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# Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2018 - 2022

#Prevention and Intervention

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# Foreword

Since the publication of our last Homelessness Strategy, we have seen dramatic changes to the environment in which homelessness services are delivered.

Changes resulting from the economic downturn, and in particular welfare reform, are impacting detrimentally on many low- income groups and those susceptible to homelessness. Well documented funding cuts to Councils are coupled with falls in support and funding streams to other statutory agencies, and those in the voluntary and community sector.

As a result, this new strategy is being developed in a context of shrinking resources and increasing demand for services. There is also considerable uncertainty over the future.

These factors weigh heavily on the determination of what can realistically be achieved in the years ahead. Nevertheless, the challenge and our aspiration remains to prevent homelessness wherever possible in line with the new Homelessness Reduction Act.

The response to this challenge will be based on the same core principle as that which underpinned our previous strategies effective partnership working.

**Councillor Roger Lawrence**
*Leader of the Council*
City of Wolverhampton Council

**Councillor Peter Bilson**
*Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for City Assets and Housing*
City of Wolverhampton Council

# Introduction

The Homelessness Act 2002 places a statutory obligation on local authorities to undertake a review of homelessness in their area and develop and publish a strategy to prevent homelessness.

While the Homelessness Review paints a picture on homelessness locally, the Homelessness Strategy sets out how to address the problem. The strategy seeks to tackle all forms of homelessness, including those owed a statutory duty (typically families with dependent children, or vulnerable adults), but also those who are single, sleeping on the streets, or other transient arrangements (e.g. sleeping on a friend's sofa). This is Wolverhampton's fifth homelessness strategy and has been developed at a crucial period for the City. The current state of the economy has put increased pressure on housing and homelessness services, whilst changes to the welfare system have simultaneously decreased the security of tenure for many households.

Across the period covered by the last strategy (2015-18), there has been a reduction in public spending which has put pressure on statutory and voluntary organisations, and in some extreme cases led to the closure of important services.

Through joint working between the Local Authority and partners, Wolverhampton had reduced the numbers of homelessness applications to incredibly low numbers via well-developed processes designed to prevent homelessness. However, over the last 12 months the numbers of applications have increased, and there has been a reduction in the number of preventions.

The Homelessness Reduction Act of April 2018 has an emphasis on the prevention of homelessness, as well as effective partnership work with statutory, voluntary, and third sector agencies. This is to ensure households' needs are met, and that they are assisted as they engage with agencies to work through their personalised plans. The Act has a focus on helping households to access housing. We need to make sure we have effective pathways to encourage and work collaboratively with households to secure their own accommodation.

The role of this strategy will therefore be to offer housing options to prevent homelessness in a time of austerity, as well as assisting those who are homeless to access quality affordable accommodation in a timely fashion.

Reducing homelessness is a key priority for the City of Wolverhampton Council, and over the last 5 years numerous steps have been taken to prevent homelessness and assist those in urgent need.

*These include:*

- Development of a multi-agency team (MASH) who work with vulnerable adults and children.
- Increased numbers of units for single persons in supported accommodation.
- Introducing a hospital discharge service to assist vulnerable homeless clients pre- and post -admission.
- Continuation of the joint protocol to work with 16-17-year olds in need of advice and or housing. The protocol links housing providers with children and families' social services looking to offer an alternative to statutory homelessness.
- The continued delivery of housing related floating support to assist vulnerable households with sustaining their tenancies.
- Transfer of operational homeless services across to Wolverhampton Homes to improve on Citywide delivery.
- The implementation of a localised private landlord's accreditation scheme (Rent with Confidence).
- Alternative giving campaign to direct public funding towards services that work.
- Sanctuary scheme providing victims of domestic abuse with security measures, thus preventing homelessness.

# Development of the strategy

To develop an effective homelessness strategy, we must be aware of current local and national issues related to homelessness and housing need. Through several forums and assessment tools we have assessed the current situation in Wolverhampton.

