Many felt that they would not be able to sustain a tenancy without structured support. In consideration that many homeless applicants advised they had accommodation in the past this is understandable.

Training on sustaining a tenancy, employment and social activities were advised as further help that could be provided.

When compared about how people chose to spend their times, many applicants reported that they felt unable to do much, due to physical health or mental health or due to their financial situation.

Most people's housing aspirations were for social housing and no respondents aspired to be in private sector housing indicating it is not an attractive or accessible offer in the Worcestershire area for homeless applicants

Access to benefits and employment

In Worcester and Redditch about a third of applicants reported trouble accessing benefits or employment whilst in other areas this was higher at two thirds of people reporting difficulties, perhaps indicating difficulties in more rural areas.

Mapping data

We conducted a mapping of services across the county to document key agencies and organisations and the services that are currently available to respond to homelessness and rough sleeping.

These services and partners support a coordinated response and include homelessness charities and support services, criminal justice agencies, health services, including substance misuse, debt advice and counselling services.

In conducting the mapping exercise, we looked at whether there are any groups not being reached. We also started to look at where they are geographically concentrated and how services were delivered for example is outreach available from for those who would find it hard to access drop ins.

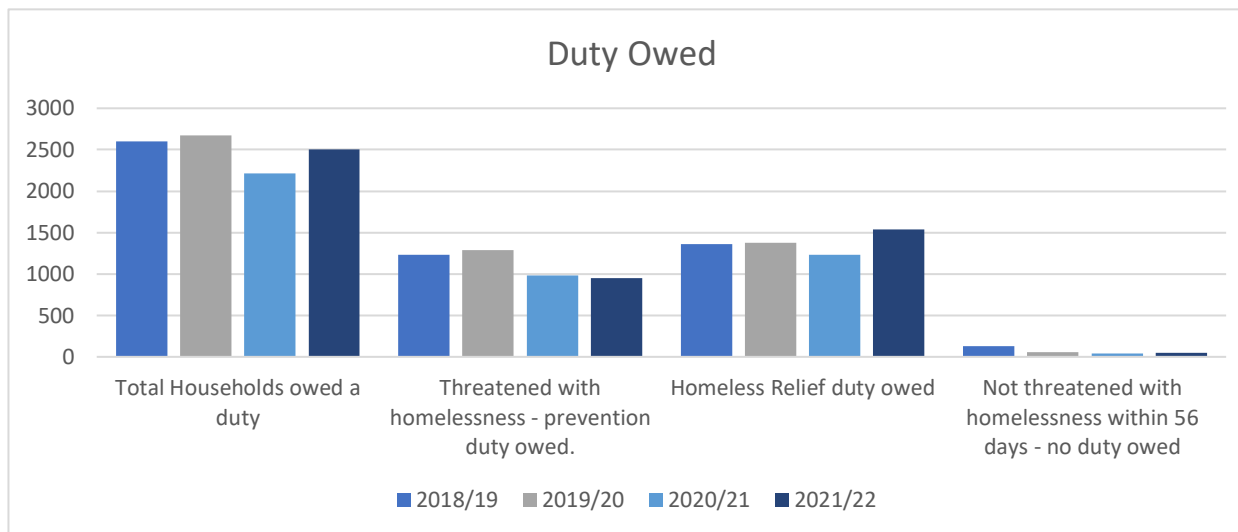
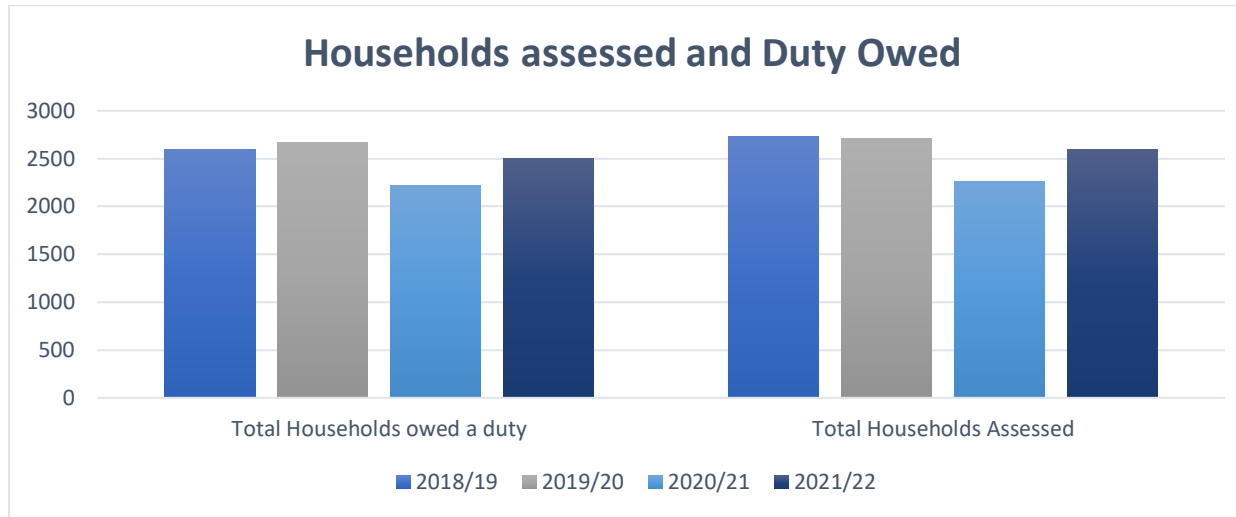
In conducting this research we have developed a directory of services that we will be looking to make available for our in house teams and partners to utilise.

