

Tamworth Borough Council

Strategic Housing Service

Homelessness Prevention Strategy

2016 – 2020

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Forward from the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Waste Management

The prevention of Homelessness in Tamworth continues to be a key priority for the Council and its partners.

Households who are experiencing homelessness or who are threatened with homelessness are trapped in cycles of deprivation that impact on their health, emotional wellbeing and life chances. The effects on children within households experiencing or threatened with homelessness can be life long.

It is of paramount importance that we continually improve and identify new ways of delivering excellent services to those who live in Tamworth. The commitment to the prevention of homelessness has been set out by Tamworth Borough Council working toward the achievement of Gold Standard. To deliver against this strategy and achieve this we will be looking more and more to work collaboratively with our key partners.

Our Homelessness Prevention Strategy for 2016 - 2020 sets out how the Council alongside its partners intends to meet the challenge of preventing homelessness over the next four years, ensuring support is available to help people avoid being without a home. With demand upon our services likely to increase over the next few years the form this support takes will vary with an emphasis on identifying people at risk as early as possible. To succeed in this challenge the Council needs to widen and strengthen our existing partnerships and by helping everybody involved to recognise and then act upon the early signs that somebody might be at risk of homelessness. Tamworth Borough Council remains confident that our partnerships can respond to this challenge and make a difference to the people of Tamworth.

We hope that you find this document informative and would welcome any comments about any improvements we could make

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Councillor Michelle Thurgood

1. Our Vision

Tamworth Borough Council intends to provide the highest standards in Homelessness Services and this Strategy sets out how the Council will achieve this over the next four years.

By 2020 the Council aims to:

- Maximise homelessness preventions
- Keep levels of homelessness low
- Only use Bed and Breakfast in an emergency and then for no longer than six weeks
- Provide sufficient, appropriate, temporary accommodation
- End rough sleeping
- Ensure a range of permanent housing options are available
- Support partnerships which develop pathways to enable people to attain and then maintain settled homes
- Introduce a private sector offer to meet homelessness duties
- Review best practice and seek continuous improvement
- Embed a corporate and partnership approach to tackling homelessness
- Ensure homelessness services meet the 10 Gold Standard Challenges set out by the Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG)

This document sets out the Council's 5 key priorities for action for the period. Each priority has a number of objectives and strategic actions, which are what the Council hopes to deliver to achieve the aims above and ensure it meets its priorities. The review of Homelessness which incorporates an introduction, the context and evidence to support this strategy and the development of the Council's priorities for action can be found here. [\(Insert link\)](#) This document contains a comprehensive review of the Council's previous Homelessness Strategy, looks at whether the priorities contained within this were still right and identifies revised priorities based on the evidence base.

The associated Action Plan which the Council will review annually can be found here and this sets out the actions the Council will take to deliver against each of the priorities and will be reflected in the Strategic Housing Service Business Plan [\(Insert link\)](#) and finally the resources committed to this strategy are set out in a spend plan here [\(Insert link\)](#)

2. Consultation

Consultation has been central to the development of this strategy and was carried out with staff, partners and customers to help develop the strategic priorities.

2.1. Feedback from staff

During the Homelessness Review process and strategy development feedback from Strategic Housing Services staff was captured during a workshop. Staff were asked to think about what they did in their “day job” and how this fits under each priority to ensure that staff understood their role in the delivery of the Strategy. Staff came up with the following ideas as to how they felt their roles may contribute to the delivery of the Priorities and how they might therefore contribute to achieving the aims of this strategy. Answers generated included:

Current work that would contribute to the priorities included

- Delivery of prevention tools as they currently exist
- Landlord Forum
- Licensing of Houses of Multiple Occupation
- Allocations Policy
- Tamworth Homelessness Education Programme
- Service for those with Complex Needs
- Delivery of Affordable Housing
- Returning empty homes back into use
- Management of the Private Sector Leasing Scheme

Staff felt that the gaps were

- Being able to discharge duty into the Private Rented Sector
- Widening relationships with local private landlords and letting agents
- More good quality Temporary Accommodation
- Clearer easy to use policies
- Uncertainty around future funding of the service
- Loss of funding streams such as Supporting People and the impact on vulnerable people and statutory services
- More engagement with health to address the needs of vulnerable people
- Improved communications and monitoring of the service to inform service delivery
- Lack of engagement of service users

2.2. Consultation with key partners and the public

The Strategy was published for consultation on the Councils Website and feedback was invited. The consultation told us that we needed to utilise other tools provided by partners to ensure that we were fully meeting the needs of those who may be threatened with homelessness or for those who are homeless and this feedback has been reflected in the accompanying review document.

