



Herefordshire Council

Homeless Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025

A review of progress against strategic priorities

BACKGROUND

Herefordshire's Homeless Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-25 sets out how Herefordshire Council will prevent and relieve homelessness. The strategy sets out 14 specific priorities to achieve during its five-year life cycle. [Homelessness prevention and rough sleeping strategy 2020-2025](#).

This review is to be read in conjunction with the document: Herefordshire Homeless Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025 – Improvement Action Plan in Appendix A.

The Improvement Action Plan was developed and has been used over the past four and a half years, as a management tool to track progress and assess the impact of the strategy. The Project BRAVEⁱ (now BRAVE) management board and operational delivery board have assessed the effectiveness and progress of the multi-agency and cross sector partnership towards achieving these 14 priorities.

This review is intended to provide information that demonstrates the progress made towards achieving the priorities. The strategy was written in advance of the COVID-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis that followed the pandemic. As a partnership we have made huge progress in reducing the number of people rough sleeping, but demand for temporary accommodation in Herefordshire is higher than ever demonstrating that the risk of homelessness has not diminished.

Please note that there is some duplication across the priorities and the work done to deliver them set out in this review. This is learning for the next strategy.

PRIORITIES

Priority 1: We will review and develop our current operational structure to ensure that homelessness preventative activity is central to everything we do.

Outcomes: In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and 'Everyone In' mandate from HM Government, Project BRAVE was developed as a multi-agency and cross sector response to rough sleeping. This approach saw the development of a three-tiered approach to addressing rough sleeping and linked homelessness. These tiers are: -

- Gold – Strategic level (Director and Heads of Service).

- Silver – Operational Management Level (Service Delivery Management); and
- Bronze – Delivery level (Operational staff working directly with people).

Bronze delivery level now operates as two case conference structures: –

- Breaking the Cycle (BTC) - to work with individuals who are rough sleeping, but who will not actively engage with services.; and
- Team Around Me (TAM) - for individuals who will engage with services.

Both pathways have adopted a strength-based approach to working with people and have been developing a trauma informed approach to their work with people affected by complex multiple disadvantages eg health, mental health, addiction, domestic abuse, criminal justice and housing. This approach has enabled support services to develop a bespoke support plan for people that enables them to build upon their strengths, empowers them to make choices and helps them meet their individual support needs. This approach has enabled this partnership to reduce the numbers of rough sleepers over this strategy cycle and ensure that there is no-one rough sleeping long-term (more than six months).

This approach has been expanded since 2023 to include an Early Intervention Officer post, working across the network of Talk Community Hubs to support and empower communities to mitigate and prevent households becoming homeless in the first instance. More on this below.

To deliver the Rough Sleeper Service, Herefordshire Council has used grant funding from HM Government to resource the following increased staffingⁱⁱ: -

- a. Rough Sleeping Outreach Lead Officer.
- b. Three Rough Sleeping Outreach Team Officers.
- c. Four tenancy support officers to deliver housing support to former rough sleepers at a 13-bedroom supported living setting and across 12 units of semi-supported living accommodation.
- d. A tenancy support worker to work in partnership with a local charity at their hostel setting of 13 units of accommodation.
- e. An Early Intervention Officer to work across the Talk Community network of hubs and in wider community settings to identify and support households at the earliest opportunity to mitigate the risk of and threat of homelessness occurring. This post has directly prevented 200 households needing housing support because they never lost their home.
- f. For 2023/24 and 2024/25 operated a commissioned cold weather dormitory shelter for up to 18 people. For 2024 / 25 this included upgrading the provision to provide a separate provision for females. For the years 2020-23 supported a local charity to deliver a cold weather accommodation provision, by providing the property from which to operate.

- g. The purchase of four emergency living pods – which have been in use continually for the past 18 months.
- h. Funding, to augment our own Capital funding provision, to develop, convert and / or purchase 60 units of accommodation. (This is additional to the cold weather dormitory provision and pods.)
- i. Herefordshire Council has also been able to support several local charities in their work to address homelessness and rough sleeping by the provision of small grants to enable them to continue their existing work or develop responses to the ongoing need for emergency housing.
- j. Rented an eight-bedroom property from a private landlord for use as part of the wider accommodation offer.

