

**Wiltshire Council**

**Environment Select Committee**

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**Tuesday 12 November 2024**

**Homeless Prevention Strategy Action Plan Update  
2019 - 2024**

**Executive summary**

This report provides the Environment Select Committee with an update on progress on the Homeless Prevention Strategy Action Plan that was adopted by Full Council in November 2019, which included a 5 year action plan.

**Proposal**

That the committee note the progress made on the Homeless Prevention Strategy Action Plan.

**Reason for proposal**

The Environment Select Committee had requested an update following the last update provided in Nov 2022.

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## Homeless Prevention Strategy Action Plan Update 2019 - 2024

### Purpose of report

- The purpose of this report is to provide the Environment Select Committee with an update on progress to deliver on the Homeless Prevention Strategy Action Plan that was approved by Full Council in November 2019,

### Background

- The Homeless Prevention Strategy Action plan was split into 5 priority areas, each having agreed key actions. Below is a table to confirm the total agreed actions for each priority area, total completed, those started but not yet completed and those not yet started.

	<b>Total Actions</b>	<b>Of which New actions</b>	<b>Completed</b>	<b>Started</b>
<b>Priority 1</b> To reduce Rough Sleeping	19	2	19	0
<b>Priority 2</b> To identify and prevent homelessness at the earliest possible stage	8	3	8	0
<b>Priority 3</b> To ensure services are designed to prevent homelessness or support those who are homeless	17	6	16	1
<b>Priority 4</b> To ensure those who are threatened with homelessness or who are homeless can secure and keep a suitable home	10	2	10	0
<b>Priority 5</b> To maintain effective strategic direction and partnership working	11	3	11	0
	<b>65</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>1</b>

Since November 2019 we continue to see a significant increase in demand, however, we have made significant progress in achieving the agreed actions with only one remaining.

See Appendix 1 for the Homeless Prevention Strategy Action Plan which is now complete.

## Main considerations for the committee

3. Looking at each priority individually I will highlight some of the positive work that has been completed since the last ESC update as well as some additional actions that have been worked on which are new actions.

### Priority 1 To reduce rough sleeping

4. We have completed all 17 actions for this priority and now continue to work through the actions contained within the Rough Sleeper Strategy which is a government required strategy that was developed to enable the authority to receive RSI grant funding and identified how we intend to work to reduce rough sleeping in Wiltshire and provide dedicated intensive support to 15 targeted entrenched rough sleepers
5. We have increased access to health services with positive contact being made with the Lodge GP practice, and we are hoping that they will have a representative who can attend the Rough Sleeper Forum as a GP representative, and also hoping that they become a member of the Rough Sleeper Partnership Group. The Lodge has taken on some of the Rough Sleeper Cohort along with the residents at Unity House, Chippenham who are some of our most entrenched rough sleepers. We are also in talks with Salisbury Medical Practise to see what support they can provide.
6. Working with public health we now have a mobile dentist and podiatry van which is providing a fantastic service to our rough sleepers right across the County, including at Alabare Place Salisbury, The Haven Trowbridge and Unity House, Chippenham which is also attended by Turning Point & the Rough Sleeper Team. This service is currently funded for 2024, and we are in discussions with Public Health in regards to potential on going funding, as well as waiting for government to announce any future RSI funding for 2025 onwards.
7. Following our successful delivery of the Next Steps Accommodation Programme NSAP which delivered (4 properties, 6 bed spaces) our Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme RSAP which delivered (7 properties, 11 bed spaces) and last year we were successful in a further government bid to secure additional rough sleeper accommodation called Single Homeless Accommodation Programme SHAP which has helped us to acquire a further 8 properties with 14 bed spaces. These were all government funded capital grants to help increase our housing provision in Wiltshire for Rough Sleepers.