Mapping services has played an important role in our understanding of how different sectors have responded to a rapidly changing environment due to a range of external influences such as the pandemic and the cost of living crisis and has contributed to the priorities that will be pursued through the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy Action Plan.

Local Authority	Outreach Support for Rough Sleepers	Outreach Support for Young People	Homelessness Prevention Support Service	Supported Accommodation for Young People	Supported Accommodation for those involved in the Criminal Justice System	Domestic Abuse Refuge	Supported Accommodation for Rough Sleepers and those with complex needs	Debt Advice	Furniture Project	Food Banks	Private Sector Deposit and Rent in Advance Scheme
Bromsgrove	√	√	√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√
Malvern	√	√	√	√		√		√	√	√	√
Redditch	√	√	√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√
Worcester	√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√	√	√
Wychavon	√	√	√	√		√		√	√	√	√
Wyre Forest	√	√	√	√		√	√	√		√	√

Homeless and rough sleeper statistics

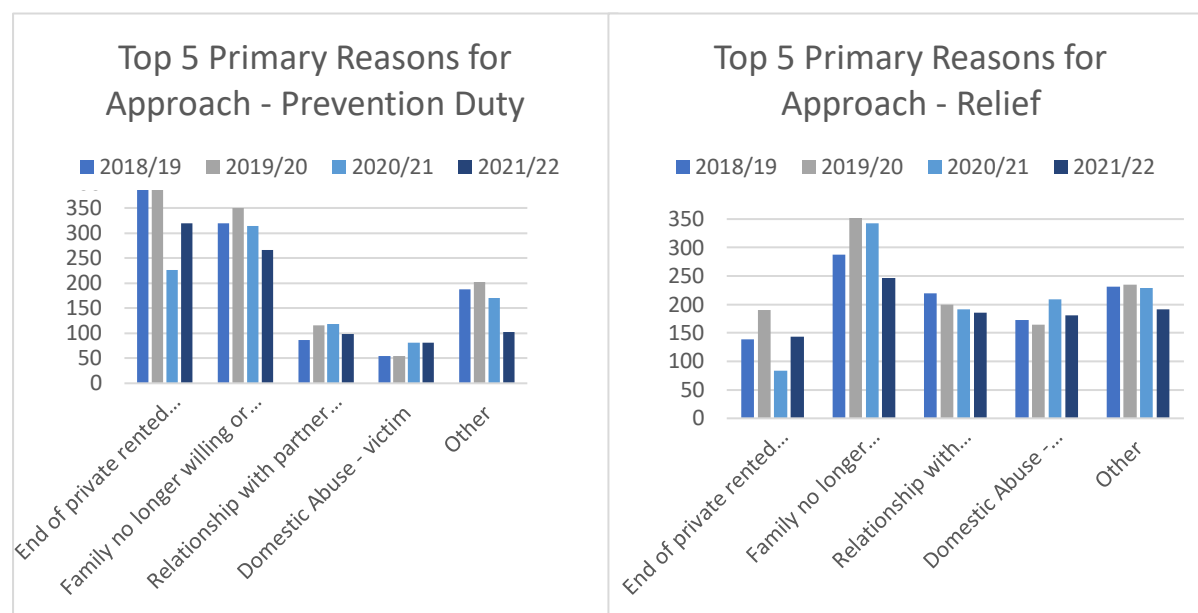
Levels of homelessness



There have been no significant changes in the level of homelessness throughout Worcestershire between 2018/19 to 2021/22. The figures have remained relatively stable, though there is a notable reduction in the number of assessments and subsequently duty owed for the year 2020/21 which is most likely attributed to the Covid-19 pandemic. Overall, from 2018/19 to 2021/22 there has been a 5% decrease in the total number of households assessed, this is replicated in the total number of households owed a duty which has seen a 4% decrease during this period.

During this time on average 97% of households assessed throughout the county are owed a duty. Of these, 43% are assessed as being owed a prevention duty, 54% are owed a relief duty, with 3% determined to have no statutory duty owed.

