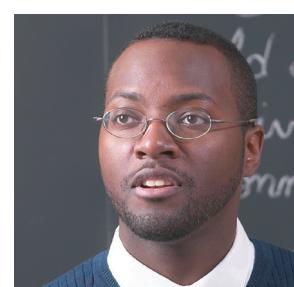
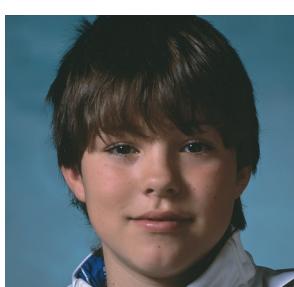
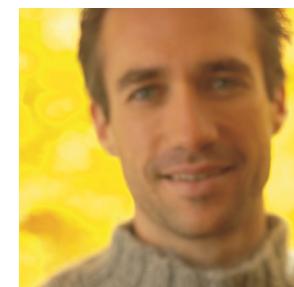
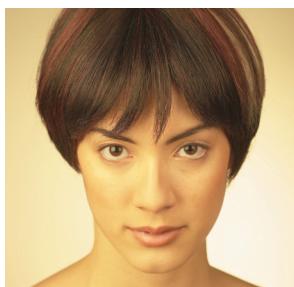
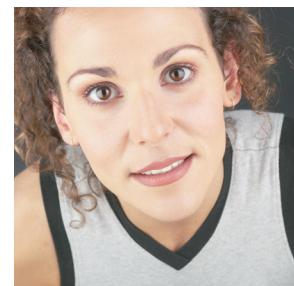
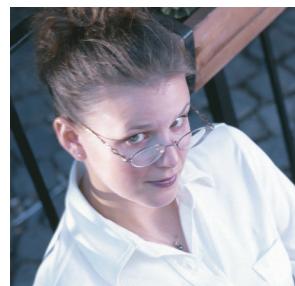
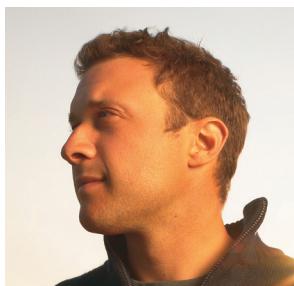


Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020 to 2025



WARRINGTON
Borough Council

Contents

1. Foreword
2. Vision
3. Definition of Homelessness
4. National Policy Context
5. Homelessness Review: Key Findings
6. Overview and Profile of Homelessness
7. Priorities
8. Delivery and Monitoring
9. Action Plan



1. Foreword

Welcome to Warrington's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020 to 2025.

Warrington's housing market is characterised by high demand, a successful local economy and growing population. This demand outstrips the supply of housing which can lead to higher house prices and rents. Those least able to compete can often find their options limited. This is exacerbated by the low level of Local Housing Allowances and welfare reform which has reduced access to the private rented sector. Alongside this we have a year on year reduction in the availability of social housing. Whilst a key priority the delivery of new homes lags behind our aspiration and the need for social housing. For decades insufficient homes have not been built and our 5 year plan cannot match the scale of this backlog of housing need.

Tackling homelessness is a key challenge for the Council and our partners. The Homelessness Review demonstrates that we have been successful in the prevention and relief of homelessness which has led to a substantial reduction in the number of households who have become homeless.

We have recognised the increasing problem of rough sleepers and have identified actions to reduce it. Two successful grant funding bids under the government's Rough Sleeping Initiative will assist in piloting the Somewhere Safe to Stay hub and providing specialist support to our New Start Plus programme.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has contributed to the strategy.



Councillor Maureen McLaughlin
Cabinet Board Member
Housing, Public Health and Wellbeing

2. Vision

Our vision is

“Working together to end homelessness in Warrington”

3. Definition of homelessness

The common perception of homelessness is a single person seen sleeping rough on the streets. However, homelessness is a more complex issue affecting families, couples and single people. Not all homeless people live on the streets they may have access to unsettled accommodation by “sofa surfing” or living in overcrowded accommodation with families or friends.

This review uses a wide definition of homelessness which includes the following:

- People sleeping rough
- Single homeless people living in shelters, hostels and supported accommodation
- Statutory homeless

It also includes people that can be described as “hidden homelessness”. These are people who are squatting, living in severely overcrowded accommodation.

The government has set out in legislation who can be considered as being homeless or threatened with homelessness and provided guidance on how the Council assesses this. People who present as homeless don't have to be sleeping on the streets or not have a roof over their head at the time they apply for help. People are statutory homeless if:

- It is unreasonable for them to remain in their current accommodation because the property is in a poor or unsafe condition
- They are no longer able to afford the accommodation
- They live in a caravan or boat with nowhere to legally put it

4. National Policy Context

In April 2017 the Homelessness Reduction Act received Royal Assent and this became operational on 3rd April 2018. The Act gives the Council new duties with a focus on prevention of homelessness and those already experiencing homelessness are able to access help regardless of whether they have a priority need. With these new duties nationally the government is providing £72.7 million to local authorities to meet the requirements of this Act.