To develop our previous homelessness strategies, we concentrated on the local effects caused by the lack of accommodation on households. However, it became very clear early on that we had to look at homelessness more widely, especially the effects it has on health, the economy, and criminal justice.

# Defining Homelessness

a) ***Statutory Homelessness***

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) defines households as statutorily homeless if they do not have accommodation they are entitled to occupy, which they cannot physically access, or if they have accommodation but it is not reasonable for them to continue to occupy this accommodation.

Priority need groups include households with dependent children, a pregnant woman, and people who are in some way vulnerable, such as due to their mental and/or physical health and wellbeing. In 2002, an Order under the 1996 Housing Act extended priority need to include those aged 16 or 17, aged 18-20 who were previously in care, vulnerable because of time spent in care, custody, or in HM Forces, or vulnerable because of fleeing their home due to violence or violent threats.

b) ***Non-Statutory Homelessness***

Typically, single people or childless couples who are not assessed as being in 'priority need' and are only entitled to advice and assistance if homeless. Some non-priority homeless cases are offered access to Local Authority housing support services.

c) ***Rough Sleepers***

MHCLG defines rough sleepers as people sleeping, about to bed down, or bedded down (lying down or sleeping) in the open air, or people in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (e.g. barns, car parks, cars). This does not include people in hostels or shelters, or people in campsites, squatters, or travellers.

d) ***Intentional Homelessness***

A person can be considered to have made themselves homeless if they have deliberately given up their home when it would have been reasonable to remain, or deliberately did or didn't do something which they knew would mean losing their home (such as not paying rent). They are also intentionally homeless if they have planned to stay somewhere they had no legal right to stay with the intention of claiming to be homeless, or if they have had legal or financial advice or assistance to help find somewhere to live and didn't act on it. If a person is intentionally homeless, the council has no duty to find them somewhere to live but is required to give advice and assistance.

# National Context

Homelessness affects and ruins the lives of adults and children across the country. It is far from solely being a housing issue. People who are homeless often suffer greater levels of ill health, unemployment, and drug and alcohol dependency, and in the case of children, lower levels of educational attainment due to prolonged, unavoidable absence.

*Examples of these large-scale inequalities nationally are*

- 1 in 5 homeless people suffer from mental health problems.
- The suicide rates of homeless people are 34 times greater than the general population.
- 80% of street homeless people are addicted to drugs or alcohol
- Homeless children in temporary accommodation miss 11 weeks of schooling on average.
- 440 individuals have been highlighted as rough sleepers and will therefore be sleeping on the streets at any given day.
- The life expectancy of someone who is street homeless is 42.
- People who are street homeless are 13 times more likely to be a victim of violent crime.
- 77% of households who are within homeless temporary accommodation (hostels, refuge etc.) are not in any form of paid employment.

The UK Government published strategies for preventing homelessness and ending rough sleeping in 2011 and 2012. Despite this, statistics collected by all English local housing authorities show that homelessness has worsened.

*Between 2009/10 to 2016/17, there was a:*

- 25% increase in the overall number of people assisted by local authorities
- 30% reduction in the number of people for whom homelessness was prevented
- 42% reduction in the number of people for whom homelessness was relieved
- 33% increase in the number of people owed the main housing (homelessness) duty of assistance (s.193(2), part 7, Housing Act 1996)
- 34% increase in the number of households living in local authority temporary accommodation
- 58% increase in the number of people sleeping rough.

## Homelessness Data

Decisions about homelessness law for England is the responsibility of the UK Government, and is a devolved matter for the governments of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The Department of Communities and Local Governments is charged with leading on policy formulation and implementation.

The report shows that Homelessness acceptance rates have gone up nationally and locally in recent years. At nearly 58,000, annual homelessness acceptances were some 3000 higher across England in 2015/16 than in 2014-15.

These statistics show that more people are approaching local authorities for assistance, however, the method in which they are being assisted has changed. Fewer people are having their homelessness prevented or relieved. At the same time, more people are benefiting from the statutory safety net - applicable to those who have a priority need for accommodation and are not intentionally homeless. This has driven up the number of people provided with temporary accommodation. Additionally, the levels of people experiencing street homelessness has gone-up to a volume not seen since 1997.