Feedback suggested that the priorities were the right ones and that the approach set out in the Strategy was a good one.

Finally feedback suggested that the document itself was clear, concise and easy to read.

No feedback was received from any service users who had accessed Tamworth Borough Councils Housing Solutions Service.

3. Priorities, objectives and strategic actions

Priority 1

Improving and Enhancing Homelessness Prevention Activities

Our objectives
1.1 Develop a Gold Standard Housing Solutions Service available to all Tamworth Residents at risk of Homelessness
1.2 To further develop and improve the prevention tools to assist households in different situations and to meet local need

Objective 1.1 Develop a Gold Standard Housing Solutions Service available to all Tamworth Residents at risk of Homelessness

The Council is working towards achieving Gold standard which is a toolkit of self assessment and a framework for change which Tamworth Borough Council has adopted as a means to achieve continuous improvements within its homelessness services. To achieve this, the Council must have excellent services and partnerships in place and demonstrate that we have met the following 10 challenges

Ten Local Challenges to achieve Gold Standard	
Local Challenge 1:	To adopt a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness which has buy in across all local authority services
Local Challenge 2:	To actively work in partnership with voluntary sector and other local partners to address support education employment and training needs
Local Challenge 3:	To offer a housing options prevention service to all clients including written advice
Local Challenge 4:	To adopt no second night out or an effective local alternative
Local Challenge 5:	To have housing pathways agreed or in development with each key partner and client group that include appropriate accommodation and support
Local Challenge 6:	To develop a suitable private rented sector offer for all client groups including advice and support to both client and landlord
Local Challenge 7:	To actively engage in preventing mortgage repossessions including through the Mortgage Repossession Scheme
Local Challenge 8:	To have a homelessness strategy which sets out a proactive approach to preventing homelessness and is reviewed annually to be responsive to emerging needs

Local Challenge 9:	To not place any young person aged 16 or 17 in Bed and Breakfast accommodation
Local Challenge 10:	To not place any families in Bed and Breakfast Accommodation unless in an emergency and for no longer than 6 weeks

Objective 1.1 – Strategic Actions
To achieve this objective the Council will
Develop the Gold Standard action plan to improve homelessness services and participate in the Diagnostic Peer Review

1.2 To further develop and improve the prevention tools to assist households in different situations and to meet local need

Following a comprehensive review of Tamworth Borough Councils Strategic Housing Service, to continually improve its services to customers and maximise opportunities for the prevention of homelessness, Tamworth Borough Council is committed to fully review all of its current Homelessness Prevention Tools, ensure that there are clear criteria for access to these and that they fully meet the needs of customers.

Current Prevention Tools include

- General Advice and Assistance to those who are threatened with homelessness where advice leads to alternative accommodation being secured or the customer being able to remain in their current home
- Tamworth Homelessness Education Programme (THEP) – Tamworth operates a Homelessness Education Program which has been nationally recognised by Shelter and works with schools to educate children and young people about homelessness and how to prevent it and where it does ensuring that it is done in a planned and managed way
- Bond Scheme - Tamworth Borough Council currently operates a cashless bond scheme
- Mediation – between young people and families where there has been an exclusion or landlords and tenants where there may be issues which can be resolved
- Solutions Fund – This offers small sums of money which could prevent homelessness
- Homelessness Prevention Fund – This offers larger sums of money where a payment would prevent homelessness
- Money Advice Service which offers a Court Desk and Debt Advice service

Each of these will be reviewed and where required changes made to ensure that maximum use can be made of these to prevent homelessness in the Borough.

