

# HOMELESSNESS & ROUGH SLEEPING PREVENTION STRATEGY

2024-2029



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Having a safe place to call home is one of the most basic human necessities; in Birmingham, we face a significant challenge in both preventing and adequately supporting those who are either experiencing or are at risk of homelessness in the city.

As Cabinet Member for Housing & Homelessness, reducing the impact and likelihood of homelessness is a priority. Our Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2024-2029 sets out the Council's commitments over the next 5 years.

We know that that the trauma and instability homelessness can cause, is lifechanging and can debilitate every aspect of someone's life. Given the impact it has on both citizens and communities, homelessness is something that should not be tolerated in modern day society.

In Birmingham, we know that high levels of deprivation and systemic issues, coupled with recovery from the pandemic, and more recently the cost-of-living crisis, have made homelessness a more common experience for our citizens. Birmingham, much like the rest of the UK is also navigating the national housing crisis and undersupply of affordable homes.

This strategy sets out our priorities for the next 5 years, helping to safeguard communities from the damage that homelessness can cause, while enabling citizens to recover.

Whilst we know there have been achievements, tackling homelessness continues to be a real challenge for the city and there is still lots to do. Thousands of households are living in unsuitable homes or are at risk of homelessness and as a Council, we are working diligently to try and stop these households' reaching crisis.

In response, we are developing our Early Intervention & Prevention model, understanding and capitalising on opportunities to work upstream; our pilot hubs are demonstrating some fantastic outcomes, and we are committed to continuing to refine our model in the future. As part of this work, we must strike a balance between our obligations to those facing homelessness

right now and those who could be at risk in the future, so the experience of homelessness does as little harm as possible.

We know that opportunities to prevent homelessness in some cases have passed and therefore we must shift our focus, making sure that when homelessness occurs, the experience is rare, brief, and non-recurring, so that households do not become trapped in a cycle of homelessness.

The Council is facing a challenging financial situation, resulting in intervention from Commissioners and the need to acquire exceptional financial support from Government. Whilst all involved parties are committed to making sure the impact on our citizens is minimised, the fact remains that there will be a significant restriction on resources both now, and in the future, with the key focus delivering on the Improvement and Recovery Plan (IRP).

Now more than ever, the role of our partners is paramount. The focus of this strategy is on collaboration and making the best use of resources available. Throughout the sector there is will and commitment to improve the options available for households, who are either homeless or facing homelessness.

It is imperative that we use this strategy to capitalise on dedication and commitment across the sector to make sure our interventions are effective so that opportunities to provide good quality advice, support and build resilience across our communities are not lost.

As Cabinet Member for Housing & Homelessness, I endorse the publication of this strategy and see the document as an opportunity to re-focus on our priorities, ensuring we are working effectively across the city to reduce the impact and likelihood of homelessness for our citizens.



Cllr Jayne Francis, Cabinet Member for Housing & Homelessness

This strategy is underpinned by the principle that homelessness is a debilitating and traumatic experience for citizens across society, which affects every aspect of life and impacts on far more than just housing. Therefore, the goal is to prevent homelessness whenever possible, and where it does occur, ensure that it is rare, brief and non-recurring.

The Council has made significant progress in improving the experiences of citizens who need to access housing advice. These are just a few of our achievements made since the implementation of the previous strategy:

- The number of families with dependent children in Bed & Breakfast (B&B) has reduced in the last year, for the first time in several years.
- Our property acquisitions programme is enabling the Council to purchase over 300 homes for families facing homelessness.
- We have mobilised an Accommodation Finding Team who have negotiated with landlords to make over 400 properties available in the private rented sector over the past two years.
- The number of successful prevention outcomes for households who approach the Council at risk of homelessness within 56 days are continuing to increase and are regularly surpassing the national average at 53%.
- We have re-designed our service following the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act (2017) to work more proactively, with prevention in mind.
- We have reduced the number of rough sleepers seen on our streets on any given night, reducing from 91 in 2018 to 36 in 2023.
- We have successfully implemented the Homes4Ukraine Move-on financial package, with 170 initially hosted households able to move into the private rented sector.

- We have designed and committed to mobilising the 'Live and Work' scheme, supported by St Basils, whereby young people have genuine access to affordable homes and the labour market in tandem.
- We have supported 110 exempt accommodation providers to sign up to the Charter of Rights whilst 18 achieved full accreditation under our supported exempt quality standards, and a further 15 providers are under assessment to become accredited.
- We have developed and drafted our new strategy, setting out specifically how we will support survivors of Domestic Abuse in line with a zero-tolerance approach.
- We continue to work towards a Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation, making sure we provide the best service possible to both survivors and perpetrators.
- We have successfully piloted EI&P approaches to prevent people at risk of homelessness falling into crisis. For example, 39 households who had requested foodbank assistance that were eligible for but not claiming welfare benefits. Our advisors contacted them via text and supported them to claim a combined £94k as a means of maximising their income and easing financial hardship.

The strategy builds on the work of the Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2017-2022 which supported the city in implementing wholesale changes to the sector, addressing the introduction of Universal Credit and the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act (2017). This strategy seeks to build on these successes, whilst responding to the changing landscape both nationally and locally.

In January 2023, the Council launched its Housing Strategy 2023-2028, setting out a refreshed approach to improving housing options for Birmingham citizens. This has been recently supported by a newly approved Asset Management Strategy 2024-2029 and Housing Revenue Account Business Plan. These key documents set out the need to direct investment towards existing stock, making partnerships ever more important, particularly in relation to the delivery of affordable homes.

We know that there will be challenges in our future. The Council is facing an unprecedented challenge financially. The challenging financial situation the Council finds itself in and subsequent intervention, means the Council will require exceptional financial support from Government, and a new Corporate Plan will be developed to reflect the changes to work practices that will be required.

Housing is not exempt from this and will have to make some very difficult decisions about the way in which services are delivered both now and, in the future, and as a result, one of the key components this strategy focuses on, will be how we will prioritise the resources available and deliver services as efficiently as possible, to help the greatest number of people.

Our objectives in this strategy are clear, as are the challenges in achieving them. The Council cannot do this alone, and the strength of our partnerships will be central in helping us to achieve our goals. We want to capitalise on the skills, resources and commitment of the sector, harnessing opportunities to work together to improve outcomes for households facing homelessness.

We have been supported by our strategic partner, the Centre for Homelessness Impact (CHI) to develop a strategy that is realistic and adopts national best practice. We want to develop a strategy that promotes innovation and enables all stakeholders to work differently to tackle homelessness, but we also want to make sure that our vision is realistic and honours our commitments to the multiple households, who continue to approach our service in a crisis position.

Councils have a statutory duty to prevent homelessness at the point a household becomes threatened with homelessness within 56 days, the balance between working proactively to prevent people becoming homeless further upstream, and providing targeted support to those already experiencing homelessness, as well as those in recovery, is crucial and requires creativity and innovation, not just from the Council but the city as a whole.

This strategy is about making sure that we get the balance right, promoting independence and resilience across communities with the understanding, that when people need us, access to services is fair, equitable and the advice people receive has a positive impact on their lives.

**To create a society in which any experience of homelessness is prevented wherever possible, but where this cannot be achieved, homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.**

We want to make sure homelessness is prevented. This means deliberately designing-out-homelessness in our strategies, policies, procedures, laws, structures, and systems, that either cause or fail to prevent homelessness.

We want to make sure that inclusion is promoted across all areas of the sector, and that everyone understands and takes an active role in preventing homelessness.

Where homelessness does still occur, we want to make it rare, brief, and non-recurring. The key words are explained below, so our intentions are clear and cannot be misunderstood.

### **1. Homelessness is RARE**

We will commit to tackling the enablers of homelessness throughout society, as well as in strategies, policy, and practise, utilising key initiatives such as the **Early Intervention & Prevention program** and by collaborating with the regional Homelessness Taskforce. We will also track the prevalence of homelessness both nationally and locally, working with partners to design interventions that will make homelessness a rare occurrence in our city.

### **2. Homelessness is BRIEF**

We will identify those experiencing homelessness as soon as we can, through clear pathways and referral routes and will support them into long-term accommodation as quickly as possible, minimizing the time and impact of homelessness. We will ensure that any stays in temporary accommodation are as brief as possible, particularly for households with children.

### **3. Homelessness is NON-RECURRING**

We will support people who have experienced homelessness, by ensuring that the routes out of homelessness are both resilient and sustainable, thereby enabling citizens to recover from their experience, and allowing them to benefit from a system designed to prevent them from becoming homeless again.

It is essential that 'prevention' of homelessness doesn't just become a catchphrase or buzz word and that the Council and partners play their part in bringing these initiatives to life; this strategy sets out how the Council will contribute to tackling some of the systemic issues that make homelessness a far more frequent experience than it should be.

# DEFINING HOMELESSNESS

To realise our vision, it is important that we first understand what is meant by homelessness, given that the term is so often misinterpreted or misapplied.

Many may think of homelessness as solely rough sleeping, which is of course the most visible and acute form of homelessness, but it only represents a very small proportion of homeless households. We want this strategy to represent every one of our citizens who experiences homelessness, in whatever form it takes.

The statutory definition of homelessness is one route in which homelessness can be defined:

## Threatened with homelessness

Citizens can approach their local authority as Homeless, as soon as they are threatened with homelessness.

**'Households are considered to be threatened with homelessness if they are going to become homeless within 56 days.'**

The Local Authority are required to intervene and try to prevent households from becoming homeless within the 56-day period. It is important to note that Local Authorities have no statutory duty to prevent homelessness outside of the 56-day timeframe, although many see the benefit of doing so.

## Homeless

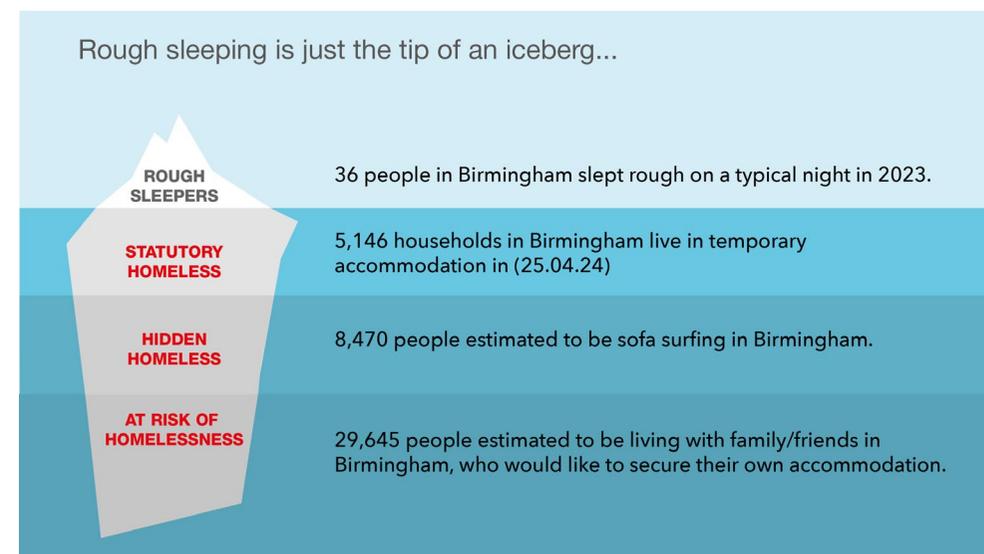
'Households are considered to be homeless if any one of the criteria below can be met:

- They have no accommodation available to occupy.
- They are at risk of violence or Domestic Abuse.
- They have accommodation, but it is not reasonable for them to continue to occupy it.
- They have accommodation but cannot secure entry to it.
- They have no legal right to occupy their accommodation.
- They live in a mobile home or houseboat but have no place to put it or live in it.'

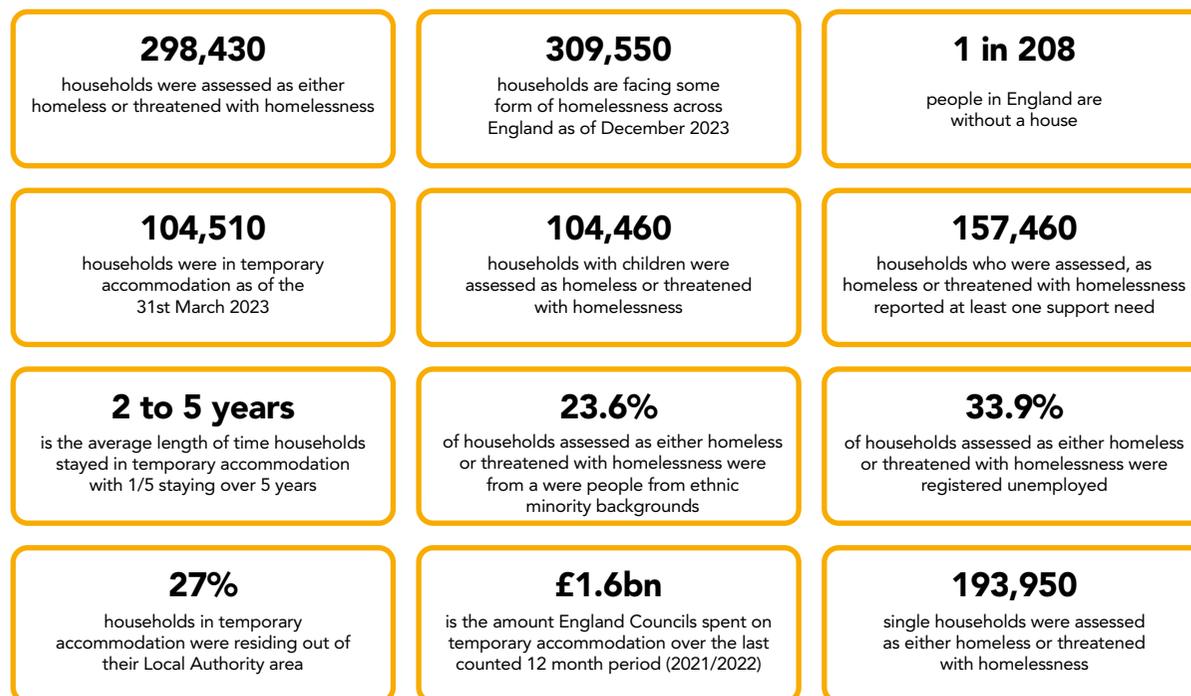
At this point, the Local Authority must intervene and have a 56-day period to work with the household to try and relieve their homelessness.

The statutory definitions are important to understand, as these definitions are directly linked to the funding arrangements Councils in England receive to support people who are either homeless, or threatened with homelessness.

Whilst the statutory definition of homelessness triggers intervention from the Council, we know that homelessness is broader than this, ranging from rough sleeping on the streets to being insecurely housed. Preventing homelessness making it rare, brief, and non-recurrent is the ultimate aim, however, to do this we must first understand the root causes and factors that lead people to become homeless in the first place.