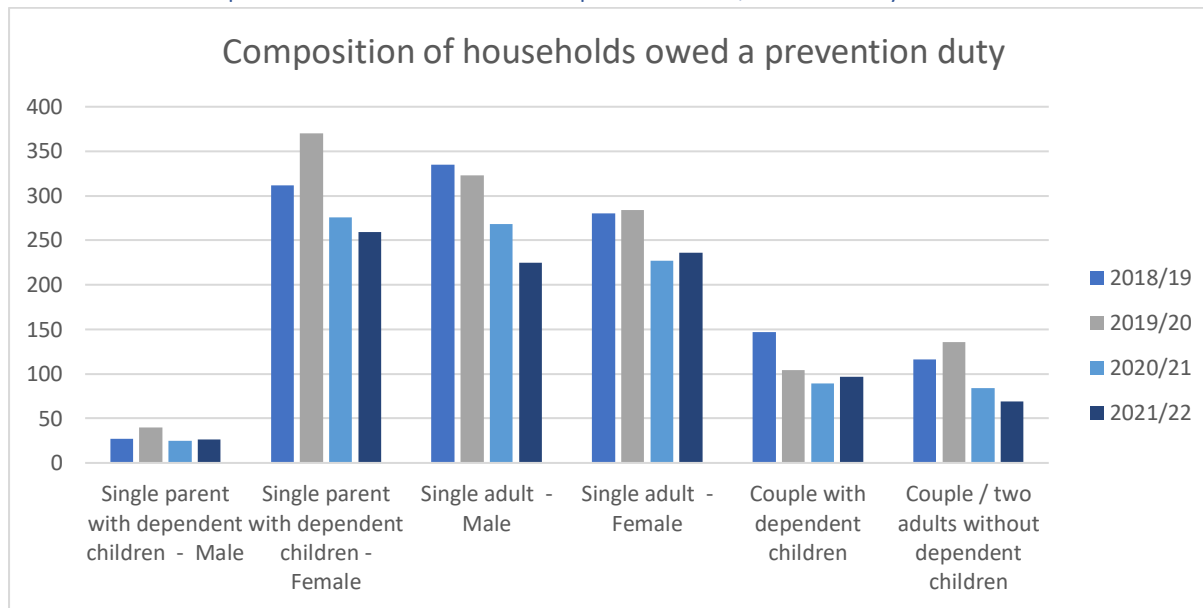
Reasons for homelessness

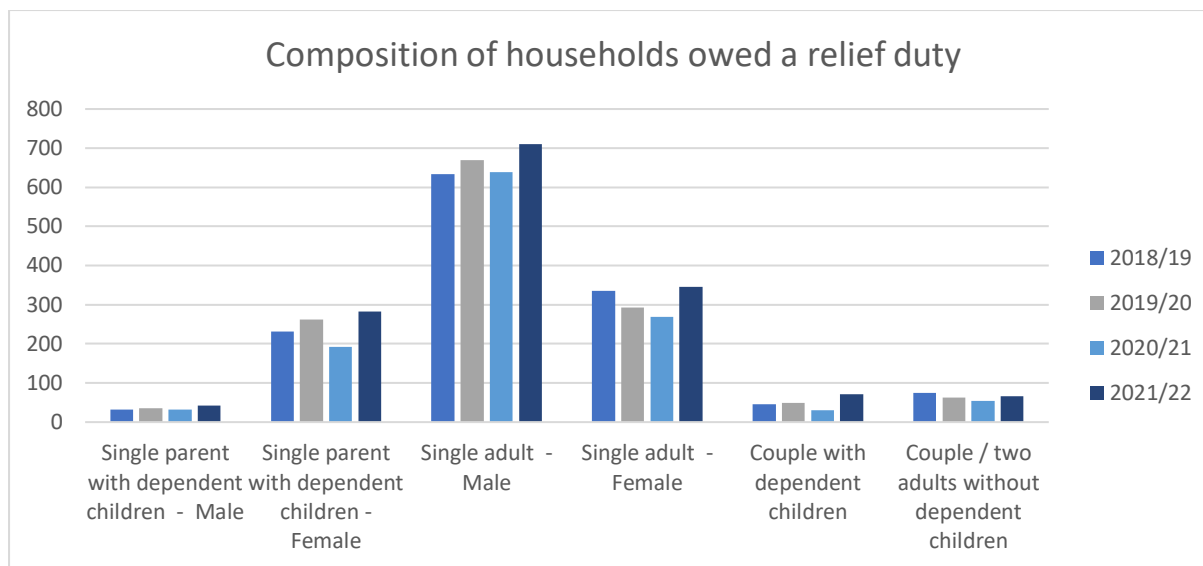


The top five reasons for approach are synonymous under both prevention and relief duty. The end of Private Rented Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST) is cited as the greatest reason under prevention duty (this accounts for 31% of those owed a prevention duty), whilst at relief duty stage end of AST is the least cited reason (accounting for just 11% of relief cases). This information and that for: 'Family no longer willing or able to accommodate', 'Non-violent relationship breakdown', 'Domestic Abuse Victim', and 'Other' is depicted in Table 2 below.

Table 2	Prevention Duty	Relief Duty			
End of AST	31%	11%			
Family no longer willing or able to accommodate	28%	25%			
Relationship breakdown (non-violent)	9%	16%			
Domestic Abuse – Victim	6%	14%			
Other	15%	18%			
	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th