### New Actions

8. **Homeless Prevention Panel** - Recent performance indicators on the reasons for rough sleepers losing accommodation showed that one of the main causes was the loss of supported accommodation. We have therefore created a Homeless Prevention Panel in which clients who are provided with written warnings or notice are discussed to see what can be done to prevent any eviction and sustain the placement. We also continue to utilise RSI funding to help unblock barriers to assist rough sleepers in securing accommodation

9. **Wiltshire Rough Sleeper Partnership Group** - Due to the increasing numbers and complexities of rough sleepers we have set up a strategic partnership framework to ensure effective multi agency partnership to respond to the needs of rough sleepers. The partnership includes members from Police, Probation, Public Health, Mental Health, Adult Social Care, Local Rough Sleeper Drop in charities and organisations, Turning Point and we are in the process of securing a GP practice and a client who has lived experience of sleeping rough.
10. The purpose of the Wiltshire Rough Sleeper Partnership is to take a joint collaborative approach to develop the services available to those who find themselves sleeping rough in Wiltshire. It will also support all rough sleepers individual needs on the streets of Wiltshire, with the aim to support the individual into accommodation and reduce risk of harm to those currently sleeping rough. To achieve this, the partnership group is divided into 3 parts
  - A weekly operational rough sleeper meeting that considers local intel, identify urgent safeguarding concerns, and agree a person-centred action plan to ensure a holistic support package is provided to all those sleeping rough.
  - A Task and Targeting monthly meeting attended by senior professionals from each service, to enable effective and quick decision making to safeguard any individuals deemed to be at high risk due to self-harm or neglect.
  - A Quarterly Rough Sleeper Forum to work in collaboration to achieve systematic changes and to co-produce services to improve & develop the services provided to rough sleepers in Wiltshire. It provides a platform to share updates on local & government level in relation to rough sleeping across the Professional & Voluntary sector, New Innovations and Developments, and flag concerns /identify issues.

## **Priority 2 To identify and prevent homelessness at the earliest possible stage**

11. We have now completed all five actions within this priority. It is important to recognise that we have delivered on other actions that were not listed within the original action plan and have been fundamental in helping to prevent homelessness.

### **New Actions**

12. **Recruitment of Building Bridges Officer** – Using RSI funding we have secured two Building Bridges Officers, one officer is in post and we are out to recruitment for the other one. The officers will work with clients both in supported accommodation and known rough sleepers. They will hold a case load of 23-25 clients. Recent success has included assisting a Rough Sleeper in RS accommodation to access a mechanical engineering course and supported them to obtain a laptop via the Wiltshire Digital Drive to enable him to complete his college work online, and two further clients have been supported to access employment. In addition we have recruited a dedicated Building Bridges Officer for Ukraine nationals to help increase opportunities for employment.

13. **Recruitment and expansion of the Tenancy Sustainment team** – During the last 18 months we have successfully recruited a tenancy sustainment team which includes a team leader and 7 TSO who work with all clients in temporary accommodation to help them move on as quickly as possible as well as maximising clients income and helping to reduce debt. With decreasing numbers in TA we are now focusing the teams work on prevention work, so allocating a TSO to those families who are threatened with homelessness. Since Jan 24, 117 households have moved from TA, 74 new households a month being referred, they are currently supporting 393 households and have assisted to claim in excess of £408 in additional benefits / grants.
14. **Recruitment of two dedicated TSOs (Tenancy Sustainment Officers) for Asylum seekers and Ukraine nationals** - In the last two weeks we have recruited an Asylum Seeker TSO post working in the Migration and Resettlement team to assist with supporting the increasing number of Asylum applicants who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, and we already have a well established Ukraine TSO who has been in post for over a year assisting Ukraine households to move on from host families

### **Priority 3 To ensure services are designed to prevent homelessness or support those who are homeless**

15. Of the 11 actions in this section we have completed ten and the final one has been started but not yet completed. The outstanding action is to develop an on line directory which we are in the process of developing to better understand pathways and support that are available to clients who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. Once completed this will be available on line for easy access for clients to be able to self refer.