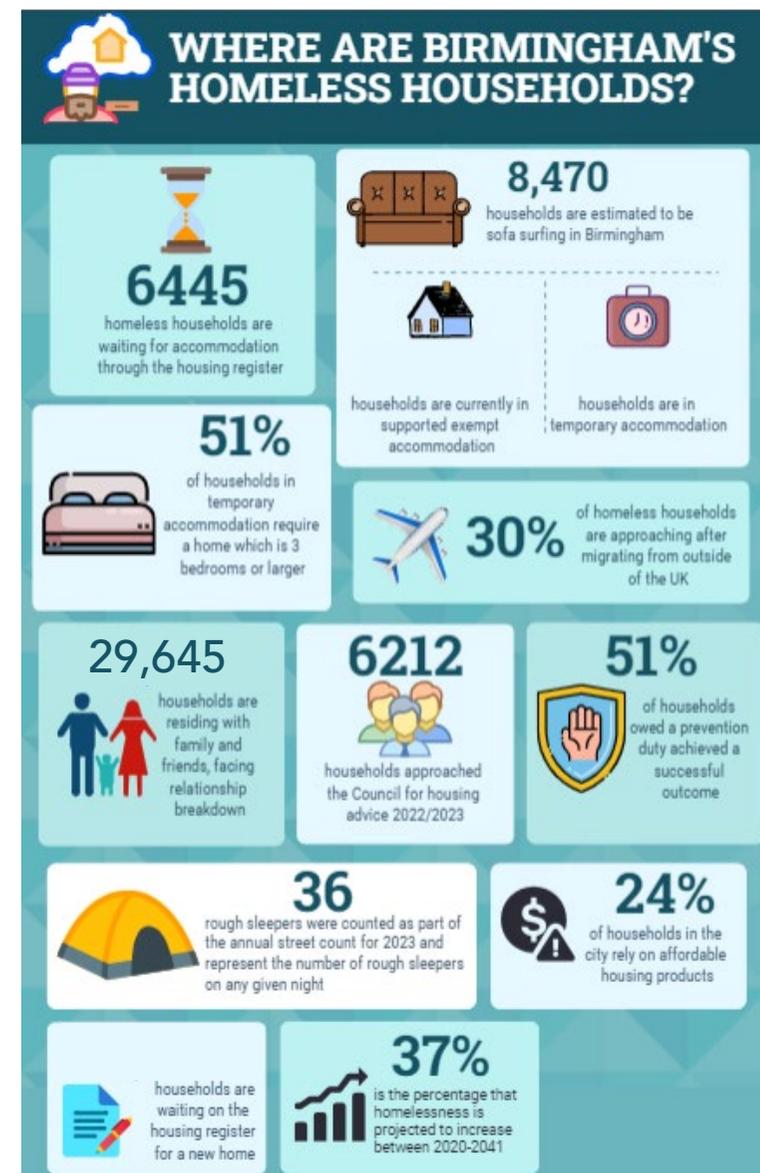


## National Homelessness Picture - 2022/2023



The data above represents some of the national, published Government data on the picture of homelessness across the UK. This demonstrates the sheer volume of households affected by homelessness across the UK and gives some indication of the cost both socially and financially.

Birmingham is a city with great strengths and enormous promise, but there is no getting away from the fact that it also faces real challenges. This is depicted in the data shown above, which gives a high-level overview of demand and an understanding of the volume of houses affected in the city.



# WHAT DOES THE DATA SAY?

This section of the strategy intends to set out the homelessness picture in the city at a high level, providing an evidence base for the strategic priorities and commitments we have identified.

## Quantifying demand in Birmingham

Homelessness in Birmingham is an acute issue and the Council continue to assess large volumes of households each year. Birmingham is twice the size of any other core city, and whilst we experience similar issues to a London borough, we cover a much broader geographical area.

This contributes to the level of demand we experience across the city. Figure 1 sets out how many households the Council has assessed under homelessness legislation in comparison with other core cities.

Figure 1

### Initial Homelessness Assessments Core Cities



With the exception of Manchester, Birmingham delivered the highest number of initial assessments across other comparable core cities in the UK, while in total, 8.1% of the population are considered homeless, again the highest percentage of any lower-tier Local authority (LTLA).

Within Figure 1, 45.2% of households assessed in 2022/2023 were owed the main housing duty, which means the Council have a duty to secure these households a home.

This is higher than any other core city, and indeed any other authority in the UK, putting significant pressure on the Council to prioritise the scarce supply of affordable homes for homeless households, while avoiding incentivising homelessness as the main pathway for people on a low income to secure a long-term home.

The numbers further support this; as in 2023/2024, 80.2% of main duty resolutions involved the household securing social housing, far more than the 40.3% of cases resolved in this way in Manchester, for example. This information highlights the reliance on social housing supply as a resolution for homelessness in Birmingham.

The reasons for homelessness in Birmingham are important to understand, because they paint a picture of who is becoming homeless and how they are reaching this point.

Figure 2

<b>Reason for loss of last settled home for households owed a relief duty 2022/23:</b>		
Family or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate	1,253	33.6%
Domestic abuse	599	16.1%
End of private rented tenancy - assured shorthold	499	13.4%
Eviction from supported housing	425	11.4%
End of private rented tenancy - not assured shorthold	248	6.7%
Other reasons / not known	201	5.4%
Non-violent relationship breakdown with partner	158	4.2%
Required to leave accommodation provided by Home Office as asylum support	102	2.7%
Other violence or harassment	101	2.7%
Left institution with no accommodation available	85	2.3%
End of social rented tenancy	54	1.4%

Figure 2 demonstrates the high levels of statutory homelessness for 2022/2023; whilst this only gives us the statutory picture, it helps us to understand why people are approaching the authority.

The data shows that relationship breakdown with family/friends and Domestic Abuse are the two most prevalent reasons for households becoming homeless, both of which suggest the household will understandably only present to the Council when in crisis, reducing the opportunity for prevention.

Other frequently stated reasons, relate to tenancies ending either in supported accommodation or in the private rented sector. This reflects the high concentration of supported exempt accommodation (housing where vulnerable adults are supported to live independently) in Birmingham for single people and the affordability pressures of the private rented sector.

## Affordability- what is the picture for low-income households?

The private rented sector (PRS) presents affordability challenges for households on a low-income. This is something that the UK experiences as a whole, but it is particularly marked in the West Midlands and Birmingham. Accessing the private rented sector is a challenge and a significant opportunity; the Accommodation Finding Team has been successful in identifying properties in the private sector, negotiating with landlords and enabling families to move into homes.

Access to the private rented sector is often dependent on what is available within the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate. The LHA is paid to low-income families in the rented sector to help them cope with high housing costs. The rate has been frozen for several years, which has meant that the sector has become unaffordable, particularly for those who are benefit dependent.

For instance, in 2023 Crisis and Zoopla reported that only 7% of two bed properties and 6% of three bed properties listed for rent in the West Midlands were available at rents covered by benefits, compared with 27% of the households in the West Midlands needing support from benefits towards their rent.

In Birmingham itself, the situation was more acute with only 3.28% of two bed properties and 1.79% of 3 bed properties available to let, at levels covered by LHA rates.

Figure 3 sets out the detailed research behind this, showing the disparity between what is affordable in the West Midlands compared with other areas of the country, providing a reason for the long-term reliance on social rented supply.

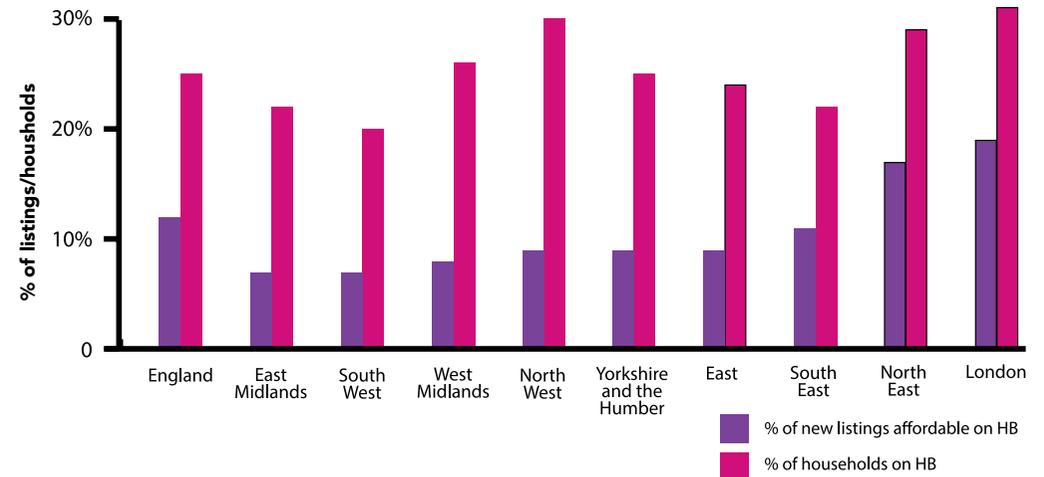


figure 3 Source: Zoopla; StatXplore: ONS

Notes: % of new listings affordable to those in receipt of housing benefits calculated using Zoopla data; % of households receiving housing benefits calculated by dividing the number of households in each region receiving housing benefits (from StatXplore - February 2022) by the most recent regional data showing the size of the PRS in each region (from office of national statistics)

In the 2023 Autumn statement, Government announced the intention to unfreeze LHA rates, raising LHA to the 30th percentile of local market rents from April 2024.

Whilst there is no commitment to this in the long-term, it is anticipated that raised LHA rates will mean people on low incomes have more breathing space, allowing them to access more affordable housing options, rather than relying solely on social housing.

## Migration- what is the impact?

Birmingham is a diverse city, covering a significant geographical area with a wide range of communities, but the impact of the Brexit decision in 2016 and additional Government interventions to reduce the level of migration, have understandably had an impact on the city.

This is demonstrated by the recent fast tracking of Home Office decisions, the interventions around small boats, and the consultation on Social Housing Allocations (which proposes the prioritisation of citizens from the UK), all of which are challenging in such a diverse city.

Additionally, the city has also had to respond to the war in Ukraine as well as conflicts in Sudan and Afghanistan. As such, interventions have been piloted to respond to conflict, such as Homes for Ukraine, which saw an outpouring of support from the community, with host families welcoming Ukrainian households into their home.

From a Birmingham perspective, the insufficient supply of affordable housing and high levels of deprivation, mean that the ability to provide the resettlement support and infrastructure to enable households from outside of the UK to settle, is not as robust as it needs to be.

The demographic of homeless households also poses a specific set of challenges for the city.

For instance, based on the data held; 30% of households presenting as statutorily homeless to the Council, have come into the UK through a migrant route. This doesn't mean that all these households' approach as homeless directly after coming to the UK, but that experience is part of their background. In context, it must be noted that 17% of Birmingham's population have arrived in the city having come to the UK as a migrant.

Of the 30% who presented as statutorily homeless, 22% of households have been formally granted asylum, leave to remain and/or refugee status. The remainder relate primarily to households from the European Economic Area (EEA).

This suggests a greater vulnerability amongst citizens who have arrived in Birmingham from abroad, and an increased need for stable accommodation and increased resettlement support.

Birmingham is a diverse city that welcomes other cultures and ethnicities into the city. Figure 4 sets out Government statistics for 2022/2023 showing the number of households that have entered Birmingham through a direct migration route in comparison to other areas.

Figure 4

Local Authority	Homes for Ukraine	Afghan Resettlement	Supported Asylum	City Population
Birmingham	1000	450	3105	1,142,494
Leeds	909	431	1451	809,036
Sheffield	704	175	1196	554,401
Manchester	642	366	1714	549,853
Liverpool	398	156	2184	484,488

Figure 4 shows that Birmingham experiences higher levels of migration than any other core city; because of the size of Birmingham’s population, migrants as a percentage of the overall population is not as significant.

The number of households migrating into the city isn’t the root of the problem. However, the percentage of overall presentations, signifies that there is a lack of long-term resettlement support for households from a migrant background.

The lack of stability for households who are likely to experience a language barrier, a difference in culture and overall lack of understanding around how to manage bureaucratic systems, like the benefits system, housing register, access to healthcare or education, means that they are often coming from a disadvantaged position.

The lack of additional support, to truly enable these households to re-settle, often results in an increased risk of homelessness.

### **Disproportionate impact of homelessness**

The connections between race, ethnicity and homelessness are recognised. A recent research study by Heriot-Watt University (Homelessness amongst Black and minoritized ethnic communities in the UK: a statistical report on the state of the nation 2022) found people from Black, Asian and other marginalised ethnic group backgrounds, can be as much as three and a half times more likely to experience homelessness as those from White British backgrounds.

Disproportionality within the housing system and other aspects, such as poverty and patterns of employment were found to increase risk of exposure to homelessness. This increased risk is echoed within the city’s own homelessness data.

<b>Ward</b>	<b>Number of Presentations</b>
Soho & Jewellery Quarter	354
Aston	353
Stockland Green	344
Sparkbrook & Balsall Heath East	331
North Edgbaston	307
Alum Rock	295
Ladywood	288
Newtown	264
Acocks Green	259
Birchfield	250
Glebe Farm & Tile Cross	249
Small Heath	220
Bartley Green	212
Bordesley Green	210
Handsworth	201
Sparkhill	201
Weoley & Selly Oak	201

Figure 5  
 Figure 5 sets out the number of households presenting as homeless, by ward. Soho & Jewellery Quarter has a population of 25,456, the ward has a younger age profile than most of the city, as well as a higher ethnic minority

population, indeed 61.9% or 15,757 people are from minority backgrounds. Similarly, Aston has a population of 24,450 of which 88.3% or 21,589 of the population are from ethnic minority backgrounds, presenting a correlation between ethnicity and homelessness.

### Pressure on families with dependent children:

The picture of statutory homelessness in Birmingham is different to that of some other core cities. In Birmingham the well-developed services and extensive supported exempt accommodation sector, have resulted in fewer single people requiring the statutory provision of temporary accommodation than in comparable core cities. This is evidenced by the fact that in Birmingham, the number of households in temporary accommodation without a dependent child, is over 10% lower than the national average (37.9%).

Families on the other hand, make up the vast majority of citizens accessing the Council’s housing services. Birmingham currently has the highest rate of family main duty acceptances in England (per thousand households living in the Council’s jurisdiction) and the percentage of citizens with two or more dependent children that are owed a homelessness duty, is 50% higher than that of the national average.

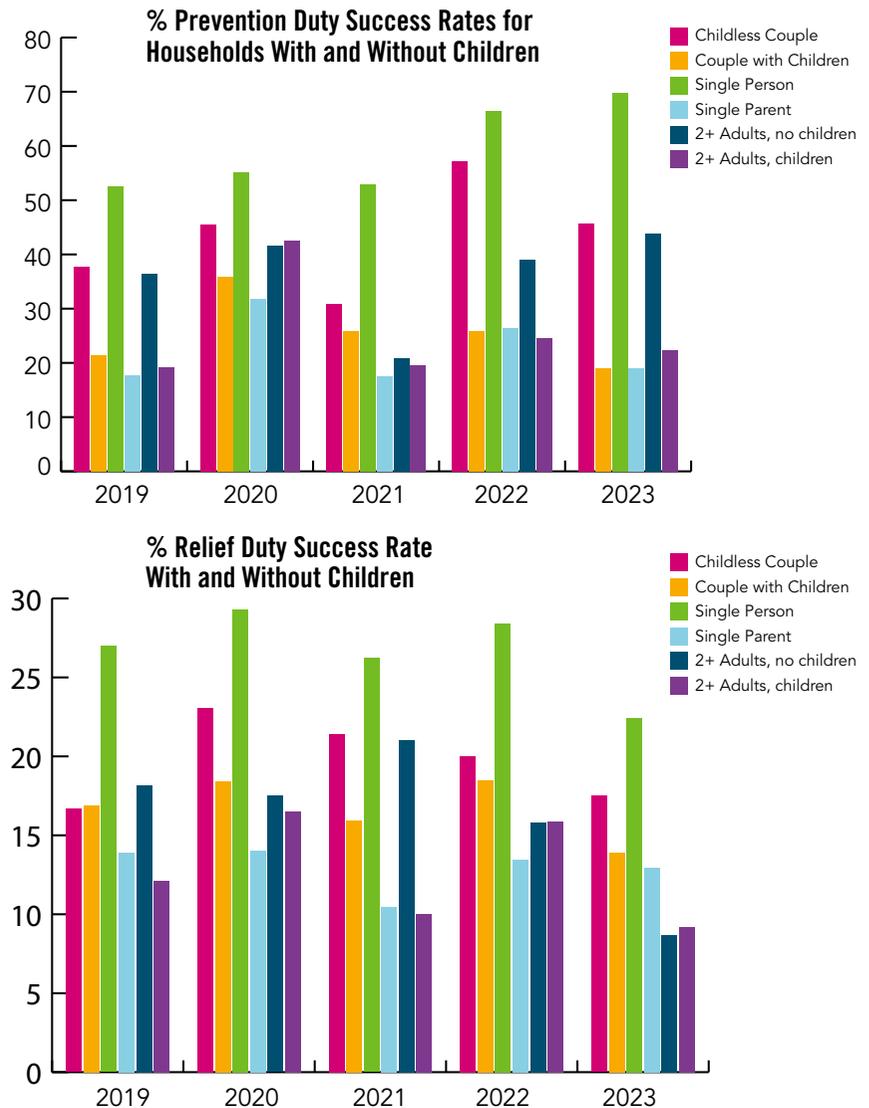
This brings with it a great number of challenges, given that social housing stock does not meet demand. This is particularly acute for larger families trying to access social housing in which there is limited supply, and therefore it can be much harder to house these families.