Household composition of those owed a prevention / relief duty



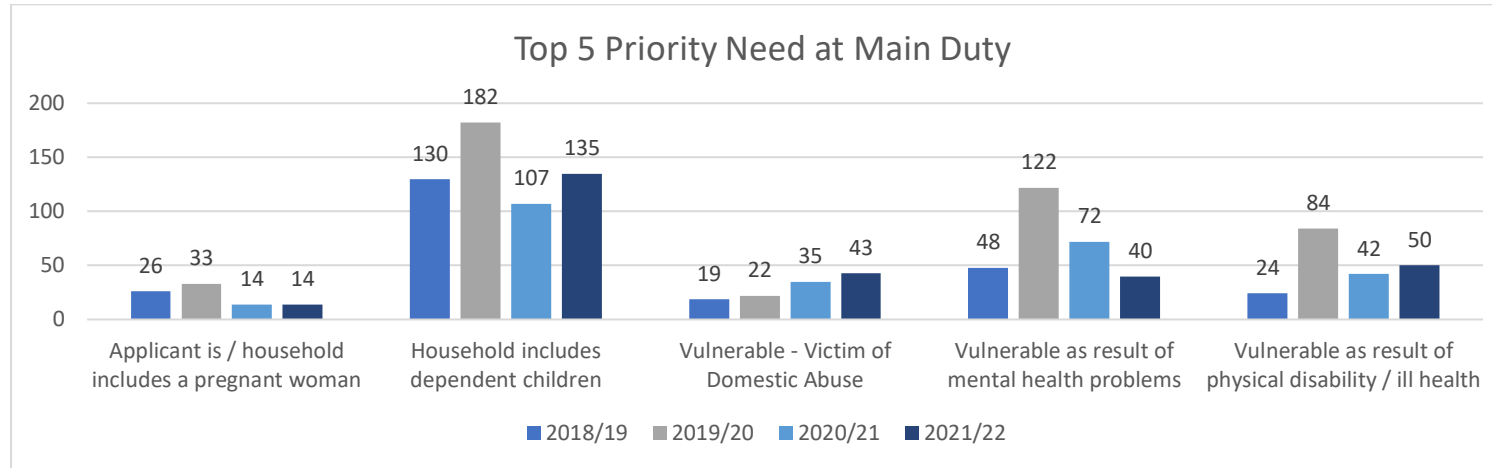


The household compositions shown in the above graphs account for 98% of those owed a prevention duty and 99% of those owed a relief duty. Single Male adults account for 26% of prevention duty cases and 48% of relief duty cases. Being a single male parent accounts for just 3% under both prevention and relief duty stage. This information and that for: ‘Female single parent’, ‘single female adults’, ‘couples with dependent children’, and ‘couples without dependent children’ is depicted in Table 3 below.

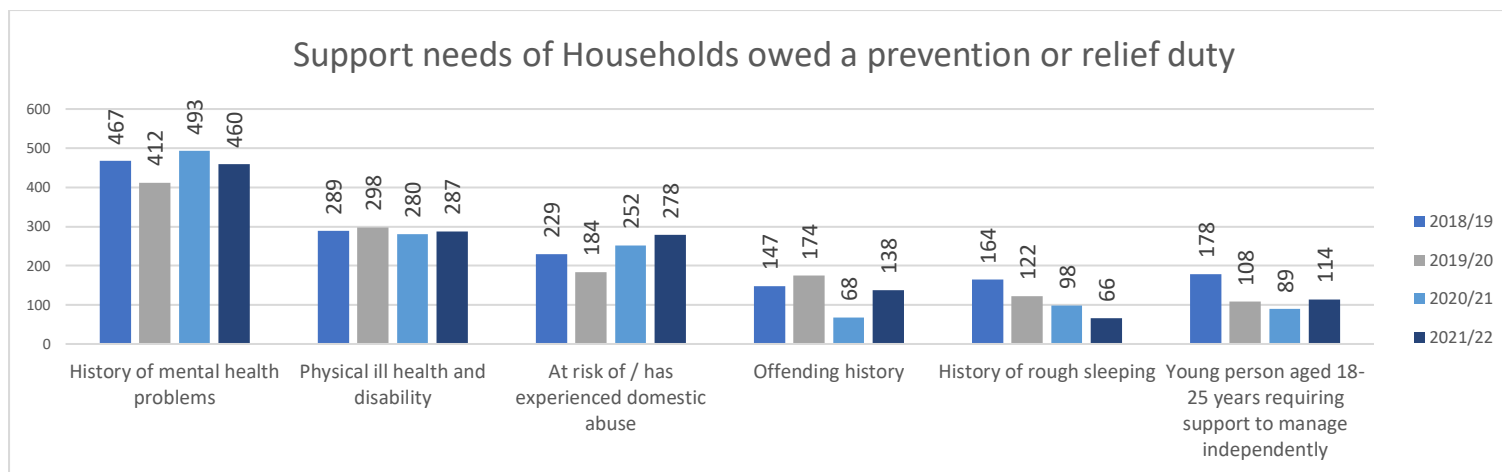
Table 3	Prevention Duty	Relief Duty				
Single Parent – Male	3%	3%				
Single Parent – Female	27%	18%				
Single Adult – Male	26%	48%				
Single Adult – Female	23%	23%				
Couple with Dependent Children	10%	4%				
Couple without Dependent Children	9%	5%				
Total:	98%	99%				
	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th

Priority need and support data

Priority Need at Main Duty Stage



The majority of households that are owed a main duty are those with dependent children. Those owed a main duty who are victims of domestic abuse have been steadily increasing over the last few years which may be down to greater awareness of issue leading to more appropriate recording by the Housing Advice Teams.

