

Tuesday, 24 January 2023

**Report of the Portfolio Holder for Homelessness Prevention and Social Housing****Update: Homelessness data and Hub principles.****Exempt Information**

None

**1. Purpose**

As requested by the Chair of Health & Well-being Scrutiny Committee on [29/11/22](#) – the purpose of the report is to provide additional information on homelessness; specifically,

- A breakdown of the homeless data/prevention figures and reasons for homelessness
- An outline of the key principles proposed for the development of **a homelessness hub** on the Cabinet forward plan for 23/2/23.

**2. Recommendations**

It is recommended that Health & wellbeing Scrutiny Committee review the information as requested on homelessness data; including the development of the homelessness hub. Committee recommendations will be used to support the development of the Cabinet proposals in February 2023.

**3. Executive Summary**

3.1 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA) came into force on 3 April 2018 giving local authorities new homelessness duties. Homelessness is complex and is often considered to be those seen rough sleeping. However, most of the data collected relates to the statutorily homelessness “ i.e. those households which meet specific criteria of priority need set out in legislation, and to whom a homelessness duty has been accepted by the local authority”....(DLUHC 2022)<sup>1</sup>.

3.2 Such households that approach the local authority are rarely roofless in the literal sense but are more likely to be threatened with losing their home or cannot continue to stay where they are currently are. Local authorities now have a duty to assess whether a household needs help to prevent or relieve homelessness for all eligible applicants. Those that are threatened with homelessness within 56 days are entitled to a full assessment and whether the local authority can retain their current accommodation, provide accommodation, or find an alternative. The full housing “main duty” still applies to those who are “not intentionally homeless” and In priority need”, where a main duty is owed, the authority must ensure that suitable accommodation is available for the applicant and his or her household. However, the focus is more on prevention and relief work and assisting households at an earlier stage. To note, “where a person is potentially homeless councils can legitimately suggest solutions other than making a formal homelessness application..” As long as these are appropriate and acceptable to

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<sup>1</sup> [Homelessness data: notes and definitions - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

the individual and the council does not avoid its statutory obligations. (Local Government Ombudsmen 2011)

3.3 Every quarter, Housing Solutions are required by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to submit data into the government portal known as H-CLIC (Homelessness Case Level Collection). The data also includes case-level data on applicants support needs, ages, genders of their households along with employment and benefit status.

Figures are also collected on the number of households in temporary accommodation on the last day of each quarter as arranged by the local authority, whether that be emergency bed and breakfast accommodation or self-contained units.

As presented at Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny in November 2022<sup>2</sup>, the presentation detailed the number of approaches to Housing Solutions from 2018 to present. (NB: Data is taken from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 upon commencement of HRA to 31<sup>st</sup> October so 2018 and 2022 are part years)

3.4 Within Tamworth, the top five reasons applicants approach as homeless or threatened with homelessness are: 1) Asked to leave by friends or family, 2) End of private rented tenancy (PRS), 3) Relationship breakdown, 4) Domestic Abuse and 5) End of social housing tenancy.

3.5 Nationally<sup>3</sup> the top five reasons remain 1) End of private rented tenancy (PRS) 2) Family or friends no longer willing to accommodate 3) Domestic Abuse, 4) Non-violent relationship breakdown 4) Evicted from supported housing. These are consistent and comparable to Tamworth. Applicants that applied advised during assessment that they had an additional support need, and some had more than one support need. The top five support needs are history of mental health problems, physical ill-health and disability, at risk of/has experienced domestic abuse, young person aged 18-25 requires support and lastly offending history.

#### 4.0 Homelessness Prevention and Relief

4.1. Under the HRA local authorities must have a strategy for preventing homelessness. Tamworth's Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy was launched in 2020 to cover the next five years. The strategy must apply to anyone who approaches and not just those who may be classed as "in priority need".

4.2. Under legislation authorities are encouraged to assist those with threatened with homelessness and to relieve homelessness even if there is no duty to secure the applicant accommodation.

"Homelessness prevention' means providing people with the ways and means to address their housing and other needs to avoid homelessness.

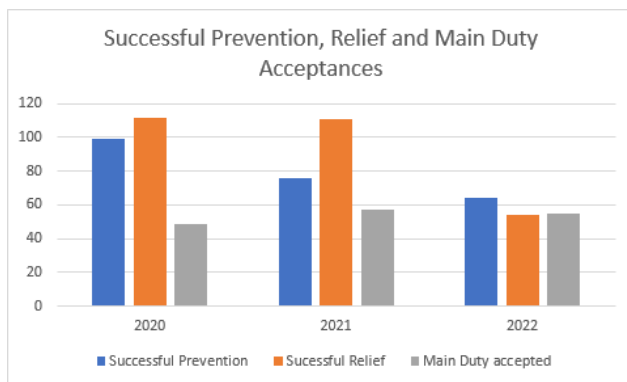
'Homelessness relief' is where an authority has been unable to prevent homelessness but helps someone to secure accommodation, even though the authority is under no statutory obligation to do so. (DLUHC 2022<sup>4</sup>).