For example, while there are almost 3,000 households on the housing register waiting for a 4-bed property (2960), in the most recently reported 6-month period, only 25 of such properties were let. For 6-bed properties there are 140 families waiting, but only 14 properties exist across the Council’s entire stock (0.02% of stock)

Figure 6 sets out the success rates for statutory prevention and relief across different key groups in 2022/2023.

## HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION STRATEGY

Figure 6



The pressure on families with dependents is often higher, given that suitable accommodation is less readily available, and because single people and households with no dependent children, are more likely to see their homelessness successfully ended at either the prevention or relief stage.

Growth in the exempt sector and the rise of HMO accommodation, coupled with the make-up of existing stock (40% 1 bedroom) and the general lack of new homes built for large families, has made this situation more acute, and has meant that households with children tend to have the least options.

This means that in line with our new placement policy we must continue to widen the scope of PRS (Private Rented Sector) offers in discharge of homelessness duties, to enable families to move on from temporary accommodation and secure a suitable and affordable home.

### A breakdown of Temporary Accommodation (TA)

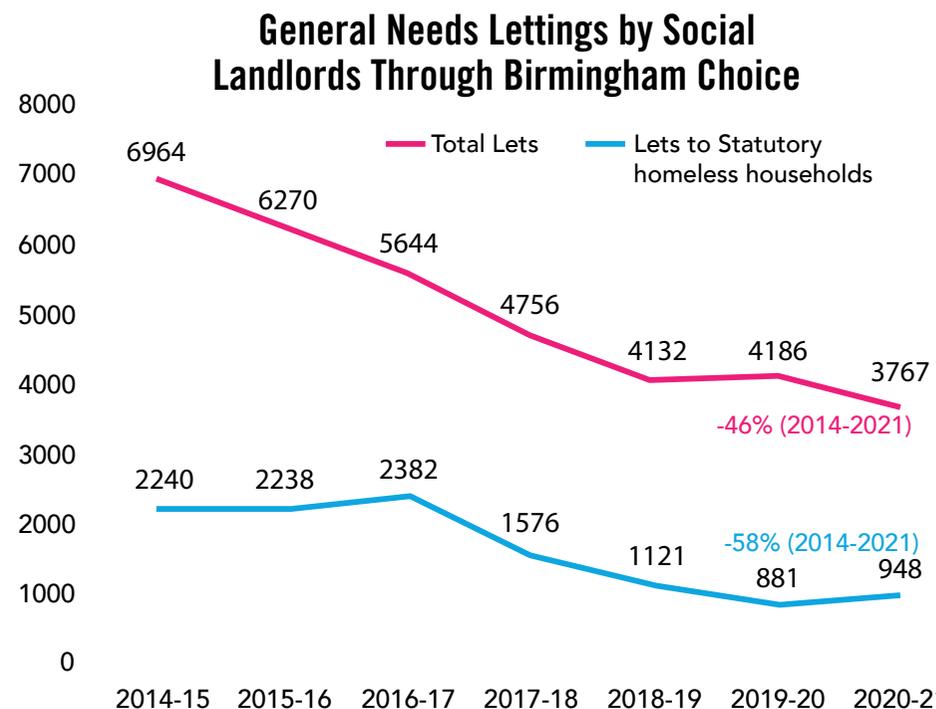
As of September 2023, 109,000 households were living in temporary accommodation across the UK, including 69,680 households with children.

From a Birmingham perspective, there were 5082 Households in TA (as of March 2024) of which 3495 households had been in TA for more than six weeks, with dependent children.

There are several reasons why the Birmingham picture is so acute; increased levels of deprivation, an over reliance on social housing and high levels of main duty acceptances are all contributory factors. However, the number of homes physically available for these households must also be taken into account.

Lettings on Birmingham Choice (The Council's social-housing lettings website) fell from 9,964 in 2014/15 to 3,767 in 2020/21, with lettings to statutorily homeless households halving over the same period, as shown below in Figure 7:

Figure 7



The Council have tried to improve this through the newly published Allocations Policy in January 2023, ensuring the Council are prioritising households based on the most acute need, which has led to a greater proportion of properties being let to statutory homeless households.

Between March 2023 and February 2024, there were 3,547 properties let, of which 1,203 properties were let to households owed a homelessness duty, 1087 of these households were owed the main homelessness duty. Lettings through the new allocations policy will be subject to review in 2024 to ensure that we continue to allocate to those most in need.

Figure 8 and Figure 9 demonstrate the reliance on lettings through the register for homeless households. Predominately the reason for discharge of duty at main duty stage is into social housing. The limited number of lettings and scarce supply of affordable homes have created a bottle neck in TA, where people have to wait for significant periods to access a long-term home.

<b>Reason for end of main duty Birmingham 22/23:</b>		
Housing Act 1996 Pt6 social housing offer - accepted	892	80.2%
Housing Act 1996 Pt6 social housing offer - refused	72	6.5%
Private rented sector offer 6 - accepted	59	5.3%
Private rented sector offer 3 - refused	6	0.5%
Voluntarily ceased to occupy	47	4.2%
Refused suitable TA offer, withdrew or lost contact	31	2.8%
Became intentionally homeless from TA	2	0.2%
Ceased to be eligible	3	0.3%
Not known 7	0	0.0%

Figure 8

<b>Bedrooms needed</b>	<b>Percentage of households in TA</b>	<b>Mean number of weeks in TA so far</b>	<b>Expected mean average length of stay in TA before leaving (years)</b>
1	7%	109	4.2
2	40%	72	2.8
3	32%	89	3.4
4	15%	135	5.2
5+	4%	142	5.5
ALL	100%	91	3.5

Figure 9

The average length in TA for all households between entering and leaving is estimated to be 3.5 years. As might be expected, this varies by the size of the household, with larger families likely to wait longer because of the lower numbers of larger properties available to let through the allocations system. In response, the Council recently set up a 'complex case team' to work with TA residents facing barriers to move on. To date the team has assisted over 1,600 households to receive over £2m in backdated housing benefit claims to contribute towards their TA arrears, and assisted a further 661 households to be permanently rehoused via direct matches, tenancy conversions, choice-based lettings and the PRS.

TA also presents a significant cost to the Council, the net weekly cost of TA is estimated at £512,946 per week (March 2024 data), equivalent to £2.2m per month. These costs have increased by £1.47m in the last 12 months since the Council's Temporary Accommodation Strategy was launched.

The most expensive form of temporary accommodation is the provision of B&B accommodation, currently costing £15.7m per year. The Council's focus since the launch of the Temporary Accommodation Strategy has been reducing the use of B&B accommodation, particularly for families with dependent children over 6 weeks.

Over the last 12 months, the service has managed to progress a gradual reduction in these numbers and have a robust B&B reduction plan, which is closely monitored both internally and by Government colleagues.

### Supply of affordable homes vs demand

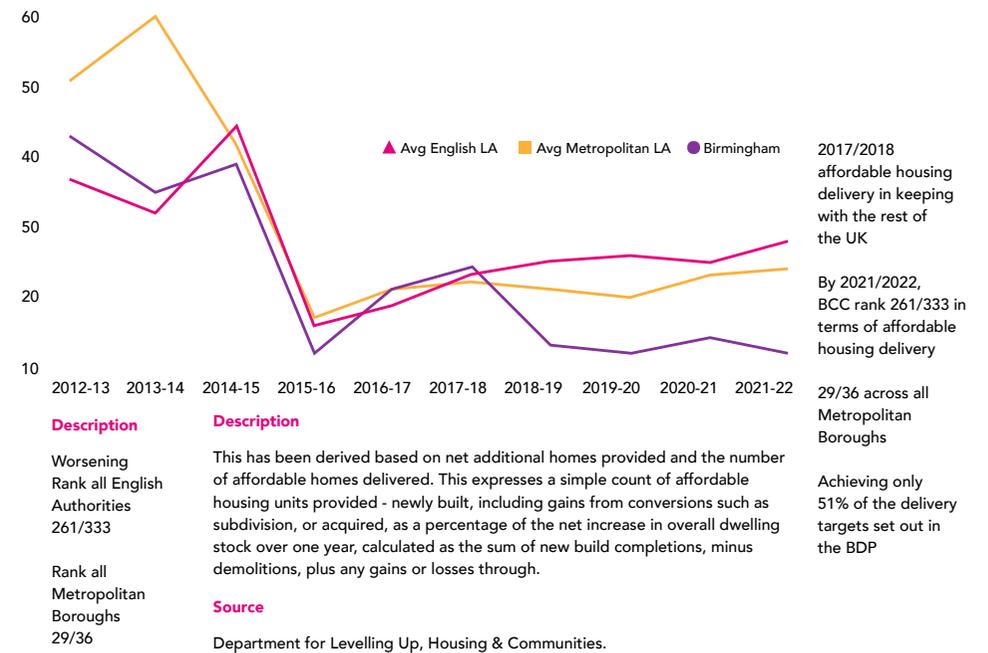
The lack of genuinely affordable homes, particularly social rented homes across all of the UK, has a clear correlation to homelessness. This is particularly prevalent in Birmingham where 24% of the population rely on affordable homes, in comparison with the 18% UK average (HEDNA, 2022).

The Council launched its refreshed Housing Strategy 2023-2028 in January 2023, which was developed with due consideration to the Birmingham Development Plan 2017-2031. The commitment of the strategy was to deliver 1,083 affordable homes per year over the course of the strategy.

Historically, the Council have relied on direct delivery as a means to develop affordable homes. Whilst this was successful between 2009-2017, productivity has reduced in recent years to meeting 51% of its delivery target in relation to affordable homes.

Figure 10 opposite, shows the decline in affordable homes post 2017/2028 following an over reliance on direct delivery routes since the inception of Birmingham Municipal Housing Trust in 2009. The data below demonstrates a summary of key metrics in relation to affordable housing and the impact of reduced development.

Figure 10



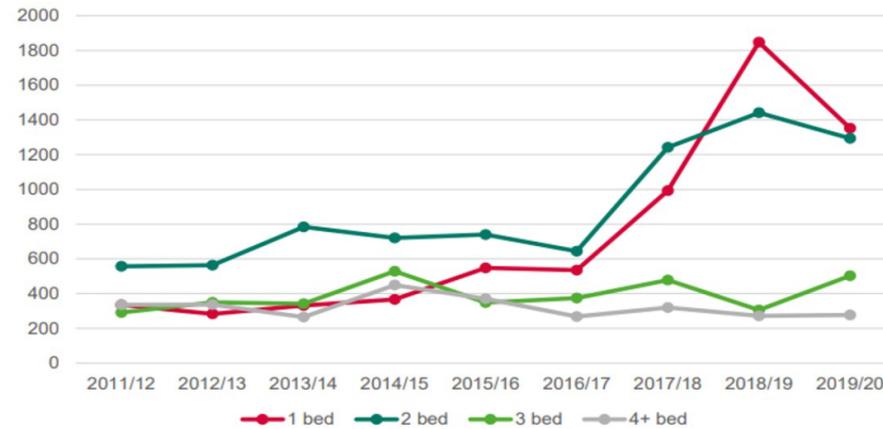
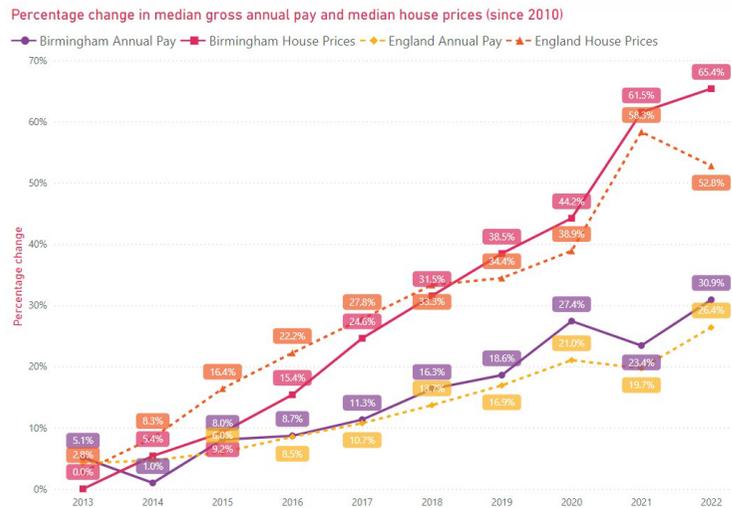
Over the last 5 years, development has been predominately undertaken in the city centre, which has reduced the number of affordable homes developed, specifically due to high land values and viability concerns.

The picture in Birmingham mirrors the national landscape; the House of Commons produced a briefing in May 2023 setting out that the UK needs 145,000 new affordable homes each year. At present, it is estimated that approximately 7,000 affordable homes per year are actually being delivered. The Council has started to address some of these concerns, disposing of the first 8 land sites to Registered Providers, enabling them to use Homes England grant to deliver 100% affordable sites. This is a positive step, but the fact remains that the city is facing the same challenge as the rest of the UK regarding supply vs demand and resolutions cannot be delivered at pace.

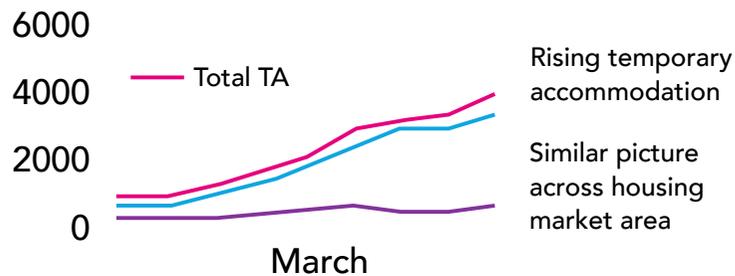
The supply of affordable homes in the city is crucial to meeting housing needs. Since 2017/18 there has been a reduction in the delivery of affordable homes. Figure 11 shows factors that are contributing to a reducing supply.

Figure 11

### Growing Housing issues in four graphs

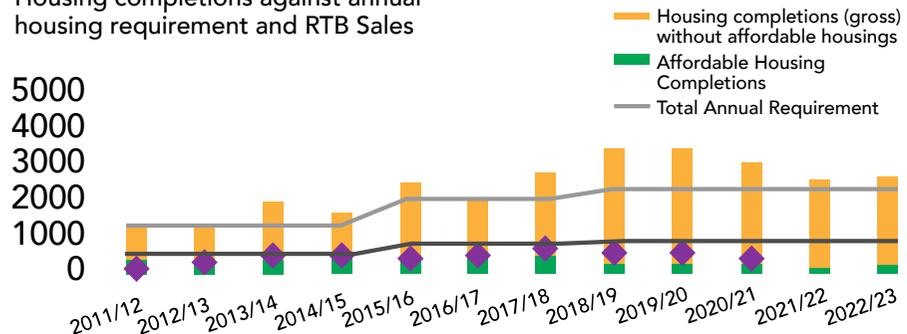


Households in temporary accommodation Mar14 to Mar 22



Lack of affordable housing and RTB loss

Housing completions against annual housing requirement and RTB Sales



The first graph shows the rising house prices over the past 7 years vs the growth in wages, with the gap widening which means more people are relying on affordable products. This is coupled with the fact that families with dependent children are facing the most need, but 1-2 bed homes are being developed proportionately more than family homes.

Graphs 3 and 4 depict the rising use of temporary accommodation vs the homes lost through RTB (Right to Buy)\* which has outweighed the number of new homes developed across the sector. These graphs set out a visual representation in relation to some of the key challenges related to the supply of affordable homes. A lack of supply in this area, coupled with the city's reliance of social rented homes, heightens the risk on homelessness to low-income households.

## **Impact of the cost-of-living crisis**

Nationally, we know that the recent shocks to the economy and the subsequent cost-of-living crisis, have reduced the level of disposable income for most households across the UK. As a city, Birmingham has found this even more challenging given the high levels of deprivation which already existed prior to the cost-of-living crisis.

Poverty has always been linked to homelessness. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation published figures in 2023, setting out that in 2022/2023, 7.2 million households were skipping meals or unable to afford essentials, 4.7 million households are in some form of arrears, either with utilities or rent/mortgage arrears, and 3 million households reported being unable to afford to keep warm in their home.

Birmingham is the 7th most deprived city in England, with nearly half of the city wards within the bottom 10% most deprived nationally.