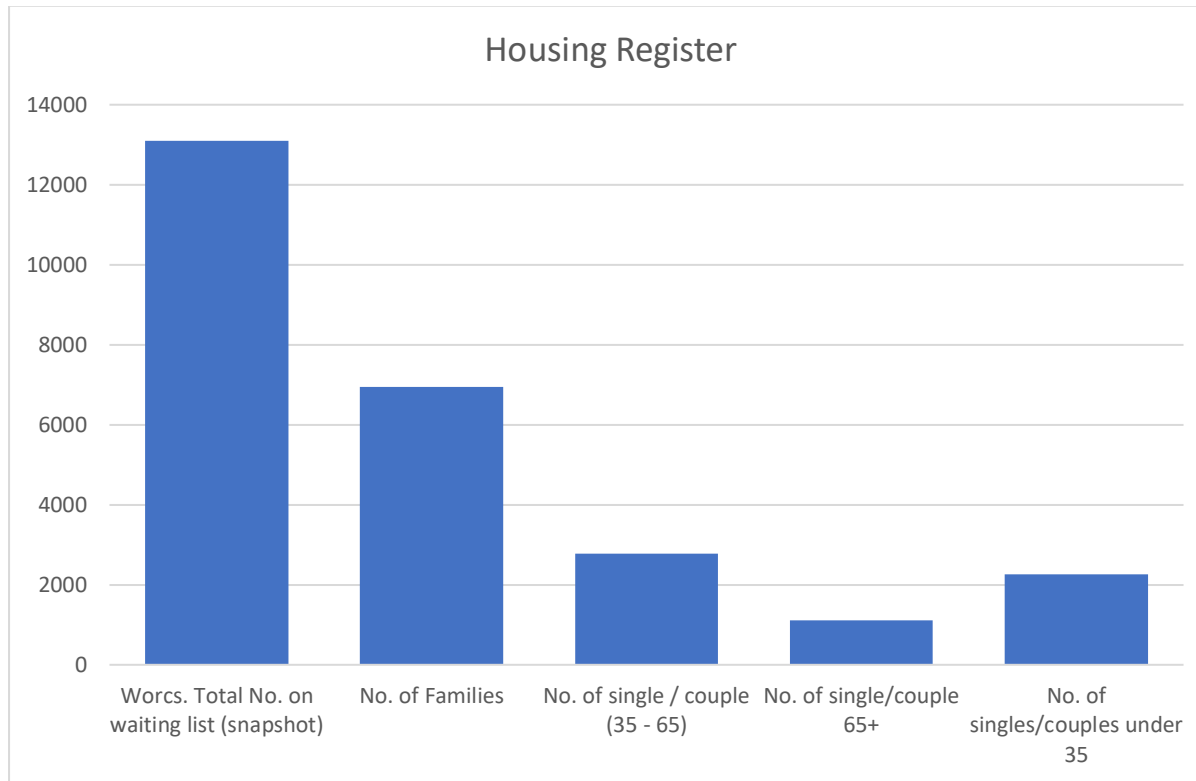


Having a history of mental health problems is cited as the greatest support need for households that are owed a duty (23%). Having a support need due to physical ill health and disability accounts for 14%. The figures for both of these support needs remains stable for the previous 4 year period.

The support need for being at risk of or experiencing domestic abuse has seen a 25% increase in the year 2021/22 (when we consider the average for the previous 3 years). This could perhaps be attributed to the implementation of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, which states when an eligible applicant approaches as homeless as a result of being a victim of domestic abuse the local authority has a duty to treat the household as priority need for homeless assistance. The graph displays a clear reduction in the number of support needs for households with a history of rough sleeping. There has been a 48% decrease from the average combined number for 18/19, 19/20, 20/21 versus 21/22.

History of mental health problems	23%		
Physical ill health and disability	14%		
At risk of/has experienced domestic abuse	12%		
Offending History	6%		
History of rough sleeping	6%		
Young person (18-25) requiring support to manage independently	6%		
Total:			
1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th

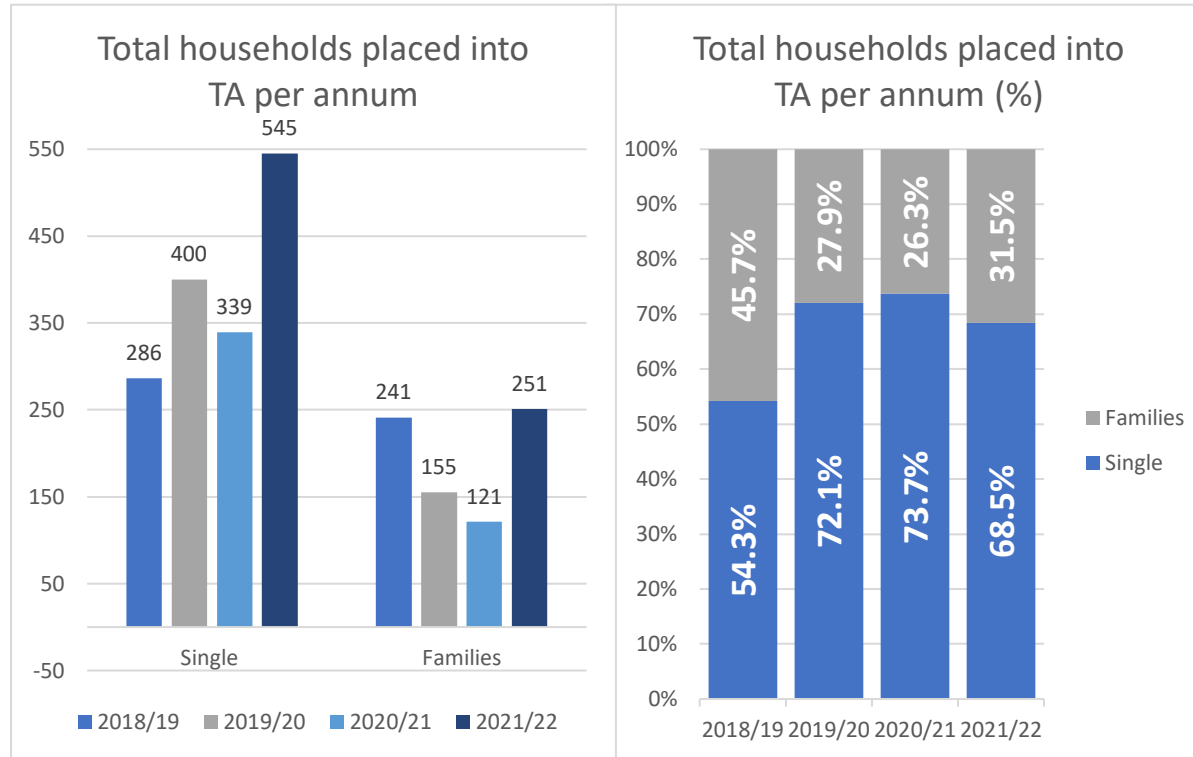
Housing Register



Across Worcestershire there are 13,105 households on the housing register. Families account for 53% of all households on the register, whilst Singles/Couples aged 65+ account for just 9%. This can be viewed in Table 1 below.