The Act changed the way councils work:

- A new duty to prevent homelessness for 56 days
- A new duty to relieve homelessness (by securing accommodation for a period of 6 months or more) for a further 56 days
- Create and monitor individual Personal Housing Plans
- Local connection and homelessness intentionality not assessed until the main statutory homelessness duty

- The current statutory homelessness duty (main duty) is not replaced by the Act it is now placed at the end of the process after attempts to prevent and relieve homelessness

In August 2018 the government published the Rough Sleeping Strategy which set out how it planned to end rough sleeping by 2027.

- Prevention: understanding the issues that lead to rough sleeping and providing timely support for those at risk
- Intervention: helping those already sleeping rough with swift support tailored to their individual circumstances
- Recovery: supporting people in finding a new home and rebuilding their lives



5. Homelessness Review: Key Findings

In order to develop this strategy a detailed review of homelessness has been carried out. A summary of the key findings are set out below:

Increasing Numbers Seeking Assistance

With the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA) there are more statutory duties so more people qualify for assistance. The largest increase has been single people.

Homelessness Prevention & Relief Increased

In 2018/19 we substantially increased the number of preventions & reliefs of homelessness, although social housing played a key role which is reducing.

Social Housing Reduction

Year on year there has been a reduction in the number of social housing becoming available. The number of families with dependent people seeking assistance due to homelessness in a year now exceeds the number of social homes available. This will increase the time people stay in temporary accommodation reducing its availability.

Affordability of Rental and Home Ownership

Many households are finding renting and home ownership unaffordable. The overall rate of new homes built is not keeping pace with household growth and demand. This and other welfare reforms increase the cost of living impacting on a person's ability to sustain a home.

The private rented sector rent levels are higher than the benefit levels paid under the local housing allowance. This means that for those on benefits or low incomes the private rented sector is not a sustainable housing option. The loss of private rented sector accommodation is the second highest cause of homelessness.

Welfare Reform

Since 2012 there have been a series of welfare reform changes with the main ones summarised as follows:

- Local Housing Allowances: capped since 2016 and a lower rate for those aged under 35
- Universal credit: brings together a range of working age benefits into a single payment
- Bedroom tax: if a tenant is deemed to have 1 spare room then housing benefit is cut by 14% and 25% for 2 or more spare rooms

Rough Sleeping

There is an increase in the number of rough sleepers from 4 in 2017 to 21 in 2018.

Complexity

Homelessness is not just a housing issue. Many homeless people have complex needs beyond the need for housing.

Direction of Travel

It is very difficult to predict the future levels of homelessness due to the complexity of the causes and the influence of national trends. What is clear is that with the introduction of the HRA we have more statutory duties so more people qualify for assistance. The biggest increase has been single people which was expected.

National statistics show that homelessness, rough sleeping and the number of households placed in temporary accommodation is increasing. Warrington is following the national trend and this is exacerbated by the success of our local economy.

Whilst more people qualify for assistance at the same time we are facing a year on year reduction in social housing. This mismatch between demand and supply is likely to result in households remaining in temporary accommodation for longer. If households remain in temporary accommodation for longer this will reduce its availability limiting the options for emergency housing for new homeless applications.



6. Overview and profile of Homelessness

An analysis of the data available for 2018/19 identified the following:

Applications

- Total applications of 3,239
- 1,389 prevention or relief
- 38% (453) single males
- 24% (292) single females
- 30% (414) applicants with dependent children
- 66% of all applicants declared that they needed support

Main Age Range of Applicants

- 33% were between 25 and 35 years old
- 23% were between 18 and 24 years old
- 21% were between 35 and 44 years old
- 14% were between 45 and 54 years

Main Causes of Homelessness

- 26% family and friends no longer able to accommodate
- 14% loss of private rented sector accommodation
- 14% domestic abuse
- 12% non-violent relationship breakdown

Support Needs

- 66% of all applicants declared that they had support needs and of those
 - 36% stated they had 1 support need
 - 21% stated they had 2 support needs
 - 43% stated they had 3 or more support needs

Further analysis of the declared support needs identified the following:

- 55% mental health
- 33% had suffered domestic abuse
- 30% had a physical disability or health problem

Prevention and Relief Duty

The focus of the HRA is the prevention or relief of homelessness and the table below shows that we have been successful in achieving this. In 2017/18 we achieved 508 preventions/relief whilst in 2018/19 this has increased to 1,389.

	P1E Data 2016/17	P1E Data 2017/18	H-CLIK 2018/19
Preventions	585	454	688
Reliefs	59	54	701
Total	644	508	1,389

The prevention duty ended by placing 78% of applicants into social housing, 15% into the private rented sector accounted and 5% in supported housing.

The relief duty was ended by placing 63% of applicants into social housing, 33% into supported housing and 3% into the private rented sector.