### **New Actions**

16. **DHLUC Homelessness inspection.**  
In May 2023 our homelessness and housing advice services was inspected by DHLUC HAST advisors who focused on 10 areas for the inspection, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, Funding, Leadership and Corporate Support, Use of Homelessness Discretionary Housing Payments & HPG, Embedding HRA and Preventing Homelessness, Staffing and service structure, HCLIC and Performance Management, Access to accommodation, Management of Temporary Accommodation, Preventing Single Homelessness and Ending Rough Sleeping and Partnerships.

This was an extremely positive audit that clearly identified the great work being carried out within housing but also identified a few areas of improvement which we are working on and regularly updated DHLUC on progress.

17. **Piloting a new Council Phone System across Housing**  
On 1<sup>st</sup> September 2024 our housing team launched a new automated phone system to better manage the high volume of calls being received by the team, ensuring that those high risk and homeless tonight are prioritised. We are in the early stages of pulling reports from the new system on call volumes, peak times and staff call management.

18. **New 7 Bed Homeless Hostel for single clients** - We have negotiated a lease with Aster to utilise a 7 bed homeless hostel for single homeless – Shepherds Close, Devizes (Formally a refuge). Using the Councils capital funding we are in the process of purchasing this property for long term use as TA
19. **Pioneering Temporary Accommodation** - We are working with our Asset and HRA colleagues to deliver a pioneering scheme in Salisbury utilising council land (an unused car park) to deliver our first modular build of 7 low carbon affordable homes built to extremely high standards of construction and energy efficiency. (6 x 1 beds and 1 x 2 bed wheelchair accessible)  
See unused garage site and artist drawing below of new TA



20. There is also additional social value with these homes as they are being built by Agile Homes who have a commercial arrangement with the HM Prison and Probation Service allowing Agile Homes to manufacture panels within the prison workshops across the UK
21. **Conversion and lease of Accommodation** We have converted a couple of 3 bed Temporary Accommodation homes into HMOs for single applicants due to the increasing demand for single units, as well as a 2 bed house as shared

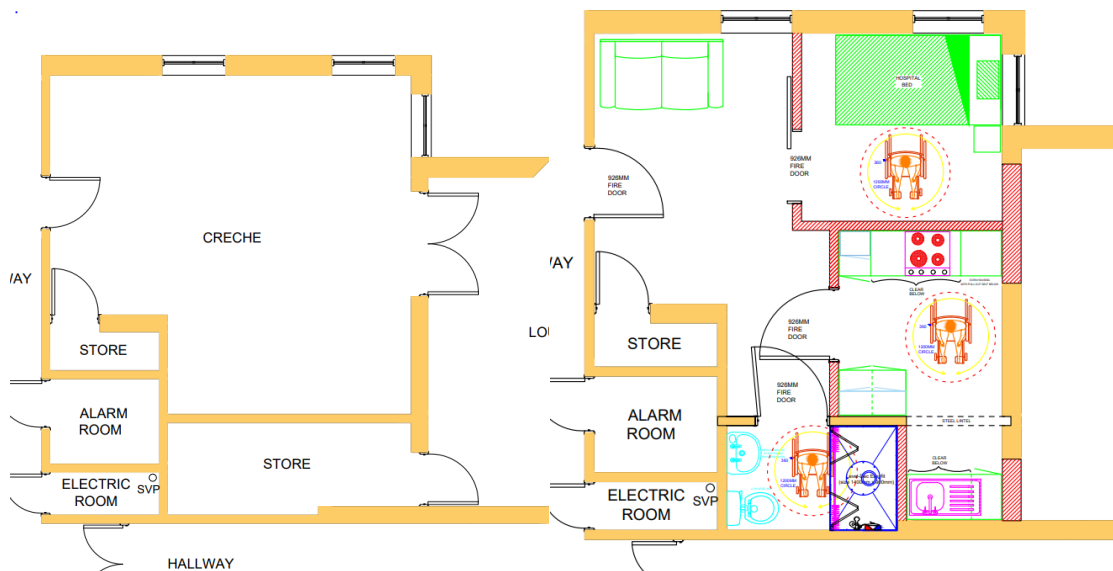


accommodation for 16 -17 year olds and we have commenced negotiations with Stone Circle to lease 2 more 2 bed properties specifically for 16-17 year olds