Wolverhampton over 2015- 2017 has seen an above the national average increase in rough sleeping and homelessness acceptances, though there has been a general decrease in statutory homeless cases.

The vast bulk of statutory homelessness in recent years is attributable to the sharply rising numbers made homeless from the private rented sector, with relevant cases having almost quadrupled over the period – from less than 5,000 to almost 18,000.

| Summary of national Homelessness Statistics | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | % change 2014/15-2015/16 | Summary for Wolverhampton | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | % change 2014/15-2015/16 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Rough sleeping in England - snapshot (1) | 3,569 | 4,134 | 16 | Rough sleeping in England - snapshot (1) | 7 | 17 | 142 |
| Local authority statutory homelessness cases - annual (3) | 112,350 | 114,780 | 2 | Local authority statutory homelessness cases - annual (3) | 1748 | 1708 | -5 |
| Local authority statutory homelessness acceptances - annual (4) | 54,430 | 57,740 | 6 | Local authority statutory homelessness acceptances - annual (4) | 336 | 376 | 12 |
| Local authority homelessness prevention and relief cases (5) | 220,800 | 213,300 | -3 | Local authority homelessness prevention and relief cases (5) | 1988 | 1848 | -7 |
| Total local authority homelessness case actions (6) | 275,230 | 271,050 | -2 | Total local authority homelessness case actions (6) | 2324 | 2224 | -4 |

***snapshot from national data P1e Oct-Nov***

## Homelessness Prevention and Relief

Local authorities have voluntarily carried-out activities to prevent and relieve homelessness since 2003 onwards. There are a range of discretionary initiatives used to assist people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. Any casework action taken is done so outside any legal obligation. The UK Government recognises three forms of homelessness prevention:

- Early Prevention – By identifying people at risk of homelessness, accommodation and necessary support can be made available in time to prevent homelessness. Early identification can target people in known risk groups (e.g. those leaving local authority care) before they reach crisis point.
- Pre-Crisis Prevention - This can take the form of advice services and proactive intervention, such as negotiation with landlords on behalf of tenants. Even if this only delays the leaving date, it can allow time to manage a move to alternative accommodation and so preventing homelessness.

- Preventing Reoccurring Homelessness - By providing support to formerly homeless people who have been accommodated, and ensuring tenancy sustainment, repeat homelessness can be prevented in cases where the provision of accommodation by itself is insufficient.

Typically, local authorities can help people to remain in their existing home or obtain alternative accommodation. Previously (in 2009/10), 55% of people were helped to obtain alternative accommodation, and 45% were assisted to remain in their existing home. More recently this trend has reversed, with 53% of people being helped to remain in their existing home compared 47% being helped to obtain alternative accommodation

## UK Government Priorities

The UK Government has received criticism about rising levels of homelessness and their lack of a coherent strategy for tackling the problems. These criticisms came from the UK Statistics Authority (in 2015), the Communities & Local Government Select Committee (in 2016), the National Audit Office, the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman, and the Commons Public Account Committee (all in 2017).

Subsequently, the UK Government declared an ambition to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and end it by 2027. To help accomplish this a taskforce has assembled, whose membership includes influential figures from public authorities and voluntary organisations, to provide advice on the formulation of a strategy.

The UK Government has allocated a substantial sum of funding to help tackle homelessness. During the present spending period (2016/17 – 2019/20), £932.7m has been awarded

- £315m Homelessness Prevention Grant, 2016/17 – 2019/20
- £100m Move-on Accommodation Fund, 2016
- £20m Homelessness Prevention Trailblazers, 2017
- £10m Rough Sleeping Fund, 2017
- £10m Rough Sleeping Social Impact Bond, 2017
- £402m Flexible Homelessness Support Grant, 2017/18 - 2018/19
- £72.7m Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 New Burdens Grant, 2017/18 - 2019/20
- £3m Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 Data Systems Upgrade Grant, 2017

## West Midlands Combined Authority

The strategic authority for the West Midlands Metropolitan County has no devolved responsibility for homelessness policy - this remains a matter for national and local governments. Despite this, the Elected Mayor of West Midlands has established a taskforce to co-ordinate efforts across the city region to tackle homelessness. This was prompted by the fact that rough sleeping has more than tripled across the Combined Authority area, with 55 people bedded down on the street on any given night.