Families	53%		
Single/Couples (Aged 35 – 65)	21%		
Single/Couples (Aged 65+)	9%		
Single/Couples (Aged Under 35)	17%		
1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th

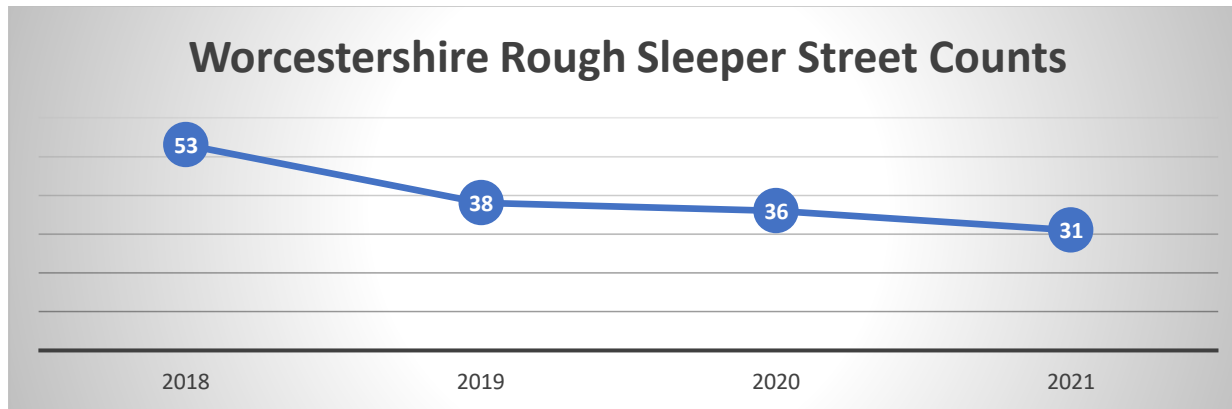
Use of Temporary Accommodation



Between 2018/19 – 2021/22, on average, single households placed into TA account for 67% of the total, and families account for 33%.

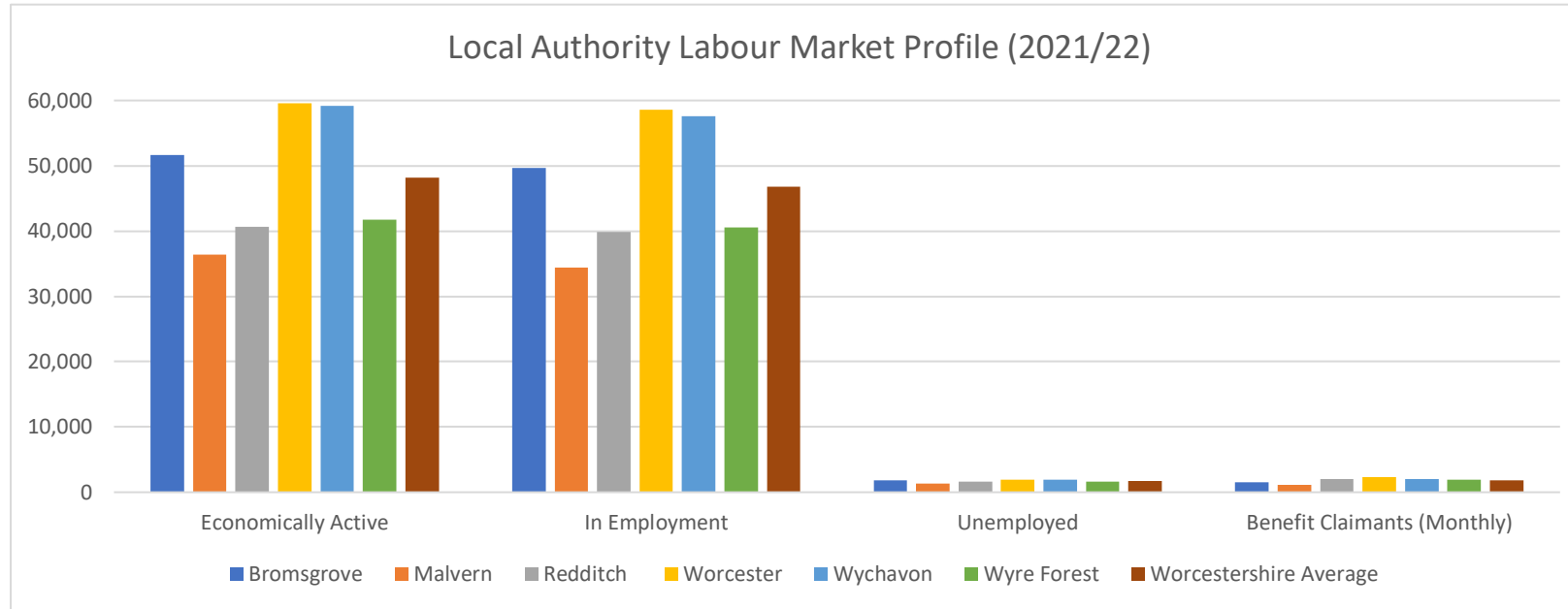
There is a notable increase in the total number of households placed into TA for the year 2021/22. When we consider the combined average figure for the years 18/19, 19/20 and 20/21 (Single = 341, Families = 172), there was a 60% increase in single households placed into TA in 2021/22 and an increase of 46% for families placed into TA for 2021/22.