These interventions have had a direct impact upon reducing the numbers of people rough sleeping over the period that this strategy has been in operation. The numbers of long-term rough sleepers is now zero, those returning to rough sleeping have reduced and are, at the time of writing this review, two people. New rough sleepers are also reduced and are seven people. Because of the increased staffing and accommodation resources, in the BRAVE pathway, these people are now able to be accommodated faster, for longer and with appropriate wrap around support.

The Council is legally required to have a local Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) in place. In Herefordshire we have developed a clear plan for SWEP and the actions that need to be taken when it is activated.

Herefordshire Council has reviewed the Housing Solutions Service. This face-to-face service operates from Blue School House in Hereford. It offers a weekday, daytime, counter service and out of hours telephone service. A new case management service called Home Connections has been commissioned and implemented to better track and manage individual cases of homelessness.

In addition to the above, Herefordshire Council has supported the formal resettlement of refugees from Afghanistan and Syria over the last five years. We have also supported families arriving through the Homes for Ukraine and Ukraine Family Schemes. The funding to do this is additional to existing budgets (and comes direct from Central Government, which has committed substantial funding to these homes, for use expressly on these schemes). This scheme has enabled the communities of Herefordshire to provide accommodation and support to these vulnerable groups. This has reduced the impact on local financial resources - in fact it has brought in additional resources for education, health and housing

Priority 2: We will investigate opportunities for entering into a long-term lease with a private landlord to develop bespoke good quality temporary accommodation for vulnerable homeless households. We will increase the number of units.

Outcomes: For the first three years of this strategy Herefordshire Council continued a lease with a private sector landlord to rent an eight-bedroom unit of accommodation. Throughout this period, the council has also leased an 18-room hotel, and two six room private rented sector units of accommodation.

Herefordshire Council has also negotiated long term contractual agreements with three local hotels to provide additional temporary accommodation that offers better value for money than a spot purchase approach. In addition, Herefordshire Council has an agreement with Connexus Homes Limited that has enabled the council to directly rent and manage over 15 homes that are used as part of the temporary accommodation provision. These are in addition to the dozen other properties leased directly from private landlords for the purpose of providing temporary accommodation.

There is a comprehensive Temporary Accommodation Procurement Strategy and protocol in place to increase the number of available units of accommodation for use by people to whom a housing duty is owed. ([Homeless or at risk – Herefordshire Council](#)). This has both increased the number of units of accommodation available for use as temporary accommodation, as well as providing better value for money for the public purse

Utilising grant funding from HM Government, coupled with its own capital resources, Herefordshire Council has purchased and developed, or refurbished an additional 21 units of accommodation to be used by people who experience rough sleeping or long-term homelessness.

Herefordshire Council has provided capital funding to enable a local charity to develop its hostel. This, coupled with the charity's own capital resources, has enabled the development and improvement of existing accommodation and an expansion of the number of rooms available to 13 units of high-quality accommodation (previously there were xx rooms)

Herefordshire Council has entered into a long-term contract with a Registered Accommodation Provider to provide 12 units of accommodation for rough sleepers as part of the BRAVE pathway of support at Whitecross Road.

Collectively these actions have delivered 46 new units of transitional accommodation for our most vulnerable citizens who have been rough sleeping. The temporary homeless

accommodation is provided through the 18 beds of the emergency night shelter and the four emergency living pods.

During this time, as part of the BRAVE response, Herefordshire Council has worked with partners to develop pathways into and through this new accommodation provision, to ensure people are supported to recover from the effects of adverse trauma and move onto secure and stable permanent homes. This approach has seen the numbers of long-term rough sleepers reduce to zero and new and returning rough sleepers reduced to nine at the time of writing this review. All 46 units of transitional accommodation are occupied and supporting people to move forward with their lives away from rough sleeping. Further units of accommodation are currently being developed to meet future demand.

Priority 3: We will seek external funding to enable the implementation of a homelessness health improvement project.

Outcomes: Working with Turning Point, Herefordshire Council secured a four-year grant funding settlement from Department of Health to enable Turning Point to deliver an enhanced outreach addiction support service to the residents of Herefordshire. This funding of just over £1.4 million has enabled a much-enhanced service to be delivered. The service is now able to work with more people, faster, with better longer-term outcomes.