*The taskforce has adopted the following seven principles:*

- Tackle all forms of homelessness, not just rough sleeping.
- Influence the Mayor's priorities across other policy areas (e.g. housing, mental health, transport).
- Support existing work rather than replacing it.
- Have an honest discussion about difficult topics (e.g. welfare reform).
- Harness skills and expertise from across the region and different sectors.
- Focus on where the Mayor and West Midlands Combined Authority can have maximum impact.
- Make decisions based on hard evidence and data.

The Homelessness Taskforce is led by a steering group, with task-groups working in specific priorities.

*The membership of the Taskforce includes representatives from:*

- Birmingham City Council
- Birmingham & Solihull
- Coventry City Council

- Crisis UK
- Gowling WLG
- KPMG
- Public Health England
- Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
- Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
- St Basils
- Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
- WM Housing Group
- West Midlands Combined Authority
- West Midlands Fire Service
- West Midlands Police
- Wolverhampton City Council
- YMCA Black Country Group

Task-groups have been established, each having clear roles with different needs for skills and expertise on the following themes:

- Rough sleeping
- Children and Families
- Young People
- Older

## Local Context

During the homelessness review information was obtained from a number of local partners to highlight the levels and causes of homelessness, as well as the client groups that are most affected by homelessness at a citywide level.

Data from 16-17 highlights that Wolverhampton has again seen a decrease in the number of households submitting homelessness applications during both 14-15 and 15-16 by 48 cases and 8 cases respectively.

| As per manual Duty referral statistics | 2016/17 |
|---|---|
| Initial Interview (Referral) | 2851 |
| Housing Advice only | 1151 |
| Homeless Applications | 1700 |
| Percentage of Apps as per Referrals | 59.62% |

***statutory Homelessness Data 2016-17***

The following reasons why households become homeless show that by far the largest group are those who are homeless from the private sector at nearly 400 cases, closely followed by 'Parents unable/unwilling to accommodate' at 267, and 'other loss of rented/tied accommodation' at 166 cases.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| End of assured shorthold tenancy | 393 | Other violence | 025 |
| Fire flood or another emergency | 011 | Parents unable/unwilling to accommodate | 267 |
| Friends unable/unwilling to accommodate | 210 | Racial violence | 002 |
| Leaving institution or care | 032 | Relationship breakdown violent other | 054 |
| Leaving NASS (BIA) accommodation | 041 | Rent arrears HA repossession | 014 |
| Living in a hostel | 038 | Rent arrears LA repossession | 022 |
| Mortgage arrears repossession | 014 | Rent arrears private | 030 |
| Newly forming family | 004 | Rough sleeper | 054 |
| Nonviolent breakdown unable to return | 108 | Split household | 002 |
| Other harassment | 010 | Unreasonable circumstances | 033 |
| Other loss of rented/tied accommodation | 166 | Violent relationship breakdown | 170 |

## Demographic Data

The annual review highlighted that there were trends in relation to age, ethnic origin and gender based on the demographic data.