22. **Refurbishment of 2 flats** We have fully refurbished 2 additional flats at Kingsbury Square ensure they are accessible for disabled applicants. As well as an additional accessible flat using unused space at the hostel

Current plan

Revised Plan



**Priority 4 To ensure those who are threatened with homelessness or who are homeless can secure and keep a suitable home**

23. All eight actions in this section have been completed
24. Our enabling team continue to maximise all opportunities to deliver more affordable homes, as well as making best use of nominations to homes secured through Stone Circle and additional homes for Ukraine households secured through Ukraine grant funding. 30 LAHF properties for Ukraine and Afghan families have now been completed and we have commenced with purchasing a further 25 Ukraine homes during 24/25.

**New Actions**

25. **Dedicated accommodation for care experienced young people:** We have commissioned a dedicated 2 bed temporary accommodation property for the sole use of care experienced young people who make the decision to be supported through housing rather than through children services under S20.
26. **Recommissioning of our housing related support schemes:** Last year we carried out a full re of all our support housing schemes which included single homeless, young people and parent and baby.

**Priority 5 To maintain effective strategic direction and partnership working**

27. Of the eight actions in this section we have now completed all of them. The final action was to establish regional comparisons with other LAs to assist with benchmarking. This was completed with DHLUC as was recognised nationally as good practice.
28. We have established and agreed suitable performance indicators that enable us to manage our service better and identify early trends. We are using comparisons with neighbouring local authorities and help to develop some good practice which was one of the outstanding actions in this section

### **New Actions**

29. **Prison Leavers SD40** - On Friday 12 July, The Lord Chancellor announced her intention to lay a Statutory Instrument before Parliament at the earliest opportunity after the King's Speech, to reduce the time those sentenced to eligible standard determinate sentences (SDS) serve in prison from 50% to 40% of that sentence, to be known as SDS40.

The changes took effect from two commencement dates.

- From 10 September SDS40 will apply to those serving sentences under 5 years (Tranche 1).
- From 22 October SDS40 will apply to those serving 5 years and more (Tranche 2).

To assist with this potential increase in demand and pressures across a number of services areas housing were part of a multi agency approach where meetings were set up at strategic and tactical levels to manage these release to ensure risks were effectively managed and appropriate resources was provided. Housing was a key partner at these meetings to help facilitate and agree the actions needed to respond to this legislative change. For Wiltshire it can be confirmed we had low numbers but the process was well managed. Discussions are now taking place in regards to how the process will be managed on going.