In partnership with Worcestershire County Council, Herefordshire Council secured funding from the Department of Health to deliver a bespoke mental health support programme to the two counties. An element of this is specific outreach support to rough sleepers. Project Bright Path has a dedicated mental health practitioner working directly for rough sleepers, providing immediate treatment and support, as well as access to pathways for long term help.

Throughout the life of this strategy, Herefordshire Council and partners have also worked with health partners to improve access to GP services by enabling people who are homeless to register for and access primary health care. This includes access to early vaccination, as well as primary care treatment for long standing illnesses. Information from Wye Valley NHS Trust colleagues informs us that this has in turn reduced demand on emergency medicine and emergency treatment access points.

The health improvement element of the work to address homelessness and rough sleeping has been driven by the 2018/19 Herefordshire Homelessness Health Needs Audit, undertaken in partnership with Homeless Link (a national body) [Microsoft Word - 20190221163308_003444_0007599_Appendix1forHomelessLinkHealthNeedsAuditHWBB05 Mar2019](#). This audit is in the process of being repeated to benchmark progress over the past

five years and to inform our health-based decisions in the 2026-31 Homeless Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

Priority 4: We will strengthen the Rough Sleeper Outreach and Resettlement Team through the recruitment of additional Outreach Workers specialising in support for rough sleepers with mental health issues, substances misuse or offending histories. We will monitor and evaluate the impact of these posts to inform future commissioning and operational decisions.

Outcomes: Two posts were recruited to in 2020, using Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) funding, provided by HM Government. Funding is in place to continue the role until March 2027. The impact of these two additional posts is captured throughout this review – they have been critical to the delivery of these priorities. Since the commencement of the BRAVE initiative, the whole rough sleeping outreach team have worked with and have directly supported an average of 70 people each year since 2020. These are individuals who are either rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping – such as currently sofa surfing or using the emergency pods or winter shelter and are amongst some of the most vulnerable people in the county. 95% of these individuals are supported to secure either supported accommodation, semi-supported accommodation or unsupported accommodation. The Rough Sleeping Outreach team continue to support and work with individuals who are still rough sleeping.

Priority 5: We will strengthen the Rough Sleeper Outreach and Resettlement Team through the recruitment of a Rough Sleeper ‘Navigator’ post and a Supported Lettings Floating Support Worker. These posts will provide bespoke support to people leaving institutions (such as prisons) and to people who have been accommodated but need ongoing support. We will monitor and evaluate the impact of these posts to inform future commissioning and operational decisions.

Outcomes: Using Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) funding, provided by HM Government, this post was recruited to in 2020. Funding is in place to continue the work of this post until March 2027. The impact of this additional post is captured throughout this review – it has been critical to the delivery of these priorities. Since the commencement of the BRAVE initiative, the whole rough sleeping outreach team have worked with and supported an average of 70 people each year since 2020. These are individuals who are either rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping – such as currently sofa surfing or using the emergency pods or winter shelter and are amongst some of the most vulnerable people in the county. 95% of these individuals are supported to secure either supported accommodation, semi-supported accommodation or

unsupported accommodation. The Rough Sleeping Outreach team continue to support and work with individuals who are still rough sleeping.

Priority 6: We will work with key partners to investigate how we can pilot a Housing First project in Herefordshire.

Outcomes: Working with a range of partners, Herefordshire Council has developed a bespoke housing pathway for people affected by homelessness and rough sleeping. This pathway is managed by the BRAVE process. It has enabled the county to move from having no accommodation for people to whom a housing duty is not owed, to developing a specific incremental pathway that enables people to access a winter night shelter, emergency accommodation pods, 25 units of supported housing, and 21 units of semi-supported housing. Following a comprehensive programme of support from a range of partners, this pathway empowers people to develop the knowledge and skills to be able to secure their own, long-term accommodation, reconnect with families and secure employment. Using funding secured from HM Government and its own capital, Herefordshire Council is currently developing a further 44 units of accommodation to be used as part of this pathway. The BRAVE pathway initially supported over 250 people with emergency accommodation in the first two years of operation. As the programme has developed and grown, it continues to support an average of 70 people each year. All these individuals have a range of complex support needs. The BRAVE partnership, through the Breaking the Cycle and Team Around Me delivery groups, work with the individuals to address their support needs and help them to secure the support they need to maintain a home. This has enabled individuals to secure a home, reconnect with their family and children and start to rebuild their lives.