Age data highlights that the ages of 16-34 are the prime age ranges for homelessness to occur.

| Performance compared to previous year | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Showing increase or decrease in % | 16 - 24 | 25 - 34 | 35 - 44 | 45 - 54 | 55 - 64 | 65 - 74 | 75 - 99 |
| 2016 to 2017 | 422 | 586 | 375 | 203 | 79 | 21 | 14 |
| 2015 to 2016 | 332 | 443 | 292 | 159 | 77 | 19 | 4 |
| Differential figure | 21.32% | 24.40% | 22.13% | 21.67% | 2.53% | 9.52% | 71.14% |

Gender data highlights that there are disproportionately higher numbers of females approaching authorities as homeless.

| Performance compared to previous year | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Showing increase or decrease in % | Male | Female | Not Known | Transsexual M to F |
| 2016 to 2017 | 688 | 1012 | 0 | 0 |
| 2015 to 2016 | 495 | 813 | 17 | 1 |
| Differential figure | 28.05% | 19.66% | -83% | -99% |

As expected, the highest numbers of cases are amongst White -British households. This was anticipated as the group constitutes nearly 70% of the UK population.

| Performance compared to previous year | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Showing increase or decrease in % | 2016 to 2017 | 2015 to 2016 | Differential figure |
| Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi | 5 | 8 | -37.5% |
| Asian or Asian British: Indian | 80 | 63 | 26.98% |
| Asian or Asian British: Pakistani | 28 | 27 | 3.70% |
| Asian or Asian British: Any Other Background | 20 | 16 | 25% |
| Black or Black British: African | 137 | 97 | 41.23% |
| Black or Black British: Caribbean | 126 | 103 | 22.33% |
| Black or Black British: Other | 34 | 21 | 61.90% |
| Chinese | 6 | 2 | 200% |
| Declined to Supply Information | 17 | 10 | 70% |
| Eastern European | 29 | 25 | 16% |
| Gypsy / Romany / Traveller | 5 | 4 | 25% |
| Information Not Supplied | 11 | 8 | 37.5% |
| Middle Eastern | 25 | 28 | -10.71% |
| Mixed: Any Other Mixed Background | 10 | 9 | 11.11% |
| Mixed: White and Asian | 16 | 11 | 45.45% |
| Mixed: White and Black African | 6 | 3 | 100% |
| Mixed: White and Black Caribbean | 81 | 70 | 15.71% |
| Other | 13 | 12 | 8.33% |
| Unknown | 30 | 30 | 0% |
| White: Any Other White Background | 47 | 38 | 23.68% |
| White: British | 967 | 736 | 31.38% |
| White: Irish | 7 | 5 | 40% |

Other variations in demography can affect the demand on homelessness services in several different ways. Due to several cultural and economic factors that are evident both nationally and in Wolverhampton, the total number of households is increasing, whilst the average size of these households is decreasing.

This trend directly impacts the numbers of households presenting themselves as homeless, and the demand for affordable accommodation - particularly single person accommodation and two bed houses.

## Under One Roof

In late 2017, City of Wolverhampton Council transferred all operational homeless services to Wolverhampton Homes.

This transfer meant that the majority of public facing housing services are now under one organisation, making the customer's journey simpler and more effective.

This exciting transfer means that people at risk of homelessness, and those in need of immediate accommodation, could now approach three local locations across the City for assistance.

With the Reduction Act on the horizon, this transfer will allow a more flexible and responsive service to be provided Citywide.

## Strategic Context

The Homelessness Prevention Strategy is one of a suite of strategic documents by Wolverhampton City Council that aim to improve the lives of current and future residents in the city.

The overarching theme of homelessness and housing need is shared across a variety of the strategic documents.

*These include:*

### *New Horizons - Our vision for the City of Wolverhampton in 2030*

A vision document that highlights what the City of Wolverhampton might look and feel like in 2030.

### *Wolverhampton City Strategy 2011-2026*

A plan to create opportunities that encourage enterprise, empower people, and re-invigorate our city.

### *Corporate Plan 2016-2019*

Our Corporate Plan sets out how we will deliver better outcomes for residents and businesses in the City of Wolverhampton. It is also the cornerstone of our transformational plans to build an ever more Confident, Capable Council.

### *Neighbourhoods, Homes & People Wolverhampton Housing Strategy 2013-2018*

The Strategy will support Wolverhampton in achieving its long-term ambitions for housing, improving the quality and supply of housing, and supporting current and future residents who will have a fundamental role to play in developing Wolverhampton's identity and economic function as a key place on the regional, UK and international stage.