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<sup>2</sup> Appendix 1

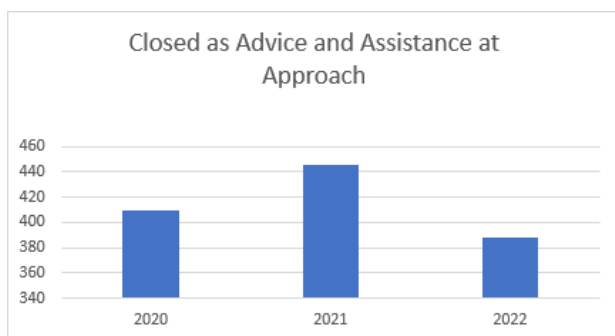
<sup>3</sup> <sup>3</sup> [Live tables on homelessness - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/live-tables-on-homelessness)

<sup>4</sup> [Homelessness data: notes and definitions - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/homelessness-data-notes-and-definitions)



	Total of Successful Prevention, Reliefs and Main Duty Acceptances
2020	260
2021	244
2022	173 as of 31 <sup>st</sup> Dec

On top of these the service also has approaches that are closed as advice and assistance which can be found below.



	Closed As Advice and Assistance
2020	409
2021	445
2022	388

NB: Based on financial years so 2022 is only 3 quarters.

NB: None of the graphs or figures Should be used to Equate a % from overall approaches due to the complexity of the homelessness journey- as Clients and decisions will cross quarters, the approach would be reported in quarter they first approach, whereas decision are the numbers decided in that quarter which may include approaches from previous quarter and the outcome of recent approaches not yet known as still open

Approaches into the service will always remain higher than the outcomes of those assisted under legislative duties as a high number of cases are closed as advice and assistance before officer's trigger formal duties due to them using early intervention tools, along with some applicants who may not be "Homeless" or "Eligible" as defined by the legislation and quite often Housing solutions officers give full advice and assistance to clients who may not need duties to be triggered therefore not reaching the data provided.

It also shows there is a decrease in request for service which is consistent with national trends as approaches are not back to pre-pandemic levels yet.

4.3 Our performance remains positive and in line with national trends. Using data and analysis from our Homelessness and rough sleeping strategy<sup>5</sup> there are five key points:

- Tamworth continues to use lower numbers of temporary accommodation (especially bed and breakfast provision) compared to England as a whole – this reflects the emphasis in the strategy of early intervention, using stock owned properties for self-contained accommodation, supported housing options and other prevention strategies.
- Low numbers of repeat homelessness cases that shows the successful impact of our relief activities
- In July 2022 a member from the HAST team from DLUCH completed a visit to Tamworth to discuss a range of issues and the Council's approach to the Homeless Reduction Act. "They observed several strengths during the visit and a commitment to prevent and reduce

<sup>5</sup> [Housing policies | Tamworth Borough Council](#)

homelessness and improve service delivery was very evident at senior level, including political support for the homeless prevention service, which is backed up by a strong prevention toolkit and some impressive examples of partnership working”.

- Relatively few rough sleepers with little evidence in the data are repeat cases, demonstrating our collaborative work with partners (which was highlighted as a major feature of the strategy). The most recent rough sleeping count (November 2022) recorded two.
- Homelessness acceptance rates up to 2021/2022 are in line with national rates – this shows that we are managing the homelessness crisis adequately.

### 5.0 Homeless Hub 2023 – 2025

5.1. The concept of the homeless hub has been born out of achieving the Council’s homelessness and rough sleeping objectives as shown in the table below.

***The hub is simply to extend our current offer of outreach in the community and to further reinforce our current partnership arrangements such as our winter relief project which runs between 1<sup>st</sup> December until 31<sup>st</sup> March with one of our anchor charities.*** It will be an opportunity for co-location for our hybrid officers and partners in providing surgery type facilities, to maximise and focus on the Council’s prevention and relief percentage figures. It is viewed as an extension to the winter relief work that is already conducted as we seek to vary our front door service offer.

5.2 Key Housing and Homelessness strategic priorities<sup>6</sup> that support a homeless hub, which if approved by Cabinet in February, will lead to a commissioned partner led service.

Strategic priority	Method	Action	Support
<b><u>Priority One - Prevention and early intervention through working with partners and stakeholders</u></b>	Drop-in service	Advice and support for households and people at risk of homelessness and rough sleeping  Expand the current service at the Tamworth Advice Centre (TAC) to include mental health support / signposting and extend job and training advice and homelessness prevention support	Will be supported by the homeless hub
<b><u>Priority Two - Develop rapid pathways for rough sleepers</u></b>	Advice and support services	Help and assistance to rough sleepers and vulnerable households to access accommodation and support is fundamental.	Supported by a hub

<sup>6</sup> [Housing policies | Tamworth Borough Council](#)