Economic activity is also significantly less than other areas of the UK. The unemployment rates in Birmingham sit at 7.5% which compares unfavourably with the overall unemployment rate for the UK (3.8%). This is compounded by the fact that 27.1% of households facing unemployment, are also economically inactive, meaning they aren't or cannot seek employment, such as students, early retirees, and those with long-term illness.

Birmingham has adopted a multi-disciplinary approach to tackling poverty; the city has an established financial inclusion partnership that has brought stakeholders together since 2017, to deliver interventions to those experiencing financial hardship.

The city has also worked hard to respond to the cost-of-living crisis; the Council declared a cost-of-living emergency in September 2022, and has worked closely with stakeholders through a well-resourced Financial Inclusion Partnership, to deliver interventions around fuel poverty, food and general household support. Multi-disciplinary interventions such as this, have led to the delivery of over 300 Warm Welcome Hubs\*, the largest across the whole of the UK.

Whilst the city's response to the cost-of-living crisis has been admirable, a longer-term commitment to financial inclusion, capitalising on the opportunities of the Early Intervention & Prevention program is required, to ensure households in financial hardship continue to be supported.

### **Supporting survivors of Domestic Abuse**

The Housing Act 1996 provides that it is not reasonable for a person to continue to occupy accommodation, if it is probable that this will lead to violence or abuse against them, a member of their household, or any other person that might reasonably be expected to reside with them.

This was further reinforced by the Domestic Abuse Act (DA) 2021 which allowed for a wider recognition of crimes, survivors, and perpetrators of DA, by acknowledging that DA can take many forms, not just physical violence, and can include economic abuse and controlling or coercive behaviour. The 2021 Act also changed homelessness legislation, by determining that all victims of DA would be automatically considered priority need.

This is vital, as DA survivors face significant barriers to being rehoused, be that socially, financially or in the interests of their safety, and as DA is intrinsically linked to homelessness, this situation has become more acute as the demand for housing services has increased, which is deeply impacted by the difficulties faced by services in preventing both issues.

Over the last 4 years, an average of 811 households per year have required homelessness assistance from the Council due to DA, of which an average of 715 households per year became homeless. DA is the third most common

reason for homelessness and is also a common reason why households access both Birmingham Children's Trust and Adult Social Care.

Given the rate of DA in the city, the Council have embarked on a journey to become accredited through the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA). The Council have also committed to developing a standalone Domestic Abuse strategy, solidifying the commitment to improving the experience of survivors. The strategy has a very clear vision and reflects the Council's zero tolerance approach to DA.

**"Birmingham is a place where Domestic Abuse is not tolerated; where everyone can expect equality and respect in their relationships, and live free from domestic abuse."**

The development of this strategy seeks to align to the objectives of the DA strategy, in an attempt to make sure that in an attempt to make sure everyone works together, so there is a multi-disciplinary approach to supporting survivors of DA.

### **Responding to the Government's Rough Sleeping Strategy (2018)**

Following a national reduction over the last few years, rough sleeping in the UK increased in both 2022 and 2023. For instance, 3,898 people were recorded as sleeping rough in August 2023, a 27% rise on equivalent figures from twelve months prior.

As a city, we recognise that rough sleeping is more than a housing issue. That's why we have developed a multi-disciplinary approach to tackling rough sleeping through partnerships that include housing providers, police, probation, adult and children's social care services, hospitals and wider NHS services, Job Centre Plus, several voluntary and community organisations, and the WMCA.

In 2018, the Government released the national Rough Sleeping Strategy (2018), which encouraged authorities and services to develop specialist approaches, particularly given the tailored support these specific groups need. A 'refreshed' Rough Sleeping Strategy was launched in September 2022, Ending Rough Sleeping for Good, underpinned by ongoing ambition to meet the 2024 target to 'end' rough sleeping as per the 2019 Conservative Party election manifesto commitment.

The 2022 strategy sets out a definition of what it means to end rough sleeping "which is that it is prevented wherever possible, and where it does occur it is rare, brief, and non-recurrent".

Legislative changes such as these have led to some key achievements; the Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) funding programme and Housing First model, which have become embedded approaches across the UK and are an example of a tailored support package for cohorts that might need something more personalised.

Backed by £9.6m government funding, the WMCA's Housing First pilot gives people who have experienced rough sleeping a home with intensive support for problems such as mental, psychological, or emotional ill health, drug or alcohol dependency, or experience of domestic violence and abuse. It places individuals directly into independent tenancies, with no requirement to progress through transitional housing programmes.

Locally, Birmingham's Housing First pilot has been successful, with allocations of social housing through the pilot recognised as best practice at the national level. The pilot helped to accommodate 175 households into sustainable tenancies, while commissioned providers have worked together to make sure that rough sleeping does not increase in the city.

Birmingham's approach to rough sleeping has been nationally recognised and this strategy reinforces the need to continue to work in a multi-disciplinary way to prevent and tackle rough sleeping, both now and in the long-term.

## HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION STRATEGY

Birmingham's Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2023 is aligned to the Government's own strategy and aimed to embed a comprehensive targeted prevention, relief and recovery model on the prevention pathway approach, set out in our overall Birmingham Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2017+ which has included:

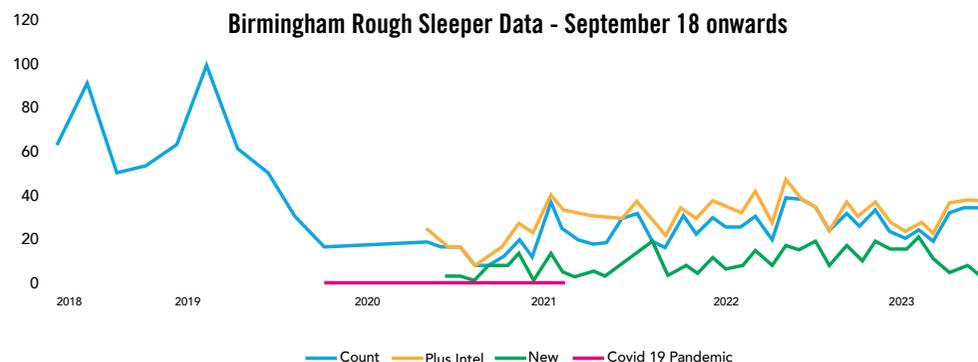
- Developing specialist provision for Young People (including Care Leavers and Youth Offenders) in partnership with BCT, St Basils and Spring Housing.
- Developing specialist provision for prison leavers and offenders in partnership with Spring Housing
- Sustaining and enhancing our homelessness provision for vulnerable Single Adults, delivered in partnership with SIFA Fireside
- Putting in place multi-disciplinary teams (housing, health and social care) into the work of NHS hospital discharge services covering Birmingham. Support is offered to patients with no fixed abode or precarious housing to prevent rough sleeping and hospital re-admissions to A&E services.

Investment in the reduction of rough sleeping delivers positive outcomes; this was demonstrated by the Government issued an 'Everyone-In' instruction\*, to accommodate all rough sleepers regardless of circumstance. This intervention gave Birmingham the flexibility to support over 450 homeless presentations from 'single adults' over the 6-week period that followed, through outreach, additional housing advice, closing of night-shelters and increased temporary accommodation capacity.

This included those traditionally excluded due to having no recourse to public funds, reducing numbers on the streets to as low as 10 people. 'Everyone-In' ended in Birmingham in August 2021, consequently a single night snapshot of rough sleepers in October 2023 recorded 36 people sleeping rough, which although is the highest it had been all year, it is still some way below the 2019 average.

Figure 12 reflects the city's rough sleeping population between April 2021-December 2023.

Figure 12

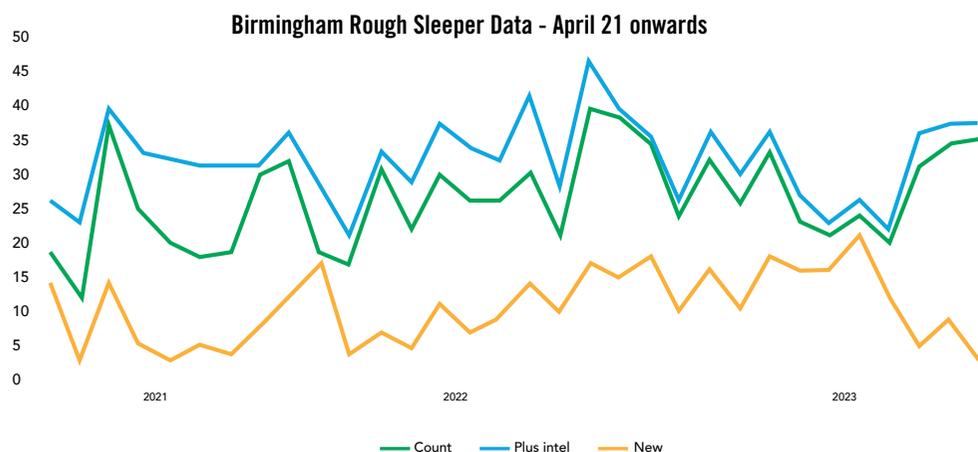


To track the number of people sleeping rough in Birmingham, the city undertakes a monthly snapshot count, Figure 12 and Figure 13 demonstrates the way in which rough sleeping is tracked. Numbers peaked in October 2022 with 39 people sleeping rough on any given night. Most recent figures (December 2023) counted 35 as the most up to date figure.

The formal 2023 street count confirmed the number of rough sleepers as 36 which is a decrease of almost 8% compared to the last year, and significantly bucks the national trend. Nationally, street count numbers saw the estimated number of people sleeping rough increase by 27% since last year's count, which is the highest it has been since prior to the pandemic, and a climb for the 3rd year in a row.

Birmingham's successes in tackling rough sleeping is evidenced by the fact city street count compares favourably with other core cities across England. In Birmingham we have the lowest rate of rough sleeping per 100,000 people of the population compared to other core cities, demonstrated in Figure 14.

Figure 13



Core City	Number of Rough Sleepers on a single night - Autumn 2023	Rate per 100k of population
Birmingham	36	3.1
Bristol	67	14
Leeds	49	6
Liverpool	34	6.8
Manchester	48	8.4
Newcastle Upon Tyne	26	8.5
Nottingham	46	14
Sheffield	31	5.5

Birmingham’s count figure for 2023 includes:

- Individuals who have accommodation to which they can return: 7 (19%)
- Non-UK Nationals with unsettled immigration status: 4 (11%)
- New presentations: 11 (31%)
- 21 (58%) individuals found on the night had been rough sleeping for less than 7 days, although 24 individuals were known to outreach services, indicating they had previous episodes of rough sleeping.
- 6 females, 30 males; 1 individual under 25, 4 individuals over 50.

Since the snapshot count in October, there has been a fluctuation in numbers of people found rough sleeping (37 in November, 33 in December, 43 in January, 48 in February 2024). All who are rough sleeping continue to have an offer of accommodation and support.

The council was awarded £5,398,744 through the Rough Sleepers Initiative (RSI) 2022-2025. The Council was also awarded £1,747,500 through Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme (SHAP). This funding has been allocated by Government to improve the existing network of provision, to provide better accommodation options for young people with complex needs, those living with physical disabilities, ensuring there is provision of single sex accommodation for women, and increasing the units of Housing First accommodation.

Birmingham’s collaborative approach to rough sleeping, means the city falls out of the top 10 cities with the most people estimated to be sleeping rough, and the West Midlands is the only region to see no significant change to its numbers.

Figure 15 sets out the national trends below.

Area	2022	2023	Difference	%Change
West Midlands	250	256	6	2
North East	61	89	28	46
East of England	285	337	52	18
East Midlands	213	287	74	35
South West	413	488	75	18
South East	572	670	98	17
Yorkshire and the Humber	170	270	100	59
North West	247	369	122	49
London	858	1,132	274	32
Rest of England	2,211	2,766	555	25
England	2,069	3,898	829	27

Rough sleeping is not increasing significantly in the city, and this is because of the specific interventions embedded jointly by the Council and voluntary sector; the implementation of Housing First, Navigators, and commissioned support services funded through Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) funding.

These partnership arrangements have been solidified over several years, and are a good example of the difference that can be made to some of the most vulnerable members of society, through multi-disciplinary efforts. We want to build on the successes we have had tackling rough sleeping so far, and this involves protecting and expanding on successful partnerships and commissioning arrangements, to ensure our approach to rough sleeping remains sustainable both now and in the long-term.

### **The relationship between supported exempt accommodation (SEA)\***

Birmingham is in a unique position, in that there is a large population of hidden homeless people consistently falling both in and out of the supported exempt sector. Exempt accommodation is a form of supported accommodation and is known as ‘exempt’ because it is exempt from the usual caps on housing benefit levels, meaning residents can receive a higher amount of housing benefit than usual. This additional housing benefit usually assists with the costs of providing care and support.

The sector has been largely unregulated for several years, meaning that unscrupulous providers have accepted an income for providing additional support that has not actually been provided, and have in some circumstances left vulnerable residents living in poor quality accommodation. The ability for landlords to make additional profit in the exempt sector, has led to a growth of over 11,000 units between 2011-2022, with the most recent number of exempt units sitting at circa 26,000 units.

Whilst the exempt sector poses a challenge, if delivered and regulated appropriately it can play an important part in reducing homelessness, for households requiring an enhanced level of support. In January 2023 the Council published its Supported Housing Strategy, which aims to improve property standards and standards of care across the supported housing sector.

Since its publication the Council has partnered with the Birmingham Voluntary Service Council (BVSC), to draw up a supported exempt accommodation quality standards accreditation scheme (SEAQS) for Birmingham. Additionally, Spring Housing and Birmingham University also developed a SEA tenants Charter of Rights. This aims to ensure there is some governance around the level of support residents receive, providing some assurance that residents who access exempt accommodation are well taken care of.

Additionally, the Council was awarded £3.19 million last year through the Supported Housing Improvement Programme (SHIP) pilot, covering the period April 2023-March 2025. The pilot sustains its multi-disciplined, cross-departmental team, dedicated to improving the quality of exempt accommodation. To date the team have achieved the following outcomes:

- Since October 2020, the Housing Inspection arm of the team have identified a total of 10,366 combined category one and two hazards across 2778 SEA properties. 98% of these hazards have been removed without the need for costly formal enforcement action.
- During the same period, the Planning Team have undertaken 353 SEA inspections resulting in 28 formal enforcement notices.
- The Community Safety Team have completed 1590 investigations into residents of SEA which have led to 28 community protection warnings, 48 arrests and 488 evictions of SEA tenants that posed a risk to others.

- Adult Social Care have completed 1756 support plans and 77 safeguarding plans for SEA residents.
- The Revenue and Benefits arm of the team have claimed back £7.6 million in overpaid SEA housing benefit.

The Council, alongside partners have taken significant steps to embed infrastructure that enables a better-quality exempt provision. The Council have also led the way in lobbying Government to introduce legislation that enables more effective regulation of the sector, leading to the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act, formally introduced in August 2023.

The Act allows the government to create new National Supported Housing Standards and introduce licensing regulations. It also sets out how a new Supported Housing Advisory Panel will work, and how this impacts the rules around intentional homelessness, in circumstances where the occupier has left accommodation that does not meet national standards'

The standards could address the type or condition of accommodation, as well as the care or support provided. There is no set date for these standards to be introduced and it is not currently known what the standards will specify. Uncertainty around how and when the standards will be formally introduced leaves the city unable to take more proactive action.

This is compounded by the short-term funding arrangements provided by Government to support the pilot, in the sense that the city are reliant on the introduction of national standards before they can build a model that is sustainable for the city.

## Embedding the Positive Pathway

The 2017 Homelessness Prevention Strategy set out the Positive Pathway system approach, designed and based on collaboration, best practice, and service integration, as a means of ensuring an excellent response to homelessness in the city.

First developed by St Basils and implemented locally with young people at risk of, or experiencing homelessness, the Positive Pathway had seen much success for young people. The Pathway sets out five key areas that can be used flexibly, with an aim that people will be supported as early and as effectively as possible; no matter what stage people enter the pathway.

The five key areas are:

- 1 Universal Prevention
- 2 Targeted Prevention
- 3 Crisis Prevention and Relief
- 4 Homeless Recovery
- 5 Sustainable Housing



The 2017 strategy highlighted the severe health inequalities experienced by homeless households, identifying triggers, causes and risk factors associated with homelessness. The prevention pathway being specifically designed to help address this inequity.