### *Wolverhampton Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy – 2013 2018*

A collective focus to improve health and wellbeing for all, so individuals and communities are able to live healthier lives, and to reduce some of the stark gaps in health experienced across the city.

### *Violence Against Women and Girls - Wolverhampton's Multi-Agency Strategy 2016 – 2019*

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) has been cited as being perhaps the most pervasive violation of human rights across the globe and continues to have devastating consequences for millions of victims. This strategy addresses the needs of victims of domestic abuse, violence, female genital mutilation, forced marriage, honour-based violence, and sexual violence.

The plan is that the Homelessness Prevention Strategy is not a strategy in isolation, and is document that is owned by the City, not just the Local Authority.

# Homelessness Strategy 2018-2022

## Main strategic Objectives

1. To offer high quality and innovative services to homeless households and households threatened with homelessness.
2. To work in partnership with other services to find long-term, affordable housing solutions for people threatened with homelessness.
3. To increase the number of employment opportunities for vulnerable clients, including those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

To achieve these objectives, we have broken these down into four strategic priorities to focus on over the four-year duration of this strategy.

1. ***Homelessness prevention.***
   To deliver a prevention service to meet the aims and intentions of the Homelessness Reduction Act and beyond.
2. ***Tackle rough sleeping.***
   To continue to work on tackling rough sleeping in Wolverhampton, with a plan on reducing numbers to as close to zero as possible by 2022.
3. ***Vulnerability and Health.***
   To ensure services remain accessible to the most vulnerable households, and can support those who need it most, such as those affected by domestic abuse, modern day slavery, etc.

   We aim to increase the resilience of households and communities, equipping them with the necessary skills to prevent crises, such as homelessness, before they occur.
4. ***Responding to the local housing market.***
   To respond to the challenging local housing market conditions by working collaboratively with, and offering advice and support to households and landlords, to develop suitable private rented sector offers for all client groups.

## Homelessness prevention

The findings from the Homelessness Review confirmed the main causes of homelessness in Wolverhampton. The primary reason being 'Termination of assured short hold tenancy.

This has contributed to a rise in cases accepted as homeless in Wolverhampton.

Since 2003, the City of Wolverhampton has had a floating accommodation support service that works with over 1000 households each year.

The objective is to grow and promote the concept of support to prevent homelessness, with a plan to make this more accessible and robust.

We also recognise the importance of utilising technology and partnership working with statutory, voluntary and third sector agencies to help us deliver an efficient preventative service.

The requirements set out in the Homelessness Reduction Act are clear, but we must have bigger ambitions to digitalise the service. The advantages of online PHPs are that households will be able to view and report updates frequently, and partners will also be able to interact with the permission of the household. This will help ensure that households' needs are met, and that they are assisted as they engage and work through their personalised plans.

### *The aims of preventative working*

- Develop a city-wide approach to preventing and tackling homelessness.
- Working in partnership to prevent and tackle homelessness and the new duties in the Homelessness Reduction Act, including the duty of public authorities to refer cases to the local housing authority.
- Improve the quality and effectiveness of prevention work to meet the requirements of the new section 195 prevention duty under the Homelessness Reduction Act.
- Improving the quality and effectiveness of help to single applicants, helping them to find accommodation to meet the new section 189B 'Help to Secure' Duty under the Homelessness Reduction Act.
- Develop several new initiatives to support the new section 189B 'Help to Secure Accommodation Duty' for single people and families.
- To develop a suitable private rented sector, offer for all client groups, including advice support and incentives to both client and landlord.
- Managing the Discretionary Housing Payment fund (DHP), which is used to help tenants cope with housing costs.
- Managing the Rent Arrears Fund, which provides a maximum payment of £500 to stop landlords evicting tenants because of rent arrears.
- Providing advice and assistance to those affected by welfare reforms, such as the Social Sector Size criteria (otherwise known as Bedroom Tax), Benefit Cap, Local Housing Allowance reforms or Universal Credit).
- Helping with budgeting and finding alternative solutions to housing needs (for example, providing a deposit so that households can move into a more affordable property).
- To utilise assistive technology and aids adaptations to assist vulnerable households to remain in their homes.
- Develop/modify pre-court and pre-eviction protocols for vulnerable clients.
- Manage expectations around provision of council accommodation by supporting homeless/risk of homeless households into accessing affordable and well managed PRS property (RWC, WH's PSL, other 'registered' and on-board landlords etc).