Priority 7: Sponsored through Team Herefordshire, a cross-sector systemic approach to rough sleeping and its risks will be developed so that rough sleeping and sofa surfing become sequentially rare, infrequent and then non-recurring.

Outcomes: Following a Thematic Review of Homeless and Housing Services in Herefordshire, a systemic approach to addressing homelessness and rough sleeping was developed. This approach was accelerated in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Government's 'Everyone In' mandate, leading to a multi-agency response that provides support, accommodation and resilience to people who were not owed a legal or statutory duty of accommodation by any agency. This approach became known as BRAVE.

The BRAVE approach has seen the county of Herefordshire counter the national trend across England of increased number of homelessness and rough sleeping. Numbers of Rough Sleepers were down 90% to one person at the end of March 2025 (from a high of 28 people in 2020).

This multi-agency approach not only recognises the impact of losing your accommodation and the complex multiple disadvantages. It also acknowledges the importance of early identification and support to people and families that might become homeless.

Funding from HM Government was used to develop an early intervention model. This enables a Homelessness Prevention Officer to work across the Talk Community network of community hubs, directly with communities and households, to identify and mitigate the risk of losing a household's accommodation. In 2024/25 this officer worked with over 200 households to directly protect the accommodation and prevent homelessness occurring at all. They were able to identify households affected by complex multiple difficulties and secure support services for them. They also were able to assist in several cases by helping households manage their debts and directly prevent them being evicted. The new role has also been able to help wider community groups with information about all the resources that are available in the county to assist households meet the challenges of the cost-of-living crisis.

Priority 8: Further develop our engagement and relationship with private sector landlords, focusing on providing support and advice to help reduce the level of terminations of tenancy in this tenure.

Outcomes: The landscape of the private rental sector has significantly changed at a national level since the strategy was written in 2019/20. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, along with changes that increased taxation and legal obligations for landlords, has meant that many private sector landlords have sold their properties and evicted tenants in that process. This means that it has been a very challenging environment in which to develop new relationships with potential landlords, secure new tenancies and maintain existing ones.

We have however been able to offer support to tenants through our Early Intervention Officer in an attempt to reduce the risks of eviction. In addition to the commentary at Priority 7 above, the Officer works with tenants and landlords and is able to offer rent deposits and rent in advance. They have also been able to assist with clearing previous rental debts, where this has been a significant barrier to maintaining accommodation or, where applicable, to accessing new accommodation.

Priority 9: Continue to develop close collaborative working with voluntary and statutory sector partners in support of homelessness prevention.

Outcomes: Herefordshire Homeless Forum is a multi-sector body that meets bi-monthly. It is attended by voluntary, community and faith groups, as well as statutory agencies, accommodation providers. All of these agencies are committed to supporting people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness. It is chaired by an independent chairperson. During the term of this strategy, it has developed a volunteer and staff training plan, and a county wide homelessness charter. The Forum is also developing plans for fund raising activities that can be used by members to deliver homeless prevention and support services to augment the help provided by Statutory Agencies. The Forum strives to make the voice of all groups and agencies heard. More information about the Forum can be found on the Herefordshire Council website: [Housing in Herefordshire – Herefordshire Council](#)

Through the Forum, an inclusive and multi-sector programme of support has been delivered to rough sleepers and people who are homeless. This has ensured that, even though COVID-19, support and food was delivered by the voluntary sector.

Herefordshire Council has supported charitable groups with small donations of funding over the winter periods to assist with this provision. It has also supported a homeless charity with funding to enable the upgrading and development of additional accommodation at their premises.

Through close collaborations with the Registered Providers of Social Housing in Herefordshire, Herefordshire Council has been able to use the planning process to ensure that 3,733 new homes were built in the county over the past five years. Of these 1,286 have been, affordable housing¹ for occupation by Herefordians.

Herefordshire Council has a programme of engagement, support and payment for people who are experts by experience. This is being delivered through the Talk Community programme. There is a range of well-established Boards in Herefordshire where those with lived experience are both Chairs and key members, including the Making It Real Board, Autism Partnership Board, Carers Partnership Board and Learning Disability Partnership Board. Our Person's Voice questionnaire, co-produced with people with lived experience, provides individuals with the opportunity to tell us more about their recent experience with adult social care.