Rough Sleepers data



Over the last four years the level of rough sleeping (as measured by the annual count) has declined by 40% which demonstrates the success of the interventions. However there is still work to reduce this to a zero figure as far as possible and ensure any rough sleeping that does occur is rare, fleeting and non-recurrent.

Employment and welfare benefits

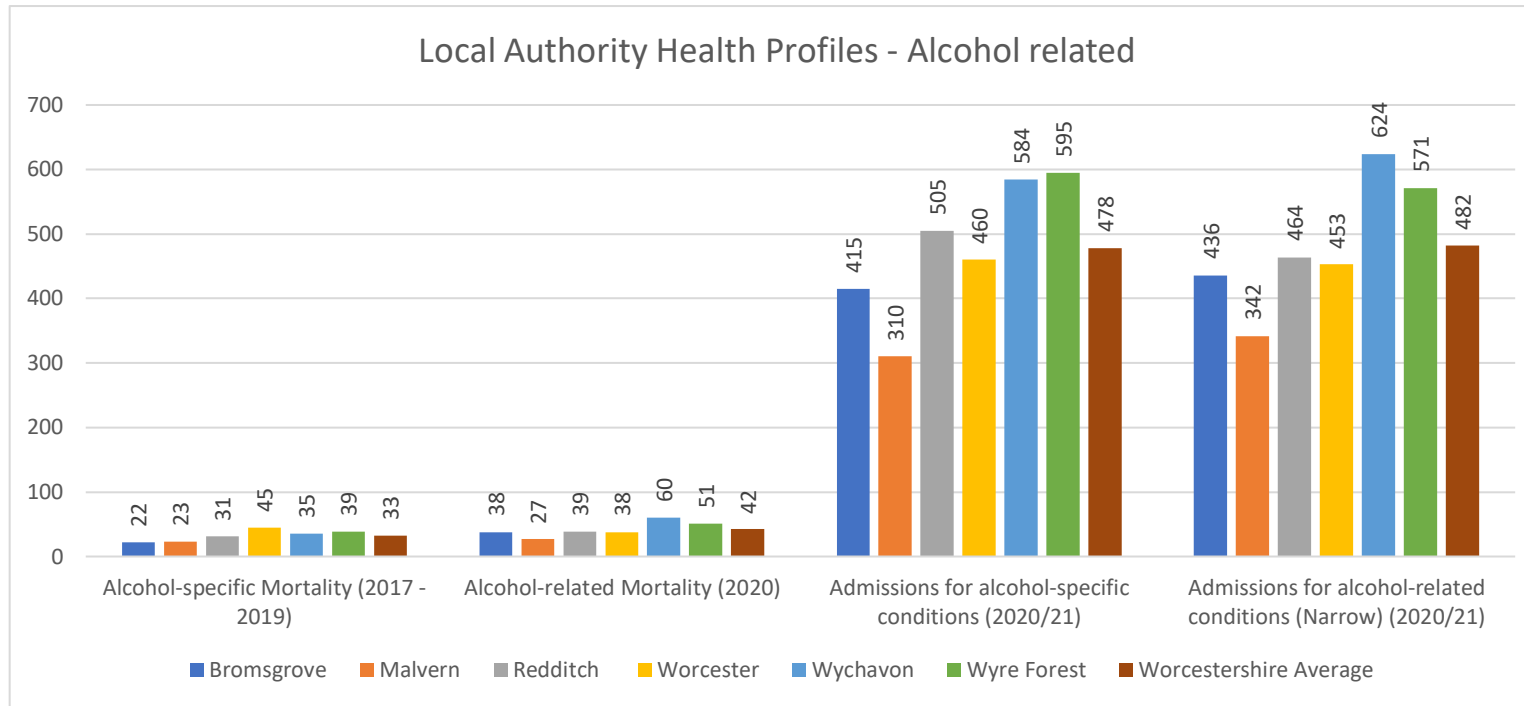


Currently there are 290,000 people in employment in Worcestershire, with good growth over the last five years. 3.5% of Worcestershire’s economically active population are unemployed and perhaps as challenging, 1 in 18 of working residents have no qualifications.

Redditch had the lowest number of economically inactive households in 2020/21 (9.5%) and Worcester City the highest (15.49%).

Median gross weekly earnings by residence in Worcestershire is £537 which is approximately 3% less than in the West Midlands and 10% less than in England.

Health data



Alcohol related deaths remain above the county average in Wyre Forest and Worcester. Admissions to hospital for alcohol-specific and alcohol related conditions are highest in Wyre Forest and Wychavon.

Drug related deaths (Public Health profile 2018-2020)

District	Count	Value per 100,000
Wyre Forest	20	7.00
Worcester	18	3.80
Wychavon	10	1.40
Redditch	10	4.00
Malvern	6	N/A
Bromsgrove	5	N/A

Wyre Forest had the highest number of drug related deaths per 100,000 during the period 2018-2020 and is higher than its CIPFA near neighbours, the West Midlands region and England averages.

Dementia

Dementia will be a significant issue in future years as the population in the oldest age groups grows. The number of people with dementia in Worcestershire is forecast to increase by 56% between 2019 and 2035 from 9,560 to 14,905.