Objective 1.2 – Strategic Actions

To achieve this objective the Council will

Review and improve current homelessness prevention tools and develop clear criteria for access to these

Deliver staff training on prevention tools (to both internal and external colleagues who may be able to signpost)

Priority 2

Improving joint working to ensure effective partnerships are in place

Our objectives

1.1. To ensure that there is a corporate commitment to the implementation and delivery of this Homelessness Prevention Strategy

1.2 To improve strategic commitment to tackle homeless issues by implementing a partner engagement structure

1.3. To ensure that there are effective monitoring arrangements in place and the Council is held accountable for the delivery of this Strategy and to ensure that there is challenge where priorities are not being delivered against

1.1. To ensure that there is a corporate commitment to the implementation and delivery of this Homelessness Prevention Strategy

Issues and actions highlighted in this Strategy and supporting evidence base will be incorporated into the Council's Enhanced Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (eJSNA) and support the delivery of the strategic approach to Housing, Health and Wellbeing via the Tamworth Strategic Partnership (TSP) and the Health and Well Being Board. This document will form part of a series of Strategies and plans that will provide the framework for action for Housing over the coming years.

Objective 1 – Strategic Actions

To achieve this the Council will

Agree refreshed priorities and delivery plan for Housing and Health via the eJSNA and Healthier Housing Strategy and ensure these complement the priorities contained within this strategy and Action Plan

Ensure Housing and Health (including homelessness prevention) activity is systematically reported to the TSP.

Identify an elected member as a Homelessness Champion

1.2 To improve strategic commitment to tackle homeless issues by implementing a partner engagement structure

Homelessness issues are complex and Tamworth Borough Council cannot address these in isolation. Delivering against the Priorities and achieving the aims of this strategy requires a joined up coordinated approach from effective partnership working. The Council works with a range of partners in meeting the statutory homeless duty. As well as its own stock, including supported accommodation and older peoples housing, Registered Providers (RPs) own and manage additional social housing stock in the Borough and private landlords own and manage properties that could be let to people in housing need. There is also a strong voluntary sector which offers services and support to those who are threatened with homelessness or who are homeless.

Working in partnership with key organisations that provide services for homeless households is a key priority for the Council and the Council expects these key partners, along with others such as the Tamworth Strategic Partnership and Health and Wellbeing Board to actively engage with the delivery of this strategy and ensure that the actions contained within the action plan are implemented and that the Council is delivering against its priorities and achieving the aims of this strategy.

Objective 1.2 – Strategic Actions
To achieve this the Council will
Undertake a comprehensive review of housing partners and their contribution to the delivery of the Council's priorities for housing and health.
Set up a Strategic Housing Panel
Review the membership of the Strategic Housing Panel annually to ensure effective governance

1.3. To ensure that there are effective monitoring arrangements in place and the Council is held accountable for the delivery of this Strategy and to ensure that there is challenge where priorities are not being delivered against

In a time where resources are more scarce and there is a need to be innovative and ensure value for money in the delivery of services, to deliver against the key priorities contained within this strategy, Tamworth Borough Council is committed to working with key partners and other agencies. Throughout the life of this strategy the Council will continue to work in partnership and explore options to strengthen partnerships further. Through this engagement with partners and setting up a Strategic Housing Panel, where this strategy is not delivering then the Council expects there to be opportunities for challenge.

Objective 1.3 – Strategic Actions
Commit the Strategic Housing Group to regular action plan monitoring, the dissemination of best practice and undertake annual strategic reviews
Set up a service user group and encourage participation in the development and delivery of services

Priority 3

Increasing the supply of affordable housing and provide more settled homes

Our objectives

- 1.1 Not to use bed and breakfast accommodation for families with children except in an emergency and then for a maximum of 6 weeks
- 1.2 Ensure 16 and 17 year olds are not placed in Bed and Breakfast accommodation
- 1.3 Improve access to the Private Rented Sector
- 1.4 Increase the supply of affordable housing through partnerships as well as Council approach

1.1 Not to use Bed and Breakfast accommodation for families with children except in an emergency and then for a maximum of six weeks