It is essential that we review our progress over the last five years. In this section we seek to acknowledge the successes of our commissioned services/partners and understand where the pathway is working well, while identifying gaps, and thus opportunities, to improve outcomes for this new strategy.

We have acknowledged the tremendous financial pressure the Council is under and the likelihood that this will impact future service delivery. However, we are committed to advocating for the protection of these vital means of support for the most vulnerable.

### What have the outcomes and achievements been?

The Homelessness Prevention Pathway in Birmingham, is a robust partnership of statutory and non-statutory services, targeted commissioned services for vulnerable adults and young people delivered in partnership with the voluntary and community sector, and interventions managed by partners such as the West Midlands Combined Authority.

All of these partners play a vital role in the prevention and relief of homelessness. The infographic to the right demonstrates both service demand and successful outcomes achieved by partners during either 2023 or the financial year 2022/23:

#### Universal

- 226 instances where Neighbourhood Advice & Information Services prevented homelessness upstream of statutory homelessness provision
- 934 Households supported by Neighbourhood Advice and Information Services to claim a combined £1.378m as a means of maximising their income
- Average of 13,577 citizens per month receiving housing related advice & assistance from our Customer Contact Centre via telephone, webchat & email
- 54,991 homelessness related webpage views per month. Down 43% following improvement to the website as citizens can self-serve quicker.

#### Recovery

- 94 clients moved into commissioned Supported Accommodation by SIFA Fireside's Homeless Transition Worker Service
- SEA Quality Accreditation Scheme 110 providers signed up to the Charter of Rights, 23 fully accredited
- 358 Care leavers provided holistic support from St Basil's, ranging from mental health support to Money skills and employment training
- 175 People a year supported via Housing First Pilot (WMCA)

#### Targeted

- SIFA Fireside Adult Support Hub:
  - 526 adults with complex needs had their financial support needs met
  - 628 had their community-based support needs met
  - 425 were referred for health and wellbeing support
  - 232 were supported into accommodation
- Commissioned Lead Worker Services:
  - 886 people provided with emotional and practical support.
  - 251 people supported into long term accommodation
  - 338 people supported to maintain their accommodation
- Cranstoun DA Hub:
  - 873 DA survivors supported.
  - 328 survivors received financial advice
    - 128 received IAG
  - 269 were supported with housing applications
  - 161 were referred to refuge
- St Basils Youth Hub:
  - 414 young people supported to secure long-term accommodation
  - 239 young people housed in emergency commissioned accommodation
  - 189 young people placed in supported accommodation
- Spring Offenders Hub:
  - 912 people supported upon release from prison
  - 439 people with an offending history accommodated
  - 957 referrals accepted for drug, alcohol, mental health and wider support

#### Crisis

- 589 People supported via the Rough Sleeper Outreach Team (24/7 response to alerts from Street Link)
- Specialist Refuge Accommodation: of 317 placement requests, 151 households accommodated into refuge and 114 supported into lone term accommodation
- 1980 households accommodated in temporary accommodation 3725 Relief Duty accepted 2230 Prevent Duty accepted
- 1323 Duty to Refer referrals received in 2023

#### Sustainable Housing

- 2746 Properties let through Birmingham Choice
- 350 Private Rented Properties secured in discharge of homelessness duty by the Accommodation Finding Team
- In 2023/24 The Empty Property Strategy has resulted in 300 properties being brought back in to use, 20 of which are family sized homes
- Private Rented Team in place to improve the standards of private accommodation-direct intervention in 359 properties last year

Across the pathway, services are well used with impressive outcomes, without which the pressure and demand upon statutory services would likely be immense and outcomes for vulnerable citizens highly detrimental.

The diagram on (page 28), sets out the volume of households supported across each type of intervention, as well as who delivers them. Presenting the pathway in this way demonstrates that partners working together is what makes a difference, rather than any individual contribution.

Targeted support spans across the pathway, with providers carrying out interventions, aimed at supporting households proactively but also through crisis and recovery.

Through the delivery of such a robust pathway, we have been pleased to see the achievements and the genuine lifeline it has provided for many vulnerable people. Aspirations for the pathway should consider how the Council's Early Intervention & Prevention program can be embedded into the pathway approach. We want to focus on how we make the universal space more inclusive for households, focusing on reaching households at an earlier point, enabling people to help themselves before they require intervention.

We want to build on the success of the pathway so far, whilst integrating a more preventative model. However, we must be clear in our conclusion that we are not promoting prevention over recovery; this strategy seeks to promote a balanced approach to resourcing, making sure that nobody gets left behind.

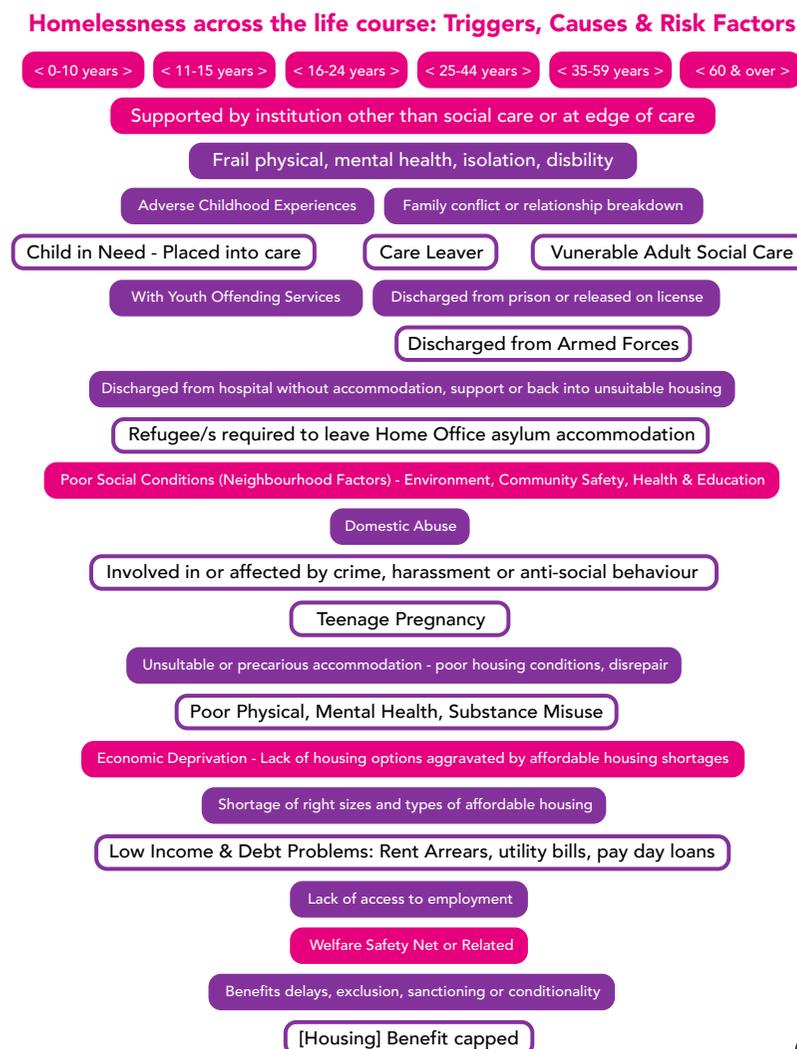
### Solidifying the relationship between housing and health

The root causes and drivers of homelessness are multifaceted and complex. Examining these through a public health lens, using the wider determinants of health and life course approach, can help us make sense of these interrelated factors by understanding what increases risk or influences that can help mitigate i.e. protective factors.

## HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION STRATEGY

Adopting this approach is vital if we truly wish to tackle the root causes of homelessness, and this process is particularly pertinent given the interlinked nature of housing and health across the life course for different cohorts, and how detriment to one can have an equally severe impact on the other, as shown visually in Figure 16.

Figure 16



For instance, with 1 in 3 children in Birmingham living in poverty and 5062 living in temporary accommodation (as of March 2024), we risk creating the next generation of homeless adults and families in Birmingham.

It is well recognised that homelessness at a young age can be harmful to one's life chances, and that associated circumstances such as neglect, abuse, missing school regularly, Domestic Abuse, and substance misuse, are well understood to be underlying risk factors for the recurrence of homelessness.

Addressing wider determinants and drivers such as these, not only improves overall health and wellbeing, but ultimately reduces the risk of homelessness in the future, which is one of our core objectives. Across all measures, from life expectancy, infant mortality, suicide, to homelessness, those living in deprivation are several times more likely to have adverse outcomes. This is compounded further when we consider other inequalities such as race and ethnicity.

In reverse, poor housing is also a key driver of health inequalities and influences health throughout the life course. Research has shown that inadequate housing conditions are linked to poor physical and mental health.

Synonymously mental health can also lead to losing housing, in January 2020, support with ill mental health has been the third most prevalent listed support need of all households experiencing homelessness.

This scenario is compounded further where someone suffers from multiple vulnerabilities, or has additional health-care responsibilities, such as those also experiencing Domestic Abuse, or full-time carers.

The same applies to vulnerable citizens who experience 'dual diagnosis', which broadly refers to those who have both a mental health illness and a substance misuse disorder. In circumstances such as these, citizens can find it difficult to obtain and maintain stable accommodation and causing additional healthcare pressures.

Similar pressures are experienced by those with household members living with neurodivergent conditions. For example, research estimates that about 12% of people experiencing homelessness are autistic, compared to 1-2% of the general population. People with ADHD are also at a greater risk of becoming homeless.

Mental and physical health needs, are already the 3rd and 4th most commonly disclosed support need for all households approaching the Council as homeless, which on its own demonstrates a correlation between health and homelessness. There are many ways to demonstrate the relationship between housing and health, it is what we do with this information that counts. In most cases, homelessness occurs when a household has reached crisis point and there are often several opportunities for both statutory and non-statutory services to intervene in prevention focused activity.

One of the key principles of this strategy is that homelessness is everyone's business and that adopting a multi-disciplinary approach as early as possible ensures that getting households the right help is prioritized.

# LEARNING FROM LIVED EXPERIENCE

Homelessness cannot truly be understood without learning from those who have experienced it. Only through understanding those who have lived experience, can we seek to design interventions that will be successful in preventing it from happening to others.

Throughout the formation of the strategy, we have been keen to draw from existing information provided by both national and regional groups like Crisis and the WMCA, who have done extensive research with people who have or are currently experiencing homelessness. We have incorporated this research and added often underrepresented local perspectives, by conducting engagement sessions with citizens with lived experience of homelessness, in collaboration with HMP Winson Green, the Birmingham Refugee & Migrant Centre, Green Square Accord Refuge, and Trident Housing.

The common themes present in citizen's journeys were listed and then discussed in additional engagement sessions with networks for citizen engagement, namely St Basil's Youth Advisory Board, Birmingham Poverty Truth Commission, Shelter, and Fair Housing Birmingham. The themes drawn from this research, as well as quotes collected from those who took part in the engagement sessions, are set out below and have been incorporated into the strategic priorities.

**Theme 1-** Homelessness affects some people more than others, and this is not always recognised within the systems we use to tackle homelessness. Throughout our research, there were many groups who said that some people are more likely to experience homelessness than others and raised concerns that mechanisms are not in place to ensure marginalised groups have the right safety net to prevent them from becoming homeless.

This is something that is widely understood; Heriot Wyatt University undertook a deep dive in to race inequalities and homelessness in the UK, finding that black people are three and a half times more likely to experience homelessness than white people.

## HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION STRATEGY

Amongst black people with experiences of homelessness, 32% report discrimination from a landlord and within the West Midlands Region, 33% of households in temporary accommodation are from an ethnic minority, which is noticeably disproportionate, given ethnic minorities make up less than 23% of the West Midlands population.

In response, the WMCA have developed a Race, Equalities Task force looking to challenge some of the systemic issues related to race. They are working closely with the WMCA Homelessness Taskforce in identifying the underlying links between race and homelessness.



The Council have also developed the 'everybody's battle, everybody's business agenda', which has a focus on driving forward a culture of equality and promoting diversity both within the Council's entire workforce and the way we deliver services to citizens as a whole.

It was clear through our research that seeking help when homeless or threatened with homelessness, is easier for some than others.

**"It's not good enough to be accessible to 'normal methods', it needs to be accessible to everyone."**

Through the work of the Regional Homelessness Taskforce, we know that outside of London, we are by far one of the most ethnically diverse regions.



The pictorial depiction (on page 31) has been developed by people who have experienced what it is like to be homeless and the different areas they are expected to navigate and explore to achieve a successful outcome.

The illustration also sets out some of the emotions people experience 'why me,' 'not fair,' and 'what else can I do', demonstrating the feelings of exasperation whilst trying to navigate a system, that can feel quite complex even for professionals.

**"When I make a housing application, it's just boxes to tick. That is a barrier to me because I can't properly explain my situation with a tick box."**

The Council is operating within a complex legislative framework and has to make difficult decisions around who to prioritise and how this should be applied. This means systems can feel bureaucratic and households often feel a desperation to move themselves up the queue.

**"When citizens are presenting, they have to oversell their situation to get help. You constantly have to fight to prove yourself."**

It is clear that the way in which households experience support is challenging to navigate and whilst the legislative framework governs this, we do have control around the way in which we help people to understand what they need to do and what the likely outcomes will be. As such, perhaps adopting progressive practice, such as Trauma Informed Care (TIC), would make procedures more accessible.

**Case Study: unsure where to go for support.**

Kelly wanted to leave an abusive home but did not know where to go for help. She spoke to the Police who were unhelpful, and inflamed the situation by making contact while her partner was at the property. Eventually Kelly was made aware of help she could receive, but this was far later than it should have been.

***"I didn't know where to go. I had heard of Women's Aid, but I didn't know that they could help. I definitely didn't know they had accommodation".***

Access, connectivity, and awareness are vital, making it easier for people to seek advice and support when they need it. In Kelly's situation, there were clearly opportunities missed to support her and we must do all we can to raise awareness of the support available.

**Theme 3-** Systems need to be humane and a space where people do not feel judged.

Following the Grenfell tragedy in 2017, there has been significant focus on the stigma that is attached to those living in social housing and we believe this extends to those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

### **Case Study: poor customer service.**

Steven became homeless when drug addiction led to a relationship breakdown. He was able to stop taking drugs and leave the homeless hostel he was staying in, but after a month Steven's mental health suffered and he once again found himself homeless. At this point Steven reached out for help, but found support unresponsive or offering false hope:

***"I had a call literally a week before coming back into this place cos I was registered as homeless. Dude, I registered that in August (now December), that wasn't even what I was registering for! I had to give them identification, I had to send them a letter of my Universal Credit. The people on the other end... do not do anything, do not get back in contact with ya. For all these guys know I'm dead in a park".***

The way in which Steven was spoken to made the situation worse, and disincentivised him to interact with services:

***"You know what the person on the other end of the phone said? [we] don't do self-contained places so 'good luck with that'. In this walk of life, the people that answer the phones don't know or see the situation you're in, they genuinely don't care. That's the horrible most degrading thing. That is the sentiment and that's what's going to stick with me".***

Experiences like those Steven reports are not about the quality of the advice provided or the options available for him. The way in which we communicate and how we treat households who need our support, is within our gift and can have a direct impact on the household's ability or willingness to seek the support they need.

***"Did you know if they don't give you a call back by 5 o'clock you have to redo it all again the next day? Go through every single detail [...] every single moment again. It's soul destroying".***

From the research undertaken, it is clear that communication is an area that citizens would like to see improved. When households approach as homeless, it is likely that they will be experiencing extreme stress and are often homeless because of existing vulnerabilities and if they are treated with a lack of sensitivity, this can make the situation worse.

***"You have to understand that the whole process is traumatic in itself, and that just adds to the trauma you've already got."***

This strategy and the activities associated with its delivery, must begin to shift the balance, understanding that households approaching are customers using the service, the same way as utility providers or any other customer focused business.

We want to ensure we commit to reducing stigma, improving the quality of service, and helping the system to feel more humane for those who need to use it.

**Theme 4-** People in Birmingham are experiencing financial hardship and feel like it is more likely that they may become homeless.

Evidence shows that the cost-of-living crisis has had a significant impact across the whole of the UK. As the levels of deprivation in Birmingham are much higher than the national average, that means that the risk of homelessness is increased, and therefore it is crucial to tackle the symptoms of homelessness upstream, in order to prevent people entering crisis.