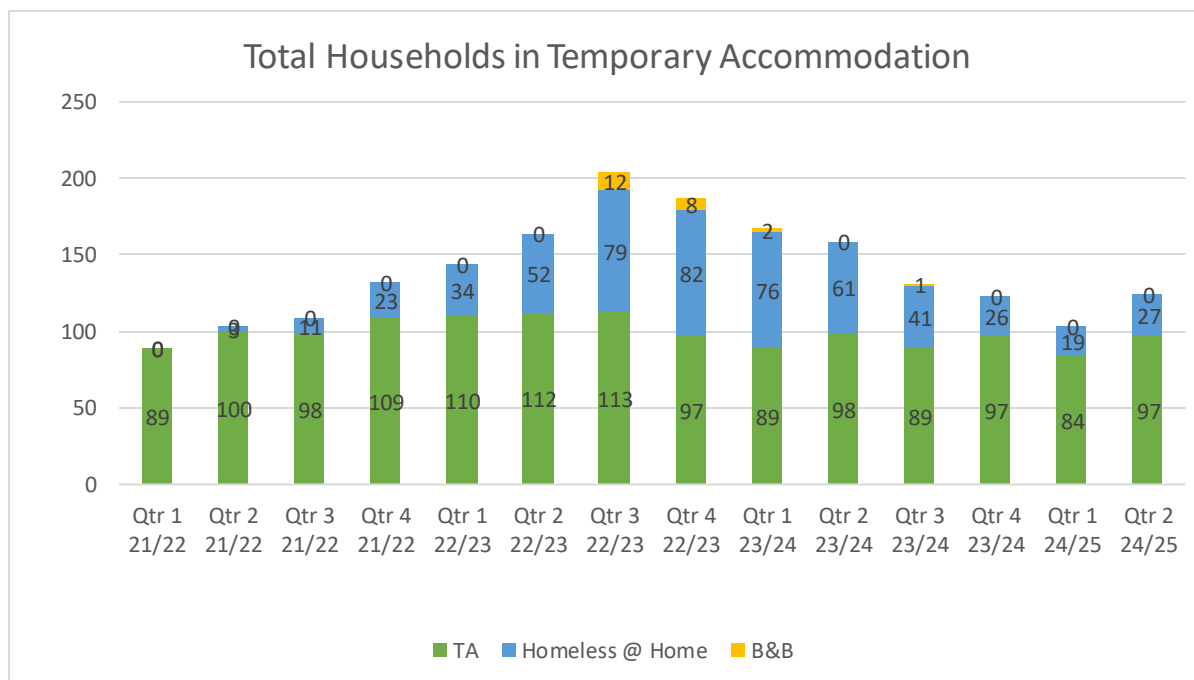
30. **Inclusion on SASA** – The Head of Housing, Migration and Resettlement now attends SASA (Safeguarding Adults Systems Assurance Group) to ensure oversight for safeguarding of rough sleepers and ensuring we have mechanisms in place to hold partners to account, as well as Emma Legg being the named designated member on the Safeguarding Adults Board as lead for complex rough sleepers.
31. **Management of Temporary Accommodation (TA)** – Due to increasing homeless demands we had no alternative but to start using B&B in November 22 after a period of 10 years not having to use B&B. Initially it was 3 single clients in B&B but this increased to 16 single clients by February 23. The average cost each week to place a single person in B&B is £490, so to continue with 16 placements it would have cost £7,800 a week and £33,973 a month
32. If we continued to increase at this level we would have seen 232 clients in temporary accommodation within the proceeding 12 months. With only 100 units of temporary accommodation this would have meant 132 either homeless at home or in B&B. If 50% were in B&B, half singles and half families it would



cost £172,900 a month to accommodate, so this was identified as a risk and a priority target area.

33. Nationally nearly all Local Authorities are seeing an increase in the numbers of households applying as homeless as well as a significant increase in the number of households in TA. However during the last 18 months we have prioritised our work with households in TA, which has led to a reduction in the number of households in TA, as well as not needing to use B&B accommodation which is a huge expense for many other LAs.
34. I am pleased to report that with the mitigation actions put in place have seen a reduction in the numbers in TA as well as the discontinuation on the use of B&B. The chart below shows a clear steady decrease in numbers in TA since its peak in Nov 22 with a slight incline in Qtr 2 24/25.

**Chart 1**



35. The figures for end of September 24 showed a slight increase in TA, with a total of 124 households in TA of which 27 were considered homeless at home. We are seeing a large number of families who are under offer but housing providers are struggling with voids and properties are taking longer to become ready to let

causing a backlog in TA Move On's. We continue to monitor and manage TA due to the significant impact it can have on our budgets

**Environmental impact of the proposal**

36. There are no environmental impacts to this update report

**Equality and diversity impact of the proposal**

37. This report is an update report and therefore has no Equality or diversity impacts

**Risk assessment**

38. There are no identified risks to this update report

**Financial implications**

39. There are no financial implications to this report

**Legal implications**

40. There are no legal implications to this update report

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**Appendix 1 Homeless Prevention Action Plan**