When the Council has reason to believe a person is homeless and in priority need and once a full duty to house a household has been accepted then the Council must provide temporary accommodation. Tamworth Borough Council uses the following types of accommodation

- Bed and Breakfast accommodation: Non-self contained accommodation provided on a nightly basis at pre-agreed charges used as and when required. The Council pays charges for the occupant only for the agreed nights of occupation and collects the charges from the occupier. Households with children should only be placed in this type of accommodation in emergency situations and then for no more than six weeks.
- Private Sector Leasing Scheme: The Council leases properties from private landlords, and manages them for the purpose of temporarily housing homeless households

The Council has recently begun a full review of its use of Temporary Accommodation with the aims of procuring good quality decent temporary accommodation, expanding its PSL scheme, looking at how the Council can minimise the use of Bed and Breakfasts, the Councils internal procedures and how the best service can be delivered to the customer who may have to access the accommodation.

Objective 1.1 – Strategic Actions

To achieve this the Council will

Review and improve the provision and range of temporary accommodation options and ensure alternative options to Bed and Breakfast

Develop a policy for the procurement of TA and when out of Borough placements will be used

1.2 Ensure 16 and 17 year olds are not placed in Bed and Breakfast accommodation

It is in the best interests of most young people aged 16 or 17 to live in the family home, or, where this is not safe or appropriate, with responsible adults in their wider family and friends network. Tamworth Borough Council recognises this and aims to work pro-actively with young people and their families to identify and resolve the issues which have led to the homelessness crisis. All other options will also be explored, such as supported accommodation.

However where the issues are not able to be resolved with mediation where an approach is made to Housing Solutions Tamworth Borough Council will complete a joint assessment with Social Services, however the Council would treat this as an application for assistance under the homelessness legislation and will investigate in line with procedures to determine if they have a duty to house the young person, If there is reason to believe the young person may be eligible for assistance, may be homeless and is 16 or 17 years of age, the authority will have an immediate duty to secure interim accommodation and where this is the case Tamworth Borough Council aims not to place any 16/17 year olds in Bed and Breakfast Accommodation as this is deemed to be unsuitable.

Objective 1 – Strategic Actions
To achieve this the Council will
Develop the Councils Mediation Service to ensure early intervention and prevention and ensure that in all cases possible that a young person remains at home
Work with partners to ensure that appropriate accommodation is available for 16 and 17 year olds

1.3 Improve access to the Private Rented Sector (PRS)

The Localism Act 2011 has enabled authorities to discharge their duties towards households accepted as unintentionally homeless and in priority need, by offering a private rented tenancy (with a minimum term of 12 months) irrespective of objections that the household may have to being housed in the private rented sector.

This is a relatively new power and Government expects Councils to develop policies to allow them to exercise this duty and offers must also consider the individual needs of each household. Offers must also be suitable and the property must be decent but in making the offer factors such as established links to Doctors, Education, Social Workers, key services and support should be considered

Objective 1 – Strategic Actions
To achieve this the Council will
Review the Council's approach to Private Sector Housing
Create a policy and procedure to use the power to end the main housing duty with an offer of private rented accommodation

1.4 Increase the supply of affordable housing through partnerships as well as council approach

The Council is working with key partners to deliver affordable housing via the regeneration of the Tinkers Green and Kerria estates, redevelopment of garage sites, bringing empty homes back into use and through its acquisitions programme.

Objective 1 – Strategic Actions

To achieve this the Council will

Access resource availability to deliver affordable housing

Review the Council's approach to Empty homes as part of its wider review of the Council's Private Sector Offer

Priority 4

Improving access to accommodation and services particularly for vulnerable people and those at risk of homelessness

Our objectives

1.1 Develop co-ordinated pathways to accommodation with key partners

1.2 Commissioning of services that provide effective support to vulnerable people and those with complex needs

1.3 Ensure that nobody sleeps rough in the Borough by 2020

1.1 Develop co-ordinated pathways to accommodation with key partners

Without suitable accommodation and the stability that this provides those who are most vulnerable are unlikely to achieve positive outcomes in other areas of their lives. Therefore housing is critical to the prevention of reoffending, worsening mental and physical health, healthy relationships and education, training and employment. Often those who are the most vulnerable find it the hardest to secure and sustain good quality decent accommodation.