**“Food insecurity is a huge challenge for me. I always talk about how important free food is... If you’re malnourished, you don’t have energy to go out and work”.**

Several people we spoke to reiterated the challenges they experienced buying essentials and keeping themselves afloat. The reiterated focus on the inability to fund the necessities, solidified the clear link between poverty and homelessness.

The city has an established financial inclusion partnership who co-ordinate interventions across the city that help to tackle poverty. This has been supported by a COL programme (Cost of Living) which has made several key achievements, including the mobilisation of over 300 Warm Welcome hubs.

#### **Case Study: cost of living**

Haider is a refugee who was recently granted refugee status and placed into a hotel, before moving into supported living. Haider spoke of his gratitude but did not understand why so much money was being spent on accommodation which he confirmed was certainly not to standard.

**“Yes, [the staff] came once. But nothing changes, the guests they still say too cold...[the staff] not helping. They charge 250 per week, more than a thousand. Why so much?”.**

Given how others were struggling, Haider was not comfortable with the amount of money being spent on him and didn’t want people to think he was wasting money.

**“I am happy to be here, but I just want to live and respect this country. I don’t understand why paying £1000 a month. I don’t [want to] disrespect people”.**

What was clear from the research undertaken was that households who are facing financial hardship are struggling because they can’t meet their basic needs.

With national rent increases in both social housing rents and private rents, as well as potential restrictions in funding through the Council, it is imperative that we continue to embed interventions that support citizens facing financial hardship.

This strategy formalises the links between poverty and homelessness and as a commitment of this strategy, we must continue to work in partnership to level up and reduce deprivation across the city wherever we have the opportunity to do so.

# OUR APPROACH TO PREVENTION

## How are we defining prevention?

Through the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act (2017), Government defines prevention as anyone who is threatened with homelessness within 56 days and requires Local Authorities to formally intervene at this stage.

The implementation of this legislation was a significant change for Local Authorities, who had no statutory duty to prevent homelessness up until this point, although many attempted to do so.

Fulfilling our statutory obligations has to be the start, not the end of our prevention activity, and experience shows us that the statutory definition of prevention doesn't go far enough.

This is formalised in the West Midlands by the Regional Homeless Taskforce approach to 'design out' homelessness.

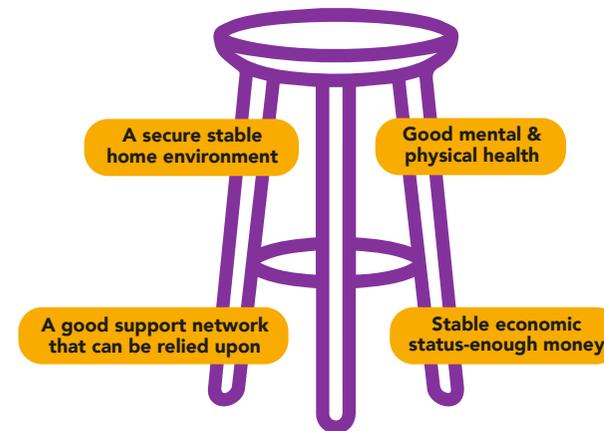
## Designing out Homelessness in the West Midlands



Homelessness is rarely the result of a single cause but rather a complex culmination and interplay of structural, systemic, and individual/relational factors.

Although distinct, we should not consider these as separate categories but rather an interplay between each within an overall system.

Our approach to homelessness prevention, should therefore seek to address this complex range of factors.



We know that homelessness can happen to anyone, at any time but we cannot get away from the fact that some members of society are at higher risk than others.

The diagram above or 'four-legged stool' analogy, sets out how we see the increased risk of homelessness develop in certain aspects of an individual's life. The stool, with four legs resting solidly on the floor represents solid foundations, a life protected from homelessness.

Good mental and physical health, a secure stable home, a steady sufficient income, and a good support network are protective factors guarding against homelessness.

A weakness in any of these four areas increases the risk of homelessness, and when more than one of these risk factors is present, the level of risk increases with it.

We know that resources to address homelessness, and in particular the root causes of homelessness are limited both nationally and locally.

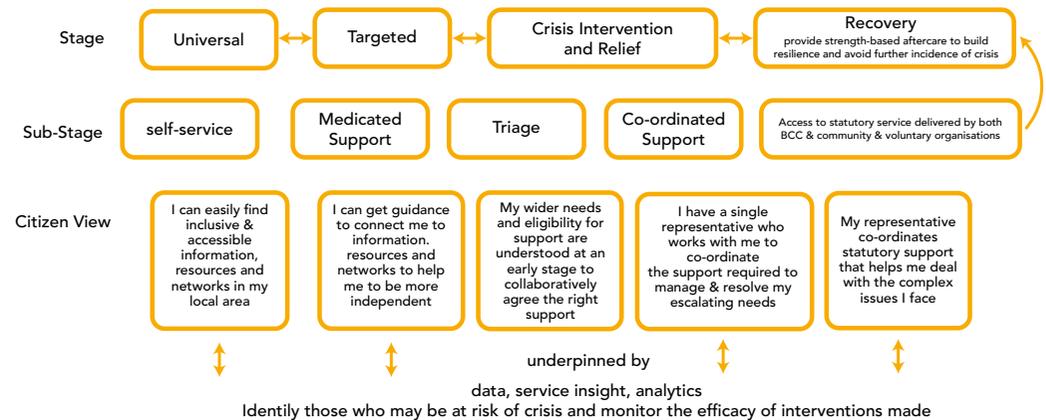
In addition, there is the danger of both the sector and government emphasising the need for short-term and emergency responses, which generally leads to funding for short-term and emergency interventions, rather than tackling systemic issues.

Focus on prevention can seem like a moral dilemma; questions around targeting resources upstream, without taking away from those who are vulnerable now are age old and it is easy to make the wrong decision.

The Council's Early Intervention & Prevention programme has been designed to work further upstream; using readily available data to proactively identify those most at risk, enabling teams to focus on early, holistic, strengths-based support.

The programme is truly collaborative, in the sense that it brings together a multi-disciplinary, integrated, and inclusive offer that leverages the strengths of the Council and its partners to bring together universal and targeted services together in one place. This includes new technology, tools, and ways of working that are fundamental to transforming how we work and think differently around early intervention and prevention.

The model below sets out how the programme will work in practice; the visual is designed to articulate what we mean by each of the stages and the key transitions that will take place between early intervention and prevention and wider services.



Our aim is to keep most of our citizens in the universal space by empowering them to completely self-serve or receive some guidance to find the resources to help themselves for example, those who are digitally excluded.

Some of our citizens will of course require more targeted, intensive support as their challenges escalate to meet statutory thresholds. If the program is successful, statutory services will have more capacity to deliver services once a threshold is reached, based on the program's proactive and targeted approach.

# WHAT IS OUR PREVENTION TYPOLOGY?

We are committed to taking an informed and evidence-based approach to homelessness prevention in Birmingham. Firstly, by understanding what homelessness looks like in the city and reflecting on the effectiveness of existing interventions. Secondly, by listening to (and learning from) the insights of real people, who have experience of homelessness and thirdly, by exploiting the expansive knowledge, evidence, strategy, and policy developed by our local and national partners.

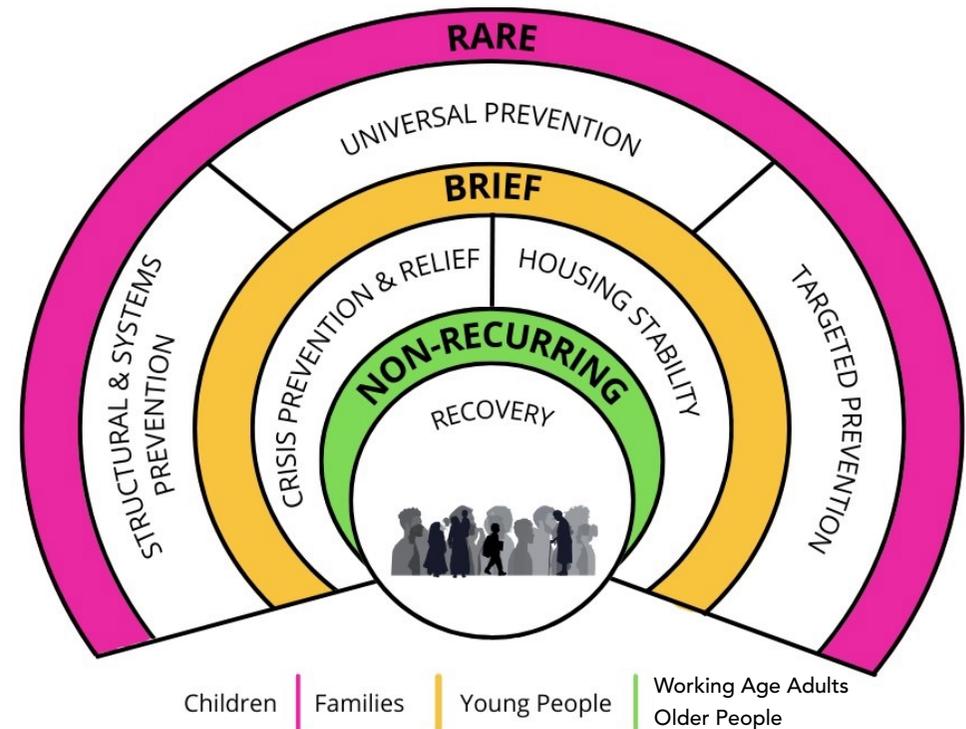
In reviewing the homelessness prevention typology within Birmingham’s 2017 strategy, we have also looked to a range of frameworks and more specifically:

- **Ending Rough Sleeping for Good (2022) – DLUHC**
- **The SHARE Framework (2020) – CHI**
- **Designing Out Homelessness (2018) – WMCA**
- **Everybody In: How to end homelessness in Great Britain (2018) – Crisis**

All the frameworks share the ultimate and ambitious vision of ending Homelessness and/or Rough Sleeping and agree the best way to prevent homelessness, is to stop it from happening in the first place. DLUHC (in partnership with CHI) in the Ending Rough Sleeping Strategy, set out four key themes of Prevention, Intervention, Recovery and a Transparent & Joined up System. In doing so, the government have laid out a clear and measurable definition of ending Rough Sleeping: To prevent homelessness where possible but where it does occur for it to be rare, brief and non-recurrent.

In developing Birmingham’s prevention model or typology, we have adopted the rare, brief and non-recurrent approach, most commonly associated with ending rough sleeping, and adapted this to apply it to homelessness in its broader form.

The model incorporates several complex themes which are explored thoroughly below, the objectives are set out below so there is clarity around what we expect it to achieve:



- The typology provides a common understanding of prevention whilst helping to define the ways in which the city, our partners and collaborators can intervene to prevent and ‘design out homelessness’.

- Look forward ambitiously and align to the rare, brief and non-recurrent stance and evaluate impact through a set of clear indicators.
- Incorporate what has worked and remains relevant from existing typologies/prevention pathways to the rare, brief and non-recurring concept.
- Be person centred, aiming to empower citizens and promote wellbeing.
- Understand homelessness prevention as a broad and complex system.
- Work 'upstream' with increased focus on the structural and systems space for effective universal and targeted prevention.
- Recognise the structural, social, economic, and individual factors, through a public health lens, learning from the Wider Determinants of Health.

The approach maintains the prevention domains of the 2017 strategy, whilst giving a stronger emphasis to upstream structural and systems prevention. The different categories in this typology, are intended to identify and organize the range of activities that are considered to be central to homelessness prevention.

The typology seeks to explain that prevention of homelessness doesn't happen in a linear format; it is an approach or a way of thinking that enables the sector to intervene early, either to stop homelessness from happening at all, or to stop a situation from worsening.

The section below sets out how we will bring this typology to life, focusing on our key commitments over the next 5 years, prioritising the key activities we need to undertake (as a city) to improve options for households experiencing homelessness.

**APPENDIX 1** answers the question around impact, setting out several key indicators that the city can use, to understand how much progress we have made against these commitments throughout the life of the strategy.

# HOW WILL WE MAKE HOMELESSNESS A RARE OCCURRENCE?

A prevention first approach with an ambition to prevent homelessness before it happens, making it a rare occurrence. Making homelessness a rare occurrence incorporates universal prevention, targeted prevention as well as systems and structural prevention.

Truly tackling homelessness means looking more broadly, addressing the structural and system factors that drive the root causes. To really make homelessness a rare occurrence, everyone has to play their part; this strategy supports the assertion that homelessness is everyone’s business and is part of a wider eco-system. Prevention is not at the expense of a crisis response; the system must support these initiatives and services simultaneously.

In making homelessness rare we incorporate structural and systems prevention, universal prevention, and targeted prevention to support our aspirations. This helps to frame what we can do to address the drivers of homelessness, ensure people are empowered and have access to the right information, advice, and guidance to prevent the risk of homelessness and the targeting of services for those who are at greatest risk.

Area	Commitments
Structural & Systems Prevention	<b>Work with partners to increase the supply of affordable housing. Activities to achieve this are likely to include the following:</b>
	Deliver on Birmingham’s Empty Homes Strategy.
	Work with partners to expand the St Basils Live & Work scheme in Birmingham
	Collectively and actively lobby government on key structural issues driving homelessness.
	Deliver on the commitments of the Supported Housing Strategy, with a focus on reducing the number of exempt accommodation units in the city.
Universal Prevention	Reducing welfare related poverty through access to high quality IAG, empowering through self-service tools and mediated where there is a need.
	Working with partners to increase awareness or, access to and readiness for good employment opportunities.
	Ensure support available in the city for those facing homelessness is accessible, inclusive, and clearly communicated.
Targeted Prevention	Work closely with households who have lived experience to ensure that interventions for households at risk are appropriate and have been stress tested by those who have been in a similar position.
	Improve the quality of data and intelligence around households at risk of homelessness
	Strengthen the Duty to Refer as a means of preventing homelessness, particularly as a result of having left an institution.
	Embed a multi-disciplinary approach where households are at risk, ensuring that all stakeholders contribute to stabilising the household

## What is structural and systems prevention?

The structural and systemic causes of homelessness are embedded within legislation, policy, and systems. Structural causes of homelessness can often be thought of as something we have limited control over. However, considering these in the round, help set our collective strategic intentions, particularly within local systems.

Structural factors can be protective providing the regulatory framework and delivery mechanisms and give the public access to welfare benefits, housing, employment opportunities, education, healthcare and mental health services. However, they can also be a barrier through discrimination, lack of integration across systems which can often lead to system's failure; of which those transitioning from statutory services, such as prison, hospital or care can be at risk.

Causal factors where one leads to the other; loss of employment restricts access to housing which can lead to sub-standard housing and eventually poor health outcomes. These are examples of causal links, which can often become cyclical and difficult to break.

This strategy refers to structural and system's preventions, as an opportunity to look at the bigger picture collectively and how this interacts with our own strategies, policies, and service delivery.

## What is universal prevention?

Universal prevention targets the general population, ensuring that there are systems in place for those who may not be immediately or obviously vulnerable to homelessness and social exclusion. Universal prevention is an upstream mechanism to prevent homelessness and has an increased focus on individual factors, empowering the individual to take action to improve their lives, before the situation reaches crisis point.

It is important to emphasise 'individual' does not mean the person is culpable (to blame), individual factors can be outside of the person's control such as Domestic Abuse. Integral to the delivery of universal prevention, is the Council's Early Intervention and Prevention (EI&P) Programme has a vision to:

**"Enable everyone in Birmingham to become, and to be, independent, socially and economically active and resilient citizens, starting from when they are children and continuing throughout their lives."**

Effective and timely Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) is a fundamental enabler of EI&P. The EI&P universal stage prevention pathway has two sub-stages:

**Self-service**- ensures citizens can access inclusive and accessible information, resources, networks, Council resources and tools, at a time of their choosing and in a way that works for them in their daily lives, through a comprehensive digital offer.

**Mediated support** - citizens receive guidance to connect them to information, resources, and networks to increase independence. Citizens who are able to self-serve are more likely to maintain their independence and resilience. By helping to facilitate timely, appropriate self-service we aim to drive better outcomes for citizens and limit avoidable demand on targeted and statutory services.

Through IAG we must ensure people are informed about their housing, as well as information that promotes social inclusion such as welfare rights advice, employment opportunities, health and wellbeing, social connection, and support.