¹ [Fact Sheet 9: What is affordable housing? - GOV.UK](#)

A collective approach to and involvement of people with lived experience of complex multiple disadvantage is being developed specifically for Homelessness.

Herefordshire Council's Early Intervention Officer works across sectors with communities to directly prevent and mitigate the risk of homelessness occurring at the earliest opportunity. In 2024 this prevented over 200 households becoming homeless. A second post has been recruited to expand this work during 2025/26.

Priority 10: Seek to reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation over the course of this strategy.

Table 1: National Data - Total presentations to Local Authorities for Housing support.

			Total Initial Assessments	Total Owed a Prevention or Relief Duty	Percentage
E92000001	ENGLAND	2023/24	358,370	324,990	91
E92000001	ENGLAND	2022/23	324,650	300,910	93
E92000001	ENGLAND	2021/22	291,620	279,470	96
E92000001	ENGLAND	2020/21	284,330	270,560	95
E92000001	ENGLAND	2019/20	305,680	289,800	95
E92000001	ENGLAND	2018/19	292,690	269,510	92

Table 2: Herefordshire Data - Total presentations for Housing Support.

			Total Initial assessments	Total Owed a Prevention or Relief Duty	Percentage
E06000019	Herefordshire	2023/24	864	758	88
E06000019	Herefordshire	2022/23	1,337	1,330	99
E06000019	Herefordshire	2021/22	1,161	1,158	100
E06000019	Herefordshire	2020/21	1,138	1,130	99
E06000019	Herefordshire	2019/20	1,015	939	93
E06000019	Herefordshire	2018/19	956	841	88

Table 1 sets out national level data. This is collated by HM Government for all English local authority areas, based upon monthly returns submitted by each local authority area. The national data for 2024/25 has not yet been ratified by HM Government. It can be observed that total presentations over the above six-year cycle rose during COVID-19 pandemic and the

“Everyone Inⁱⁱⁱ” mandate, it then dropped back in 2020/21 before increasing year on year to 2023/24.

Table 2 sets out the same data for Herefordshire. It can be observed that the total presentations have dropped significantly in 2023/24 returning to slightly lower than pre-pandemic levels – this is against the national trend, one of only a few local authority areas to be in this position.

A similar percentage rate of households continues to be owed a prevention or relief duty by Herefordshire County. This means that Herefordshire Council owes that household a statutory duty to intervene to work with the household in an attempt to either prevent their homelessness occurring (if not yet homeless) or relieve their homelessness, if already evicted or the prevention duty intervention is unsuccessful.

Where a relief duty is owed, a household is supported with an offer of temporary accommodation. Temporary accommodation can be provided in one of three broad settings: -

1. Accommodation provided in premises owned or leased by Herefordshire Council or a CVFS partner.
2. Accommodation provided in premises leased by Herefordshire Council from a private landlord or a registered provider landlord.
3. Accommodation provided in a bed and breakfast or chain hotel type setting.

Herefordshire Council has limited access to property types listed at 1 and 2 (approximately 60 units). If demand for temporary accommodation increases then property type 3 is used.

Bed and breakfast / chain hotel settings are the most expensive type of Temporary Accommodation.

The table 3 below sets out the numbers of households in temporary accommodation over the period 1/1/24 to 30/4/25. It can be observed that this is broadly an upward trend, with more households being in temporary accommodation and there for longer periods of time.

Table 3: Temporary Accommodation Data

	Jan 24	Feb 24	Mar 24	Apr 24	May 24	Jun 24	Jul 24	Aug 24	Sep 24	Oct 24	Nov 24	Dec 24	Jan 25	Feb 25	Mar 25	Apr 25	May 25
No of households in TA	72	70	68	59	56	55	64	56	55	45	60	50	48	56	58	58	57

No of households in B&B	76	75	74	79	85	74	73	81	78	94	86	91	108	90	85	98	96
Total households in TA	148	145	142	138	141	129	137	137	133	139	146	141	156	146	143	159	153
Length of time (nights) in TA average			162	191	193	192	183	177	193	202	201	196	187	176	183	159	173

Table 4: Family Households in Temporary Accommodation

	Jan 24	Feb 24	Mar 24	Apr 24	May 24	Jun 24	Jul 24	Aug 24	Sep 24	Oct 24	Nov 24	Dec 24	Jan 25	Feb 25	Mar 25	Apr 25
Families in B&B					16	16	14	19	23	24	28	30	28	29	24	21
Over 6 Weeks					6	5	6	8	10	11	15	18	19	18	16	13

Table 4 sets out 12 months of data for families in B&B type accommodation. HM Government rules state that families should not be in B&B accommodation for longer than six weeks. Local authorities should do all that they are able to facilitate either no stay in B&B type accommodation or as short a stay as possible in B&B type accommodation.