		<p>We, therefore, have three specific actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with the third sector / voluntary sector (eg Heart of Tamworth and TCIC)</li> <li>• As part of the community safety partnership, make links with the street warden scheme and local policing teams.</li> <li>• Explore the concept of a 'homeless hub' based on our homelessness team and its services</li> </ul>	
<p><b><u>Priority three: Improve the supply of and access to affordable and supported housing</u></b></p>	<p>Supported housing / floating support/ housing first principles adopted</p>	<p>Our evidence base shows that homeless households have a diverse range of support needs as well as accommodation.</p> <p>We, therefore, will investigate with our partners the potential of putting together a hybrid package of support to help households better access move on accommodation</p>	<p>Supported by the hub and will link to tenancy ready schemes and winter relief projects already operational</p>
<p><b><u>Priority four: Offer a high quality and innovative service to homeless households and those threatened with homelessness</u></b></p>	<p>Customer access to services</p>	<p>The overall theme of this action is to support vulnerable users to access services so as to (i) prevent homelessness and (ii) relieve homelessness.</p> <p>The specific actions include:</p>	<p>Links to reset and recovery programme and part of broader customer services approach</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting vulnerable households on digital inclusion so as to directly access / use, for example, e-forms and customer portals.</li> <li>• Work with third sector organisations to support their vulnerable customers to access services online and in person</li> </ul>	
<b><u>Priority five:</u></b> <b><u>Improve health and well-being aspirations</u></b>	Addressing mental health issues	With mental health being a high support need that most clients approach with, we will enhance our joint working with partners (MPFT), MIND on addressing this issue	This could be widened through the hub

5.3 The overall aim of the priorities collectively is to tackle homelessness amongst households and individuals through direct services and/ or developing new ways of working with partners to generate housing and accommodation and access to service. The homeless hub will be a variation to the front door offer. Its key principles will be:-

- Early intervention and prevention of homelessness
- Access to advice services and sign posting, referrals to appropriate agencies.
- Support services that promote new ways to prevent homelessness and access accommodation.
- Provide weekly outreach/satellite surgeries.
- Family drop-in surgeries and advocacy support to all
- A service to show how working with partners in local government and voluntary and community organisations enables comprehensive provisions of services for those most in need.
- To ensure those accessing are already aware of the Council's prevention toolkits, such as housing solutions fund, rent in advance, deposit schemes, landlord reconciliation, home visits, the council's allocations policy (Band 2 for rough sleepers and band 1 for 6 months mediation for parental evictions).
- To increase the Council's prevention figures via commissioned activity which will coincide with Council's longer-term R&R plans for its permanent customer services arrangements.
- Duration will be for two years to start April 2023 until the end of the Strategy March 2025. (Funding has been identified for these two years and renewal will be based on delivery and continuing availability of resources).
- The Council will revise a service specification to be commissioned following recommendations and Cabinet sign off.

## 6.0 Resource Implications

- 6.1. There are no direct financial implications arising from the report. Details of the funding for the commissioned homeless hub service will be built into the Cabinet report in February 2023 with regard to the proposed hub. The budget allocation within the homeless prevention grant is estimated to be around £60kper annum.

## 7.0 Legal/Risk Implications Background

- 7.1. Homelessness decisions are strictly controlled through legislation and therefore subject to judicial review if service users believe the Council has not adhered to guidance and this could be escalated through County Court

## 8.0 Equalities Implications

- 8.1. All activities to give due consideration to the Councils Equality and Diversity Policy-Making Equality Real in Tamworth (MERIT)

The implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 means that the council now has additional duties to prevent homelessness and we must help to secure accommodation for all eligible households, regardless of whether they are in a 'priority need' category. This has increased the help given to single people and those without dependent children, especially single men, who were previously not in a 'priority need' category. They are still not necessarily in a priority need category, it is just that priority need is not a consideration when we are trying to prevent or relieve homelessness, except in determining eligibility for temporary accommodation.

However, it is noted that the immigration status of some households may restrict the assistance that they can be offered under the homelessness legislation.

## 9.0 Environment and Sustainability Implications (including climate change)

- 9.1. Housing Solutions is a statutory function with the Council and is bound by the legislation of Housing Act 1996 Part VI and Part VII

## 10.0 Background Information

### 10.1. ***National Headlines from the Annual Statistical Release for April 2021 – March 2022:***

278,110 households were assessed as owed a prevention or relief duty in 2021-22, up 2.8% from the previous year but 4.0% below the pre-COVID level in 2019-20.

133,460 households were owed a prevention duty, which is an 11.3% increase from 2020-21 but 10.6% below the pre-COVID 19 level in 2019-20. The increase from 2020-21 includes:

- a more than double increase (up 121.1%) in threatened homelessness due to the service of a Section 21 notice to 19,790 households, which largely reflects the removal of restrictions on private rented sector evictions from May 2021.
- a 23.6% increase in households with children owed a prevention duty to 56,340 households
- Local authorities made 62,060 main homelessness duty decisions in 2021-22, and accepted a main duty to 42120 households, a 6.4% increase on the previous year. This reflects an increase in the number of households with children owed prevention and relief duties in this period.

## **Report Author**

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## **List of Background Papers**

## **Appendices**