## What is targeted prevention?

Although it is true that anyone can become homeless, targeted prevention focuses on groups at particular risk of homelessness. It is possible to identify people who are most likely to become homeless by understanding risk factors. People transitioning from a state institutions or care are at increased risk and this includes young people leaving the care of the Local Authority, people leaving prison, people leaving hospital, people leaving the Armed Forces and people leaving Asylum services. It is possible for such transitions to be planned well in advance.

St Basils Live & Work model provides an excellent example, of how young people can be transitioned away from supported accommodation, in a way that is affordable and promotes independence.

Other groups at increased risk include vulnerable children and young people, people experiencing Domestic Abuse, people with a mental health issue, people with addictions e.g. drug, alcohol, and people experiencing family breakdown.

Targeted prevention requires that there is early identification of people who are at risk of homelessness, and ensuring there is an opportunity to intervene before it reaches crisis. Integration between services and effective use of data is crucial in targeted prevention activity. People who are at risk of homelessness often use a variety of different services, either statutory services or voluntary sector services and much work can be done to work better together, sharing information effectively.

We will identify those experiencing homelessness quickly and support them into accommodation as soon as possible.

Where homelessness cannot be prevented, and a household becomes homeless/threatened with homelessness, its vital people don't fall into destitution and are supported to either remain in their home or helped into suitable accommodation as soon as possible.

Temporary accommodation is a crisis safety net, but unfortunately, limited supply of affordable housing means that, on average households currently wait 3.5 years before being permanently accommodated. Where a larger property is required of 4 or more bedrooms the average wait increases to 5+ years.

Given that the most acute need in the city is for families with dependent children, there is a danger that children are experiencing several years of their childhood in temporary accommodation.

The Council's Temporary Accommodation Strategy seeks to address this. The strategy recognises that the supply of affordable housing must be bolstered, in order to enable services to be more efficient and make homelessness a brief experience.

# HOW DO WE MAKE HOMELESSNESS A BRIEF OCCURRENCE?

Single people have the same experiences; time spent in supported accommodation with limited move on options, as well as long-stays in refuges or exempt accommodation, often means households can be at risk of homelessness for a significant period. Adapting pathways to improve throughout, alongside a focus on bolstering supply will enable the experience of homelessness to be a brief one.

Our indicators work toward making homelessness brief, this includes a range of indicators relating to the length of time spent in temporary accommodation and time between sleeping rough and moving to permanent accommodation. Reductions in these timeframes help us to demonstrate we are moving closer to our aims of making homelessness brief.

Key commitments:

Area	Commitments
Crisis Intervention	Deliver on the recommendations set out in the Campbell Tickell review of the Housing Solutions & Support service.
	Consistently review our approach to Housing Applications and Allocations to ensure the level of demand is managed wherever possible.
	Deliver on the commitments set out in the reviewed Temporary Accommodation strategy (post March 2024).
	Actively seek and trial best practice approaches on what works across the UK.
	Bridge gaps in support for families with children, including undertaking an analysis of the impact of homelessness and particularly temporary accommodation on children throughout their life stages.
	Work collaboratively with the supported housing sector to prevent eviction and people returning to rough sleeping.
	Increase the number of households accessing the private rented sector.
	Increase the supply of genuinely affordable housing.

## What is crisis intervention?

Crisis intervention is defined by a range of responses that support households when they have no option but to engage with statutory services. This domain aims to respond at the point of crisis, where the threat of homelessness is imminent or has occurred. It includes interventions that result in someone making a homeless application in order to help them secure accommodation.

Intervening when households reach crisis point and providing good quality advice and guidance, is a key lever when making homelessness a brief experience. Crisis intervention is a form of prevention activity in itself, given that it can significantly prevent a household's circumstances from worsening. It also encompasses interventions that seek to resolve the threat of homelessness such as mediation, resulting in someone being able to remain in the current home or alternative accommodation and therefore removing the imminent threat of being homeless. The scope of the crisis and relief offer is broad and includes:

- Crisis and relief work is undertaken by the Housing Solution and Support service and targeted hubs who support hard to reach groups (young people, rough sleepers, offenders, survivors of Domestic Abuse etc.)
- The interventions delivered are generally led by Government policy (the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017) and are centrally funded through New Burdens funding that was provided following the legislative change in 2017.
- An enhanced Rough Sleeper Outreach Team are available 24/7 and responds to alerts raised through Streetlink. The team actively find and assist those sleeping rough and ensure they are provided with a Housing and Support Needs Assessment and accommodation offer.

- Rapid Rehousing through the Housing First pilot supports for people who have experienced rough sleeping in Birmingham to be provided with a home with intensive support for problems such as mental, psychological, or emotional ill health, drug or alcohol dependency, or experience of Domestic Abuse
- Bed and breakfast and temporary accommodation- the provision of interim accommodation where there is a statutory duty to do so.
- Direct hostel and refuge routes and specialist support and intervention for people affected by Domestic Abuse.
- Specialist teams who support households who may not have recourse to public funds, or who need tailored support following asylum related decisions.

As part of work being undertaken by the Council to deliver services focused on prevention, our strategic partners Campbell Tickell undertook a full review of the Housing Solutions and Support service, providing several recommendations to enable a more responsive approach to service delivery.

Additionally, the Council's Temporary Accommodation Strategy was launched in June 2023, setting out several commitments geared towards reducing the reliance on unsuitable temporary accommodation, like B&B and improving the experience for those who are required to use it. These key documents inform our approach to the delivery of statutory services, preventing household's circumstances from worsening when crisis does hit.

# HOW WILL WE MAKE HOMELESSNESS NON-RECURRING?

We will support people who have experienced homelessness to recover from their experience, so that it does not happen to them again.

We know that the impacts of homelessness are far reaching and can affect a person throughout their life. The complex range of factors that lead to any household becoming homeless, compounded with the experience of homelessness, means that the need for extra support to recover is much more likely.

We recognise that the sustained experience of homelessness is often negative, unhealthy, unsafe, traumatising, and stressful. We know that without the right conditions, the impact on children can be lifelong, with them being more likely to become homeless as an adult. We know that repeat homelessness for people rough sleeping shortens life expectancy by more than 30 years.

Outside of the moral reasons why there should be a tailored approach to support people to recover from homelessness, there is also a clear impact on multiple statutory services, when homelessness is experienced more than once. Households who experience repeat homelessness often need to use health, social care and criminal justice services which comes at significant public cost.

By investing in recovery, we reduce the likelihood of households needing to rely so heavily on statutory services and provide them with a genuine opportunity to live fulfilled, independent lives in the long-term.

In Birmingham, one way in which recovery is enabled is through the commissioned vulnerable adults pathway, in which flexible support is provided to sustain recovery. People who have experienced homelessness are more likely to have additional needs around their mental, physical, and emotional health and may need extra support to make a sustained recovery into stable housing and onward to a positive and healthy future.

Whilst the city has continued to face challenges in relation to families with dependent children; the routes that have been developed to support single people in the city have been robust and have been one of the key achievements over the last five years.

The overarching pathway and the way in which commissioned services work together is something that the Council must continue to build upon. There are opportunities, given the financial situation of the Council to review the way in which this works, to ensure the heart of the pathway is retained.

Key Commitments:

Area	Commitments
Recovery	Services must operate in a multi-disciplinary way where households are experiencing repeated homelessness.
	Build on the positive pathway approach to ensure hard to reach groups have the right tailored support when things go wrong.
	Lobby Government to improve the re-settlement package and infrastructure to support households made homeless through Home Office decision making.
	Formalise our tailored approach to rough sleeping, making sure that the system is as accessible and inclusive as possible to their specific needs.
	Build on the success of Housing First, capitalising on opportunities to lobby Government for the expansion of the future Housing First programme.
	Ensure that all statutory services play their part in a household's long-term recovery from homelessness.

## What is recovery?

In such a challenging financial climate, there is a danger that the balance of resource shifts, with recovery focused service delivery reducing whilst organisations try to stem the flow by targeting resources upstream.

This strategy maintains that the best approach is a sensible balance, where resource is allocated based on need and there is sufficient resource to support both prevention and recovery.

Whilst resourcing recovery is long-term in its nature and cannot be delivered in a 'light-touch' way, the lifeline this provides for groups that do not find universal systems easy to access is significant. In many cases, crisis looks significantly worse for households with complex support needs and can at times lead to a reduced life expectancy.

As highlighted in the prevention typology (on page 38), it is incredibly valuable to prevent homelessness from happening at all and wherever we are able, we should be gearing our efforts towards this. However, prevention is just as valuable in recovery, particularly when it is focused on helping people to be more independent, resilient and to stabilise following difficult and traumatic experiences.

Within the scope of this strategy, prevention can also mean preventing challenging situations from getting worse and is not something that should be discounted.

## Monitoring delivery of this strategy

This strategy is designed to encourage real change across the city and has been developed with a clear understanding of the local context, with the voices of lived experience woven throughout.

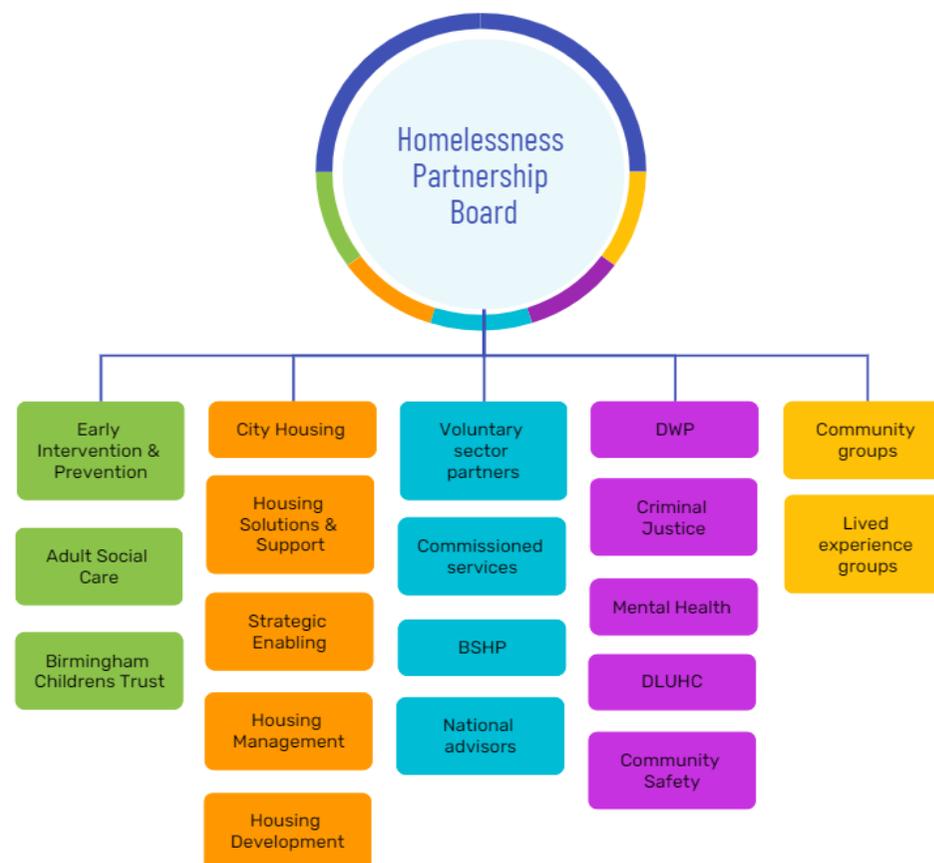
Given the context in which the city is operating, it is more important than ever that there is genuine collaboration across a multitude of internal and external partners, to make sure we truly make tackling homelessness everybody's business.

Robust governance arrangements are vital in order to make sure that there is a forum by which progress can be tracked and there are clear lines of responsibility for the key commitments set out. **APPENDIX 2** sets out a co-produced delivery plan, which focuses on the specific sets of activities that will be undertaken over the next 5 years.

The Council have an established Homelessness Partnership Board, who hold overarching responsibility for the delivery of the strategy. There are several key stakeholders that will feed into this governance framework and will be responsible for co-ordinating activity related to some of the key commitments within the strategy.

The Homelessness Partnership Board is made up of both internal and external stakeholders and will be informed by community and lived experience groups, who have been vital in informing the key commitments within the strategy.

The image below sets out the key stakeholders and agencies that will contribute to the delivery of the strategy, via the Homelessness Partnership Board. The Board is chaired by the Cabinet Member for Housing & Homelessness, ensuring there is appropriate levels of visibility at senior levels.



Progress against this strategy will be reported upon at the Commissioner led Housing Sub-Board, ensuring that Commissioners are kept abreast of delivery against the key commitments set out in the strategy.

Aspects of the strategy, particularly those relating to the provision of B&B accommodation for families over 6 weeks will be reported through the Council's Improvement & Recovery Plan (IRP) so there is public accountability.

Cabinet will also receive an annual progress update against the strategy's delivery plan. This will be supported by the Cabinet Member for Housing & Homelessness who will chair the Homelessness Partnership Board moving forward.

## Documents reference list:

Local strategies/documents:

- Housing Strategy 2023-2028
- Improvement & Recovery Plan
- Temporary Accommodation Strategy
- Domestic Abuse Strategy
- Corporate Plan 2022-2026
- Early Intervention & Prevention program plan
- Supported Housing Strategy
- Levelling Up Strategy
- Health & Wellbeing Strategy
- Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care Strategy 2023-2033
- Housing Revenue Account Business Plan & 2024/2025 Rent Setting Report
- Asset Management Strategy 2024-2029
- Birmingham Economic Review 2023
- The Office for National Statistics Employment, unemployment and economic inactivity in Birmingham
- Birmingham Chapter 5: Projecting homelessness | The Plan To End Homelessness
- Birmingham Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment 2022
- Rough Sleeping Initiatives 2018 & 2022-2025
- National strategies/documents:
- Statutory homelessness in England financial year 2021/2022 & 2022/2023
- Homelessness in England 2023- Shelter

- Centre of homelessness impact- Defining an end to rough sleeping in England
- Rough Sleeping strategy (2018)
- Homelessness Reduction Act (2017)- Code of Guidance
- Levelling Up Strategy
- LGA- 'Making homelessness strategies happen.'
- WMCA: Designing out homelessness, full toolkit.
- Ending Rough Sleeping for Good (2022) – DLUHC
- The SHARE Framework (2020) – CHI
- Designing Out Homelessness (2018) – WMCA
- Everybody In: How to end homelessness in Great Britain (2018) – Crisis
- Crisis Homelessness Monitor 2023
- Joseph Roundtree Cost of Living Tracker Winter 2022/23
- Ending Rough Sleeping for Good (2022) – DLUHC
- The Office for National Statistics Food and energy price inflation, UK: 2023
- Chartered Institute of Housing What You Need to Know About the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023
- How life has changed in Birmingham: Census 2021 (ons.gov.uk)
- Homeless people staying with family and friends: why it's not that simple? | Fulfilling Lives (fulfillingliveslsl.london)
- Domestic abuse victim characteristics, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics

## GLOSSARY:

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- **B&B** – Bed and Breakfast
- **BSHP** – Birmingham Social Housing Partnership
- **CHI** – Centre for Homelessness Impact
- **CoL** – Cost of Living
- **DAHA** – Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance
- **DLUHC** – Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities – now: Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)
- **DWP** – Department for Work and Pensions
- **EI&P** – Early intervention & Prevention
- **HRA** – Housing Revenue Account
- **HMO** – Houses in Multiple Occupancy: a building or flat in which two or more households share a basic amenity, such as bathroom, toilet or cooking facilities
- **IAG** – Information, Advice and Guidance
- **IRP** – Improvement and Recovery Plan
- **LHA** – Local Housing Allowance: Housing benefit entitlement for tenants renting in the private sector
- **PRS** – Private Rented Sector
- **Prevention Duty** – The Local Authority has a duty to prevent you from becoming homeless
- **Relief Duty** – The Local Authority has a duty to relieve your homelessness
- Registered Providers: Social Housing providers registered with the Regulator for Social Housing
- **RSI** – Rough Sleeper Initiative
- **SEA** – Supported Exempt Accommodation: Housing where vulnerable adults are supported to live independently
- **TA** – Temporary Accommodation
- **WMCA** – West Midlands Combined Authority