## Rough Sleepers

Both the Leader of the Council at a local level and West Midlands Mayor Andy Street who have developed task groups to address the increase in rough sleeping and homelessness.

Each year local authorities are duty bound to either count or estimate the numbers of people sleeping rough on a particular day. The official figures from the estimate of the 6th November 2016 Wolverhampton had 18 people sleeping rough (information supplied by outreach services, police, accommodation providers and the voluntary sector. Since 2010 rough sleeping in England has increased by 134%.

| Local Authority | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Birmingham | 20 | 34* | 55 |
| Coventry | 18 | 22 | 13 |
| Dudley | 6 | 3* | 3 |
| Sandwell | 2 | 4 | 11 |
| Solihull | 6 | 5 | 6 |
| Walsall | 4 | 8 | 26 |
| Wolverhampton | 8 | 13 | 18 |

Even though this evidence suggests rough sleeping is increasing nationally, this strategy sets out the plans for making further steps towards Wolverhampton bucking the trend.

Wolverhampton has for the last 5 years had a No Second Night Out hub, where individuals are given a roof over their head for the night before a more permanent housing solution is sought.

### *The aims to end rough sleeping in Wolverhampton*

- Develop a No First Night Out Model.
- Develop a Housing First Model.
- Develop a multi-agency assessment hub within the target and prevent people sleeping rough.
- Develop small scale accommodation project for customers who approach services and have nowhere safe to stay that evening.
- Recruit former rough sleepers and customers to Wolves@work programme.
- Develop a mentoring service for rough sleepers via the recruitment of former rough sleepers.
- Develop a corporate social responsibility (CSR) project for working to assist rough sleepers
- Develop a project to assist NRPF rough sleepers.
- Undertake Behavioural insight into lack of engagement by rough sleepers
- Develop and publish city wide rough sleeper plan

## Vulnerability and Health

We will ensure our services remain accessible to the most vulnerable households and can support those who need it most, such as those affected by domestic abuse.

We aim to increase the resilience of households and communities, equipping them with the necessary skills to prevent crises, such as homelessness, before they occur.

For many people who become homeless, the provision of suitable accommodation is the only problem that needs to be addressed. However, many other people can become homeless or be threatened by homelessness due to a range of support needs.

For example, this can be related to a mental or physical disability or circumstances such as domestic violence, a history of offending behaviour or drug and alcohol misuse. By working with our partners to provide targeted, specialist support, we endeavour to limit the number of vulnerable people who become homeless.

Homelessness and temporary accommodation have an impact on health and wellbeing of a household. A national survey conducted by Shelter of 2,000 people in temporary accommodation, found that more than half said that they were suffering from depression, and that depression and other mental health problems were two of the most common health conditions reported.

It is a strategic priority to reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation, particularly in nightly rate (B&B style) by developing suitable offers of private rental sector accommodation.

The council pledged a long-term aspiration to eliminate the usage of B&B style accommodation. Over the lifespan of this strategy we will aim to make progress towards this. This is in accordance with The Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) Order 2003 which sets out the statutory duty to limit B&B usage for only when no other suitable accommodation is available. It also sets a limit of six weeks for the length of time families, pregnant women and single under 18-year-olds can legally be placed into B&B accommodation.

## Vulnerabilities

The Review of Homelessness in Wolverhampton found that over 75% of the 1700 homeless applicants have additional vulnerabilities other than just a lack of housing.