Fuel Poverty

Fuel poverty is a material issue in Worcestershire, affecting around 14.4% of households compared with 13.4% of households in England as a whole. A household is said to be fuel poor if it needs to spend more than 10% of its income on fuel to maintain an adequate standard of warmth. Following significant increases in energy costs in the past 12 months, fuel poverty is expected to affect more people, and as a result, might further accelerate investment in energy efficiency. The health effects of fuel poverty are far-reaching and disproportionately affect older people as there are links between cold homes and respiratory conditions. The five-year average for excess winter mortality index in the County is higher than England's five-year average

Partner information

It hasn't been able to collect this data for all councils but it gives an indication of the volume of work.

CCP deliver a support service for single homeless people across the county. In 2021/22 they supported 121 through their floating support service and also provided support to the councils in the winter months with their Severe Winter Emergency Provision.

Just over 4800 food parcels were delivered to households across the county from the various food banks.

There were nearly 1000 financial inclusion or debt advice cases seen in 2021/22 including services provided by the Citizens Advice Bureau and nearly 500 applications for welfare assistance made to the councils.

Supply of accommodation

Number of units expected to be built per annum

Council	Number of units
Bromsgrove	383
Redditch	337
South Worcestershire	1283
Wyre Forest	276
Total	2279

This figure is based on standardised housing methodology as set out in Local Plans and gives an indicative figure of housing needs.

Number of affordable housing units completed 2021-2022

Council	Number of units
Bromsgrove	8
Malvern Hills	194
Redditch	19
Wychavon	256
Worcester	148
Wyre Forest	212
Total	837

2021/2022 saw levels of affordable new build housing returning to pre-pandemic levels or above although data prior to 2021/22 is not available for Bromsgrove and Redditch.

Number of social housing lets in 2021/22

Council	Number of units
Bromsgrove	304
Malvern Hills & Wychavon combined (part year)	700
Redditch	307
Worcester	450
Wyre Forest	360
Total	2121

Levels are returning to normal in 2021/22 following a decline during the covid period in all areas where the data is available.

Private rented sector and Housing First

Number of private sector leasing, rent bond and housing first/led units 2021/22

Council	Private Sector Leasing (PSL) units	Rent bond / deposit units or other forms of financial assistance	Housing First / Led units
Bromsgrove	Scheme not available	4	1
Redditch	Scheme not available		10
Malvern Hills and Wychavon DC combined	30	6	17
Worcester	0	20	10
Wyre Forest	5	41	21
Total	35	71	59

Across the county the councils have utilised the private rented sector for resolving those who are, or are potentially, homeless. In 2018 the councils were successful in obtaining a combined countywide grant from DLUHC to help with making better use of the private rented sector called the Private Rented Sector Access fund and this enabled some of the councils to develop private sector leasing or social letting schemes. Over time the use of rent bonds has declined but Discretionary Housing Payments and PSL has increased in some areas of the county. Private sector leasing does presents a more attractive offer to landlords looking for a guaranteed return.

Resources

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.

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

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.

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

This funding is to support Local Housing Authorities discharge their duties arising from the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. Across the county this is spent in a variety of ways but includes funding for the countywide Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator and Research and Intelligence Officer posts.

Rough Sleepers Accommodation Programme 2021/22 - 2023/24

Local Authority	Grant			
	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2023/24
Worcester (3)	Capital - £440,000 Revenue £147,667			
Wychavon & Malvern (18 units)	£28,330	£49,420	£50,420	N/A
Wyre Forest (5 units)	N/A	£29,023	£30,622	N/A

This funding programme is aimed at providing rough sleepers move-on accommodation either via new build or purchase and repair schemes or through leasing accommodation. The scheme in Worcester included a capital element for purchasing existing dwellings.

Rough Sleeper Initiative 2022-25

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

This funding delivers a number of projects across the county including No First or No Second Night Out emergency accommodation to minimise the nights rough sleepers spend on the streets, housing pathway or intervention and transition workers, the Rough Sleeping Co-ordinator role (which covers five councils) and Housing Led or Housing First accommodation.

Household Support Fund

Housing Authority	Tranche One 2022/23 Grant (£)	2021/22
Bromsgrove District Council	100,344	178,687
Malvern Hills District Council	81,672*	158,673
Redditch Borough Council	146,200	260,345
Worcester City Council	173,316*	336,720
Wychavon District Council	153,125*	297,492
Wyre Forest District Council	207,342	369,223

*Final allocated amount may have been amended.

This funding is delivered both indirectly and directly to households to help fund food, utilities and other essential items.

Discretionary Housing Payments (2022-23)

Housing Authority	Grant (£)
Bromsgrove District Council	62,332
Malvern Hills District Council	74,115

Redditch Borough Council	79,926
Worcester City Council	116,780
Wychavon District Council	109,823
Wyre Forest District Council	108,004

This funding supports households with costs of renting accommodation including rent in advance payments.

Welfare Assistance Schemes

Housing Authority	Funding available (£)
Bromsgrove District Council	30,000
Malvern Hills District Council	Data not provided
Redditch Borough Council	30,000
Worcester City Council	Data not provided
Wychavon District Council	Data not provided
Wyre Forest District Council	20,000

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 deliver 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

Number of empty homes (over 6 months)

Housing Authority	Empty homes
Bromsgrove District Council	452
Malvern Hills District Council	1150
Redditch Borough Council	337
Worcester City Council	393
Wychavon District Council	1340
Wyre Forest District Council	207
Total	3879

Homes are empty for a variety of reason and it doesn't necessarily mean they are available for people to occupy due to condition or legal status but nonetheless maybe a potential source of accommodation for councils to tap into.