Demand for temporary accommodation in Herefordshire (similar to every other UK local authority) has grown and continues to outstrip supply. The main reasons for this are set out under Priority 11

Herefordshire Council works hard with a range of housing providers – social and private to try and secure enough properties for our communities. The following provisions are in place to support households in need of temporary accommodation.

1. Deliver a choice based letting service that lists all social housing in the county. This service enables households to bid for properties across the county – either to swap homes or to secure a new one if they have been homeless.

2. Work in partnership with social and private landlords to deliver housing stock for use as temporary accommodation.
3. Have in place an action plan to reduce the amount of time families stay in B&B type accommodation.
4. Have secured agreement to develop a Herefordshire Council Housing Development Company to deliver social housing for Herefordshire's most vulnerable households.
5. Have in place a comprehensive strategic plan to deliver new housing for the county - [Local housing strategy 2021-2026](#)
6. See Priority 1 and 2 Outcomes above for details of accommodation sourced specifically for rough sleepers.

Outcomes: Whilst Herefordshire has been able to reduce the numbers of people initially requiring housing support (against the national trend) we still have too many households in need of temporary accommodation and too few affordable / social properties to permanently meet this need.

Locally we have a good understanding of where new homes are needed - [Housing market area needs assessment July 2021](#). This knowledge informs where to build new homes.

Through our procurement processes we have been successful in securing more cost-effective temporary accommodation to provide additional units of emergency accommodation for households. We have developed a comprehensive plan to address the numbers of families in temporary accommodation. This is starting to make a difference and is reducing the numbers needing emergency accommodation and the length of time they stay in emergency accommodation.

The work of the Early Intervention post has reduced the number of households actually being evicted in the first place which will also reduce demand for temporary accommodation in the longer term.

Whilst these specific actions and plans are in place to address this shortfall, there are no quick solutions. The long-term solution is to support social landlords in the county to build more homes.

Priority 11: Develop an evidence base of the factors which contribute to levels of homelessness in Herefordshire, the impact of our partnering interventions and emerging risks, including the impact of the continuing roll-out of Universal Credit.

Outcomes: We have a good understanding of the causes of homelessness in Herefordshire. They are: -

1. The landlord issued a notice to end an Assured Shorthold Tenancy.
2. Family or friends were no longer willing or able to accommodate the family, couple, or single person.
3. There was a violent or non-violent breakdown in a relationship – leading to one or more parties needing to leave the home.

These reasons for homelessness are the same at a national level.

Comprehensive assessments take place with all people who need housing support or who access the winter shelter. This data is captured on our housing management system and is used to provide statistical data returns to HM Government. This allows us to track a wide range of reasons, from age, family make up and employment status to demographics and support needs.

A comprehensive assessment of need is also completed when people access the winter shelter. This provides detailed information about an individual's support needs, illnesses, treatment regimes, and housing and offending history.

On the Homeless Prevention pathway, our data tells us that the interventions through the BRAVE pathway reduced rough sleeping by volume (Long term, returning and new rough sleepers) and duration.

The Early Intervention Officer and the work they do through our Talk Community network has reduced demand requiring housing support from our Housing Solutions Team.

The website Understanding Herefordshire ([Home - Understanding Herefordshire](#)) contains a wealth of data about the county.

Specifically, around the implementation of Universal Credit (UC) benefits, there are a small number of people who have refused to migrate to UC. This actually means they lose an element of their existing benefit payments, part of which is the rent element. This puts them at risk of being evicted and therefore homelessness. Partners in the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) have been able to identify who is affected by this and put in place bespoke support packages that ensure a designated DWP case worker makes contact with households affected to work with them to remove the risk.