Housing Options works in partnership with a range of agencies to ensure that it meets the housing and support needs of those customers who suffer from a range of additional issues

A report by Homeless Link 2015 using information supplied by over 2,500 people highlights the extent to which homeless people experience some of the worst health problems in society. It showed that 80% of homeless households reported some form of mental health issue, while 73% reported physical health problems.

Homeless people are more likely to die young, with an average age of death of 47 years old and even lower for homeless women at 43, compared to 77 for the general population, 74 for men and 80 for women. It is important to note that this is not life expectancy; it is the average age of death of those who die on the streets or while resident in homeless accommodation.

Drug and alcohol abuse are particularly common causes of death amongst the homeless population, accounting for just over a third of deaths. Homeless people have seven to nine times the chance of dying from alcohol-related diseases and 20 times the chance of dying from drugs.

***The aims to assist households with poor health and vulnerabilities in Wolverhampton***

- Remodel and recommission violence and abuse services
- Remodel Safe Homes Sanctuary service
- Remodel and recommission drug and alcohol services
- Develop a robust process for early housing referrals from health, social care and external partners
- Continue with the delivery of the hospital discharge service
- Develop suitable housing options for a variety of vulnerable groups including veterans
- Develop employment and training opportunities for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.
- Continue to reduce the use of B&Bs for young people and families via offering alternative and suitable accommodation options.

# Responding to the local housing market

Having a stable home enables people to access support services, integrate into their local community and to obtain and sustain work and training. We will continue to manage the expectations of customers and ensure that we maximise access and availability not only to social rented accommodation but to other housing options. This approach will help us to meet housing need, prevent homelessness and reduce the use of temporary accommodation.

City of Wolverhampton Council have identified five priorities for housing activity in Wolverhampton. There are also four crosscutting themes that will run through all strategic housing work in Wolverhampton.

We anticipate growth of around 11% in the number of households between 2006 – 2026, driven by a significant increase in the number of people living alone and a 3% increase in population.

The Black Country Core Strategy target for Wolverhampton is to build 13,400 new homes between 2006 and 2026 to accommodate these households. 2,129 additional homes were built during 2006-12 and there is a requirement to provide 760 additional homes every year up to 2018. The Wolverhampton Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (April 2013) identifies sufficient deliverable housing sites to provide 6,438 homes by 2018, 41% above target.

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) identifies a need for 621 extra general purpose affordable homes each year, and additional need for affordable specialist accommodation. As it has never been possible to meet this level of need, a local target which equates to an average of 115 affordable homes per year was set based on the Core Strategy and historical build levels, as at the Neighbourhoods, Homes & People 11 times an average of 124 affordable homes were being delivered each year since 2006.

In addition to new builds this would have included affordable housing achieved through a variety of mortgage assistance products including conversions to affordable housing.

In line with the Reduction Act we will need to deliver a comprehensive approach to

responding to the present market conditions. These will address procurement of temporary accommodation, with specific regard to the cost and suitability of the options. We are aspiring to increase the number of leased accommodation used for TA. Leased accommodation offers greater stability for households in contrast to nightly rate bed and breakfast style accommodation which also often have shared facilities, and the use of social housing stock which is in high demand.

The Homelessness Reduction Act encourages local authorities to embed an approach to use the private rented sector accommodation to discharge a duty to homeless households and households threatened by homelessness. As a result, we will explore how we assist households to find accommodation that meets their needs in the private sector. By guiding households via the Rent with Confidence scheme with finding their own accommodation, they will have more control over their choices.

***Aims of responding to local housing market***

- Reconfigure and recommission single person homeless accommodation and support.
- Develop standards framework for the provision of temporary accommodation.
- Increase the provision of private sector accommodation via Rent with Confidence.
- Work with developers and housing providers into the development of affordable accommodation for people at risk of homelessness.
- Enable discharge of homeless duty into the private sector with Rent with Confidence rated Landlords.
- Investigate the development of temporary accommodation via WV Living.