The development of positive pathways to accommodation is about more than just the housing. They are about the support to enable the customer to become active, aspirational individuals who can take advantage of opportunities to further their economic independence and health and wellbeing.

Objective 1.1 – Strategic Actions

To achieve this the Council will

Review the Allocations Policy on a regular basis in line with local and national developments

To develop effective protocols with key partners which are monitored and reviewed annually

1.2 Commissioning of services that provide effective support to vulnerable people and those with complex needs

Following on from the Hospital to Home pilot Tamworth Borough Council recognised a need to commission services for those with complex needs to work with all partners, not just in a hospital setting. The Crisis Support and Intervention project has been commissioned using homelessness prevention funds, and in addition to this the Safe and Well Project has been commissioned one of a number of projects funded as part of the locality commissioning process.

This is in line with the Governments report titled Addressing Complex Needs which sets out a clear argument for allowing local authorities to commission services based on need.

Given the cuts to Supporting People Funding and more people accessing the service with a range of needs the Council is committed to commissioning evidence based services to continue to provide support to those who are vulnerable or who have complex needs.

Objective 1.2 – Strategic Actions
To achieve this the Council will
Work with Strategic Commissioning partners to ensure that homeless households receive the support they need, particularly those with multiple and complex needs

1.3 Ensure that nobody sleeps rough in the Borough

Rough Sleeping is the most visible form of Homelessness and where people are most vulnerable. Tamworth Borough Council is committed to no one sleeping rough on the Streets of the Borough and if anyone new arrives on the streets of Tamworth that they do not spend a second night there.

To achieve this Tamworth Borough Council will develop a No Second Night out model based on guidance and best practice published directly by Homeless Link

Objective 1.3 – Strategic Actions
To achieve this the Council will
Develop a No Second Night Out or effective alternative suitable for Tamworth Borough Council

Priority 5

Improve health outcomes and reduced health inequalities for those who are homeless

Our objectives

1.1. Improve access to healthcare for those who are homeless and living in temporary accommodation or Rough Sleeping

1.1 Improve access to healthcare for those who are homeless and living in temporary accommodation or Rough Sleeping

Households who are homeless tend to experience greater health inequalities than the rest of the population. Living in temporary accommodation can negatively impact a person's health and wellbeing, particularly mental health. People in temporary accommodation often suffer with stress related health conditions such as depression and children are more likely to suffer illness and experience difficulties at school whilst staying in unsettled accommodation. People in temporary accommodation can also often lose contact with primary healthcare services.

Rough sleepers also tend to suffer substantial health problems. They have high rates of diseases such as tuberculosis and hepatitis, pneumonia, hypothermia, and have poorer mental health and greater prevalence of smoking, alcohol and substance misuse. The average life expectancy of a rough sleeper is just 47, thirty years below the general population. The lack of a permanent address makes registering with a GP and accessing primary health care services difficult. Where rough sleepers are treated in hospital, they are often discharged without a home to return to, making ongoing provision of healthcare difficult.

Objective 1.1 – Strategic Actions

To achieve this objective the Council will:

Embed homelessness prevention priorities into the Council's eJSNA, strategic approach to housing and health and wider Corporate priorities

Work with Public Health and the Clinical Commissioning Group to explore the links between poor health and homelessness and identify ways of tackling these

Advise the Health and Wellbeing Board on the links between homelessness, healthcare and housing

Consider undertaking a health needs audit of those who are homeless working with key partners using the Homeless Link Health needs audit toolkit

Identify a GP champion for those who are homeless

4. Summary

This Strategy sets out Tamworth Borough Councils vision for the prevention of Homelessness in Tamworth for the period 2016/2020 and clearly sets out how the Councils priorities, which were revised following completion of the review document and evidence base, will be achieved. It is supported by a two year priority for spend plan and an Action Plan that will be revised annually.

5. Feedback

The Council welcomes feedback and comments on our Strategic Housing Service at any time. If you would like to make any comments about the Strategic Housing Service, this document or to request any further information or related documents, or discuss the service please contact us via the details below:

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