Whilst the numbers of people being released from institutions and needing housing support is relatively small in Herefordshire, through the Duty to Refer scheme, ([A guide to the duty to refer - GOV.UK](#)) Herefordshire Council receives an average of 30 referrals a year from partners in the Justice system and an average of 15 a year from partners in the Health Service. There

is a dedicated housing officer who works as the hospital discharge officer. Their role is to work with Health Service partners specifically with individuals who would be homeless upon discharge from a health setting. They identify a person's housing and support needs and ensure that not only is appropriate housing in place but also the support is provided for them to live there. In addition, where no suitable home can be immediately found, the Hospital Discharge Officer works closely with colleagues in the Strategic Housing Team to develop a home as a new build leveraged through the planning process.

There is also a dedicated housing officer in Housing Solutions who works closely with His Majesty's Prisons (HMP) estate to identify prisoners being released who may not have a home to return too and therefore would be homeless. By working through the Duty to Refer scheme and utilising pre-release panels, we are able to identify individuals who may be at this risk. This new scheme has been developed nationally after local authority areas (including Herefordshire) asked for more to be done within prisons to identify offenders at risk of homelessness before they were released. Whilst Herefordshire did not secure funding from the Accommodation for Ex Offenders national funding grant, we have been successful at a regional level in accessing the Community Accommodation Scheme (CAS3) Probation Service driven accommodation programme. This allows offenders being released to have accommodation for up to 81 days whilst long-term accommodation is secured for them. This reduces offending, increases family reintegration and ensures the right support is delivered. Whilst there are no units of accommodation currently in Herefordshire. We have been able to place people in CAS3 accommodation across the wider West Mercia area, in Shropshire, Worcestershire and Telford.

Priority 12: Continue to build on our success in securing grant funding to support homelessness prevention initiatives in the county.

Outcomes:

Herefordshire Council has been granted / secured £9,674,225 in external grants for homelessness prevention funding since 2020. In addition to this we have used £2,500,000 of Herefordshire Council capital funding towards the purchase of properties to be used as or converted into accommodation.

Details of how this money has been used is referred to in the above sections.

Priority 13: Explore the potential for expanding the Registered Provider portfolio of private rented sector tenancies in Herefordshire through new build or property purchase.

Outcomes:

During the lifetime of this strategy, Herefordshire Council has worked closely with Registered Provider partners to apply for, and deliver, two programmes to increase the amount of social housing stock in the county.

Local Area Housing Fund - This is a government initiative aimed at providing capital funding to local authorities in England to acquire and/or refurbish properties, creating sustainable housing for individuals and families on resettlement schemes who are unable to secure their own accommodation. This includes those arriving under Ukrainian and Afghan resettlement programmes, as well as people experiencing homelessness. Through this programme we have supported two Registered Provider partners to secure 38 additional units of social housing – at no additional cost to Herefordshire Council or the services we deliver.

Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme - The government announced the Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme (SHAP) following the publication of the [Rough Sleeping Strategy](#) in September 2022.

SHAP was a £200 million fund to deliver up to 2,400 homes and support services for people sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough across England. SHAP funding was secured for Herefordshire and will provide supported housing and 15 units of accommodation for young people, under 25 years old, at risk of or experiencing homelessness or rough sleeping.

The Council's Strategic Housing Team work closely with Registered Providers to explore funding opportunities as they arise.

Priority 14: Develop a homelessness prevention 'toolkit' for use in the Talk Community Hub approach. This could potentially be achieved through a Making Every Contact Count (MECC) plus e-learning module on homelessness prevention for non-housing professionals and community partner agencies.

Outcomes:

The Early Intervention Officer, who is working across the Talk Community Network, is currently developing a toolkit for communities to access and use. This toolkit will provide guidance, advice and next steps to help people identify what support options and practical solutions are available to them to help reduce the risk of homelessness. It will also set out what help is available to address homelessness, should it occur. This will be a web-based resource – open to all, communities and partners alike. Advice and guidance are also available on the [Herefordshire Council website](#) and through the Housing Solutions Team.

GLOSSARY / DEFINITIONS

ⁱ BRAVE – Building Resilience Against Endemic Vulnerabilities

ⁱⁱ Core Grant funded Rough Sleeper Outreach Team posts is one staff member.

ⁱⁱⁱ “Everyone In” was a national mandate from HM Government to offer accommodation to anyone who needed it in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The normal assessment of need process was suspended for this period of time.