STRATEGY COMMITMENT	ACTION	LEAD	INDICATOR RAG (within existing budget)	TIMESCALE (approximate)
<b>1. Strategy Commitment:</b> Collectively and actively lobby government on key structural issues driving homelessness.	<b>Action:</b> Develop a lobbying agenda with the WMCA and partners for significant changes to policies that drive people into homelessness.  Examples include: Developing joint lobbying paper proposing long-term uplifts to the LHA rate, with the objective of making the PRS more affordable. Along with existing political campaigning in the areas of Right to Buy suspension and welfare rights policies.	Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness  WMCA Regional Homelessness Taskforce Lead	No additional cost	12 months
	<b>2. Strategy Commitment:</b> Work with partners to increase the supply of affordable housing.	<b>Action:</b> Develop stronger relationships with third party providers, enabling the city to deliver 1,083 affordable homes per year as agreed in the Housing Strategy 2023-2028	Assistant Director of Strategic Enabling	Cost to the Council alleviated through revised HRA Business Plan 2023/2024
<b>3. Strategy Commitment:</b> Work with partners to expand the St Basils Live & Work scheme in Birmingham & Working with partners to increase awareness or access to and readiness for good employment opportunities	<b>Action:</b> Deliver on the activities set out in the IRP, related to the BMHT review, building the right internal capacity to deliver new affordable homes	Strategic Director of City Housing	Dependent on Directorate move	12 months
	<b>Action:</b> Deliver flagship Live & Work scheme in the city and develop robust offer for young people based on this model.  <b>Action:</b> Deliver the rent simplification pilot and analyse its success as a mechanism reduce the number of households facing homelessness	Chief Executive, St Basils  WMCA Regional Homelessness Taskforce Lead	Dependent on the success of current bidding process  No additional cost- model is being delivered	18 months  18 months

STRATEGY COMMITMENT	ACTION	LEAD	INDICATOR RAG (within existing budget)	TIMESCALE (approximate)
<b>4. Strategy Commitment:</b> Work collaboratively with the sector to prevent eviction and people returning to rough sleeping.	<b>Action:</b> Develop and jointly agree pre-eviction protocols actively focused on preventing the eviction of vulnerable households; incorporating the learning from and closer working with BCC's Eviction Prevention Panel	Birmingham Social Housing Partnership (BSHP Exec)	No additional cost	12 months
<b>5. Strategy Commitment:</b> Strengthen the Duty to Refer as a means of preventing homelessness, particularly as a result of having left an institution, hospital, or care.	<b>Action:</b> Develop and implement protocols for early identification of at-risk individuals in healthcare settings, including the experience of dual diagnosis	TBC	Savings to Public Health services could delay the time taken to deliver	18 months
<b>6. Strategy Commitment:</b> Work closely with households who have lived experience to ensure that interventions for households at risk are appropriate and have been stress tested by those who have been in a similar position.	<b>Action:</b> Ensure there is regular and deliberate engagement with households who have experienced homelessness, disseminating learning from their experiences in order to improve service delivery	Homelessness Partnership Board	Limited resource may make this challenging, support from Strategic Enabling available	6 months
<b>7. Strategy Commitment:</b> Improve the quality of data and intelligence around households at risk of homelessness.	<b>Action:</b> Embed a data driven approach to identifying households in financial hardship or at risk of homelessness, through the implementation a single customer view and the Council's Homes & Money hub model	EI&P, Strategy, Equalities & Policy	Model progressing through consultation,	18 months

STRATEGY COMMITMENT	ACTION	LEAD	INDICATOR RAG (within existing budget)	TIMESCALE (approximate)
<b>8. Strategy Commitment:</b> Ensure support available in the city for those facing homelessness is accessible, inclusive, and clearly communicated.	<b>Action:</b> Develop a communications plan, ensuring that households facing homelessness are provided with good quality advice, using language that is inclusive and non-judgemental	Assistant Director of Strategic Enabling  Director of Housing Solutions & Support.	No additional cost	12 months
<b>9. Strategy Commitment:</b> Ensure that all statutory services play their part in a household's long-term recovery from homelessness.	<b>Action:</b> Ensure that future commissioning arrangements make provision for vulnerable adults at risk of homelessness, maximising availability of services through coordination of joint commissioning, planning and procurement activity across the council.	Director of Adult Social Care  Corporate Commissioning	£1.3m savings in 2024/2025 and £3.4m savings in 2025/2026	6 months
<b>10. Strategy Commitment:</b> Reducing welfare related poverty through access to high quality IAG	<b>Action:</b> Raise awareness of available support through community partner organisations and the council, alongside self-help digital routes to support households facing financial hardship	EI&P	No additional cost	18 months
<b>11. Strategy Commitment:</b> Ensure support available in the city for those facing homelessness is accessible, inclusive, and clearly communicated.	<b>Action:</b> Ensure Homes & Money hubs support areas where households disproportionately face homelessness	Homes & Money Hubs	No additional cost	18 months
	<b>Action:</b> Deliver on the commitments of the Race Forward 2022 strategy, ensuring this actively includes homeless households	WMCA	Strategy commitments may be impacted by a change of mayor	5 years (2023-2028)

STRATEGY COMMITMENT	ACTION	LEAD	INDICATOR RAG (within existing budget)	TIMESCALE (approximate)
<b>11. Strategy Commitment:</b> Ensure support available in the city for those facing homelessness is accessible, inclusive, and clearly communicated.	<b>Action:</b> Eradicate silo working to prevent homelessness & develop protocols to ensure access to services and support	Homelessness Partnership Board	No additional cost	2 years
	<b>Action:</b> Call to action for all our Statutory, Voluntary, Community and Faith Partners to work with the City to reimagine and address the challenges/gaps in services arising from the City's financial position.	Statutory, Voluntary, Community and Faith Partners		9 months
<b>12. Strategy Commitment:</b> Ensure support available in the city for those facing homelessness is accessible, inclusive, and clearly communicated	<b>Action:</b> Develop targeted support programs to integrate asylum seekers and refugees into stable long-term accommodation.	Migration Partnership Board	Must be delivered within existing resource	2 years
<b>13. Strategy Commitment:</b> Build on the success of Housing First, capitalising on opportunities to lobby Government for the expansion of the future Housing First programme.	<b>Action:</b> Work with DLUHC to deliver an expanded Housing First programme for rough sleepers in Birmingham	Housing Solutions and Support	Dependent on additional RSI funding	18 months
<b>14. Strategy Commitment:</b> Work collaboratively with the sector to prevent eviction and people returning to rough sleeping.	<b>Action:</b> Develop and jointly agree pre-eviction protocols actively focused on preventing the eviction of vulnerable households in the supported/exempt sector and maximise opportunities of investment through RSI funding to support this aim.	Birmingham Homelessness Forum	No additional cost	12 months

STRATEGY COMMITMENT	ACTION	LEAD	INDICATOR RAG (within existing budget)	TIMESCALE (approximate)
<b>15. Strategy Commitment:</b> Build on the positive pathway approach to ensure underreached groups have the right tailored support when things go wrong	<b>Action:</b> Develop protocols with the partnership, that reflect the Council's financial position, to proactively ensure no children are made homeless on their 18th birthday	Birmingham Children's Trust  Homelessness Prevention Board	Commissioned provider funding reduced	12 months
<b>16. Strategy Commitment:</b> Deliver on the commitments of the Supported Housing Strategy, with a focus on reducing the number of exempt accommodation units in the city.	<b>Action:</b> Develop a post 2025 options appraisal to develop a sustainable model for the continuation of the Supported Housing Improvement Programme	Strategic Enabling	Options to be devised based on no further funding	3 months
	<b>Action:</b> Lobby Government to bring forward pending consultation on the delivery of the Supported Housing (Regulatory) Oversight Act	Cabinet for Housing & Homelessness	No additional cost	12 months
<b>17. Strategy Commitment:</b> Build on the positive pathway approach to ensure underreached have the right tailored support when things go wrong.	<b>Action:</b> Deliver on the agreed commitments set out in the Domestic Abuse (DA) Strategy, ensuring housing services play a role in supporting survivors of DA	Director of Housing Solutions & Support	No additional costs- built into existing resource	12 months
<b>18. Strategy Commitment:</b> Ensure support available in the city for those facing homelessness is accessible, inclusive, and clearly communicated.	<b>Action:</b> Align Homelessness Prevention & Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse Strategies to enable a robust response/preventative approach to homelessness caused by domestic abuse	Adult Social Care  Director of Housing Solutions & Support	No additional cost	6 months

STRATEGY COMMITMENT	ACTION	LEAD	INDICATOR RAG (within existing budget)	TIMESCALE (approximate)
<b>15. Strategy Commitment:</b> Build on the positive pathway approach to ensure underreached groups have the right tailored support when things go wrong	<b>Action:</b> Develop protocols with the partnership, that reflect the Council's financial position, to proactively ensure no children are made homeless on their 18th birthday	Birmingham Children's Trust  Homelessness Prevention Board	Commissioned provider funding reduced	12 months
<b>16. Strategy Commitment:</b> Deliver on the commitments of the Supported Housing Strategy, with a focus on reducing the number of exempt accommodation units in the city.	<b>Action:</b> Develop a post 2025 options appraisal to develop a sustainable model for the continuation of the Supported Housing Improvement Programme	Strategic Enabling	Options to be devised based on no further funding	3 months
	<b>Action:</b> Lobby Government to bring forward pending consultation on the delivery of the Supported Housing (Regulatory) Oversight Act	Cabinet for Housing & Homelessness	No additional cost	12 months
<b>17. Strategy Commitment:</b> Build on the positive pathway approach to ensure underreached have the right tailored support when things go wrong.	<b>Action:</b> Deliver on the agreed commitments set out in the Domestic Abuse (DA) Strategy, ensuring housing services play a role in supporting survivors of DA	Director of Housing Solutions & Support	No additional costs- built into existing resource	12 months
<b>18. Strategy Commitment:</b> Ensure support available in the city for those facing homelessness is accessible, inclusive, and clearly communicated.	<b>Action:</b> Align Homelessness Prevention & Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse Strategies to enable a robust response/preventative approach to homelessness caused by domestic abuse	Adult Social Care  Director of Housing Solutions & Support	No additional cost	6 months

STRATEGY COMMITMENT	ACTION	LEAD	INDICATOR RAG (within existing budget)	TIMESCALE (approximate)
<b>19. Strategy Commitment:</b> Increase the number of households accessing the private rented sector.	<b>Action:</b> Capitalise on opportunities to expand the Accommodation Finding Team to increase the number of PRS landlords available	Director of Housing Solutions and Support	Dependent on the use of GF resources	12 months
	<b>Action:</b> To produce an options appraisal on the validity of a 10 years plus leasing model in order to reduce the overall cost of temporary accommodation and use of B&B	Director of Housing Solutions and Support	No additional cost	3 months
	<b>Action:</b> Develop and deliver an alternative to property acquisitions, termed as 'plan B' to reduce the overall cost of temporary accommodation and use of B&B	Director of Housing Solutions and Support	Cost saving action. Cost clarity via OA	3 years
<b>20. Strategy Commitment:</b> Bridge gaps in support for families with children, including undertaking an analysis of the impact of homelessness and particularly temporary accommodation on children throughout their life stages.	<b>Action:</b> Deliver a pilot programme supported exempt accommodation to include families with dependent children	Director of Housing Solutions & Support  Assistant Director of Strategic Enabling	Financial impact on families to be assessed	12 months
<b>21. Strategy Commitment:</b> Ensure support available in the city for those facing homelessness is accessible, inclusive, and clearly communicated	<b>Action:</b> Incorporate cultural sensitivity training in to housing services	Assistant Director of Strategic Enabling	Likely to be a GF cost if procured externally	2 years

STRATEGY COMMITMENT	ACTION	LEAD	INDICATOR RAG (within existing budget)	TIMESCALE (approximate)
<p><b>22. Strategy Commitment:</b> Formalise our tailored approach to rough sleeping, making sure that the system is as accessible and inclusive as possible to their specific needs.</p>	<p><b>Action:</b> Improve the co-ordination of street services and use of social media to inform and support homeless individuals.</p>	<p>Director of Housing Solutions</p>	<p>No additional cost</p>	<p>18 months</p>
<p><b>23. Strategy Commitment:</b> Formalise our tailored approach to rough sleeping, making sure that the system is as accessible and inclusive as possible to their specific needs</p>	<p><b>Action:</b> Co-locate multidisciplinary teams to provide holistic support for people experiencing rough sleeping.</p>	<p>Director of Housing Solutions</p>	<p>No additional cost- integration with Homes &amp; Money Hubs</p>	<p>18 months</p>
<p><b>24. Strategy Commitment:</b> Consistently review our approach to Housing Applications and Allocations to ensure the level of demand is managed wherever possible.</p>	<p><b>Action:</b> Undertake a review of the Council's Allocations Policy to ensure the existing framework meets the needs of the city</p>	<p>Director of Housing Solutions and Support</p>	<p>No additional cost</p>	<p>6 months</p>
<p><b>25. Strategy Commitment:</b> Deliver on the commitments of the Supported Housing Strategy, with a focus on reducing the number of exempt accommodation units in the city</p>	<p><b>Action:</b> Review the Supported Housing Needs Assessment and overall viability of the Supported Housing Strategy in light of the Council's financial position.</p>	<p>Strategic &amp; Enabling &amp; Adult Social Care Commissioning</p>	<p>Dependent on funding arrangements post 2025</p>	<p>3 years</p>

STRATEGY COMMITMENT	ACTION	LEAD	INDICATOR RAG (within existing budget)	TIMESCALE (approximate)
<b>26. Strategy Commitment:</b> Consistently review our approach to Housing Applications and Allocations to ensure the level of demand is managed wherever possible.	<b>Action:</b> Develop localised protocols to manage migration from other areas in the UK, including reciprocal arrangements within other LAs.	Director of Housing Solutions	No additional cost	18 months
<b>27. Strategy Commitment:</b> Embed a multi-disciplinary approach where households are at risk, ensuring that all stakeholders contribute to stabilising the household.	<b>Action:</b> To ensure DAPO/N's are used widely to prevent family homelessness and the displacement of children	West Midlands Police	Resource restrictions	18 months
<b>28. Strategy Commitment:</b> Deliver on the commitments set out in the reviewed Temporary Accommodation strategy (post March 2024).	<b>Action:</b> Review the TA strategy in light of the Council's financial position to understand where remaining investment will be best utilised	Director of Housing Solutions and Support	No additional cost	3 months
<b>29. Strategy Commitment:</b> Deliver on the commitments set out in the reviewed Temporary Accommodation strategy (post March 2024).	<b>Action:</b> Ensure officers supporting households in temporary accommodation understand the options available for residents and are supporting them to move on (workforce development)	Director of Housing Solutions and Support	No additional cost	6 months

STRATEGY COMMITMENT	ACTION	LEAD	INDICATOR RAG (within existing budget)	TIMESCALE (approximate)
<b>30. Strategy Commitment:</b> Bridge gaps in support for families with children, including undertaking an analysis of the impact of homelessness and particularly temporary accommodation on children throughout their life stages.	<b>Action:</b> Continue to prioritise the reduction in B&B for families with dependent children over 6 weeks before considering the long-term reduction in B&B for all households	Director of Housing Solutions & Support	Depending on remaining investment from the TA strategy	12 months
<b>31. Strategy Commitment:</b> Bridge gaps in support for families with children, including undertaking an analysis of the impact of homelessness and particularly temporary accommodation on children throughout their life stages. temporary accommodation on children throughout their life stages.	<b>Action:</b> Ensure households in dispersed temporary accommodation receive the same quality of property and support with tenancy management as general needs tenants	Director of Housing Management	No additional cost- managed through the HM service re-design	12 months
<b>32. Strategy Commitment:</b> Deliver on the recommendations set out in the Campbell Tickell review of the Housing Solutions & Support service.	<b>Action:</b> Deliver on the recommendations of the Campbell Tickell, highlighting the impact of resource reductions on the ability to deliver high-quality services	Director of Housing Solutions and Support	No additional cost	6 months

STRATEGY COMMITMENT	ACTION	LEAD	INDICATOR RAG (within existing budget)	TIMESCALE (approximate)
<b>33. Strategy Commitment:</b> Actively seek and trial crisis intervention best practice approaches on what works across the UK.	<b>Action:</b> Incorporate the use of trauma informed care in to commissioning processes and staff development to shift the culture of service delivery.	TBC	No set budget to deliver this at present	3 years (estimated)



 **RESET**

 **RESHAPE**

 **RESTART**