Temporary Accommodation

Temporary accommodation (TA) is measured by counting how many households are in TA or B&B at the end of each quarter. This means that some households are not counted if they entered and left TA or B&B during the quarter.

During they year (at the end of each quarter) 11% of the total number of households assessed were occupying TA and 6% of those households contained dependent children.

With regard to B&B there were 4% of the total number of households assessed occupying B&B at the end of the quarter and 2% of those households contained dependent children. During the year only 1 family with dependent children stayed in B&B accommodation for 6 weeks or more. Temporary housing was offered in this case, although refused by the family through their representative (Shelter).

16 and 17 Year Olds

16/17 year old applicants represent less than 3% (34) of the total number of applicants owned a duty and 2% (27) declared having support needs. No unaccompanied 16/17 year olds were placed in B&B or temporary accommodation during this period. Applicants aged under 18 are assessed jointly by Housing Plus and Children's Services with appropriate supported accommodation provided if the applicant is unable to return to the family home.

Main Homelessness Duty

Previously the full housing duty acceptance homeless trend has been upwards increasing from 219 in 2016/17 to 267 in 2017/18. However, due to an increase in prevention and relief this has reduced to 31 for 2018/19.

Duty to Refer

The HRA placed a statutory duty on public bodies to make referrals to the Council where they have clients who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The total number of referrals from 1st October 2018 to 31st March 2019 was 277.

7. Priorities

Following the review of homelessness 4 key priorities have been identified which are as follows:

Priority 1: Prevention & relief of homelessness

Reason for this priority:

- Prevention is better than dealing with the challenges arising from homelessness
- The focus of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 is on prevention and relief
- In 2018/19 there were 3,239 applications for assistance from Housing Plus
- Need to move away from a crisis driven approach

Our aim is to intervene earlier to help prevent families and individuals becoming homeless. This achieves a better outcome for our customers and reduces the cost of providing emergency temporary accommodation.

Housing Advice and Information

The Council provides free advice and information about homelessness.

Mediation

Mediation can assist if there has been a breakdown in relationships with parents, friends or relatives who are no longer willing/able to provide accommodation. Our approach will be reviewed to see how we maximise our effectiveness through mediation.

Sanctuary Scheme

The violent breakdown of a relationship is one of the main reasons for homelessness. Warrington operates the Sanctuary Scheme which provides free security measure to a property to enable people at risk of domestic abuse to remain in their own home. Applications are increasing as more people choose to remain in their own home.

Tenancy Relations Service

Housing Options case workers aim to intervene to prevent homelessness where possible by negotiating with as well as supporting landlords.

The Council will assist private sector tenants in dispute with their landlord or who are being harassed or have been or due to be evicted illegally.

Private Rented Sector Bond Scheme

The Council runs a scheme to assist people into the private rented sector by covering the cost of the bond deposit. This scheme has become less successful over the years because the private rented sector is increasingly more expensive and unaffordable.

Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)

The Council commissions CAB to provide a free, independent, confidential and impartial advice service to everyone on their rights and responsibilities including:

- Benefits
- Work
- Debt and money
- Housing
- Consumer trading
- Family
- Law and courts
- Immigration
- Health

Floating Support

The Council commissions a floating support service in Warrington which provides advice and assistance to enable people to maintain their tenancy.

Priority 2: Accommodation

Reason for this priority:

- More statutory duties so more people qualify for assistance
- Many households are finding renting and home ownership unaffordable
- 4,334 registered with Under One Roof
- Reduction in social housing
- Increasing demand for temporary accommodation
- Prevention duty ended by placing 78% of applicants in social housing
- Relief duty ended by placing 63% of applications into social housing and 33% into supported housing

Affordable Housing

The provision of affordable accommodation is essential in order to address homelessness.

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment identified that 377 new affordable homes are required each year with the majority of need for rented homes. In 2018/19 there were 112 affordable housing completions.

The demand for social housing is increasing with 4,334 registered with Under One Roof. However, the availability of social housing is reducing year on year. Golden Gates Housing Trust is the largest

provider of social housing in Warrington and the table below shows the reduction in lettings over the years:

2002/03	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
1,311	809	688	639	486

Source: Torus Under One Roof

Warrington & Co has the key leadership role in enabling and supporting the delivery of new housing schemes in the borough. In addition they will directly build new homes through the Local Housing Company.

Homes England provides grant funding to deliver new affordable housing under the Shared ownership and Affordable Homes programme 2016 to 2021.

Temporary Accommodation

Temporary accommodation is provided to those who we have reason to believe have a priority need under the terms of the relevant homelessness and housing legislation. This is a temporary measure provided as an emergency before a long term suitable property is found.

The reduction in social housing will put pressure on the Council's limited stock of emergency temporary accommodation. It will take time to increase the number of new build homes. As a result in the short term it is essential that more temporary accommodation is provided and at the same time spaces are created within hostels and refuges through Homes England's £50m Move On Fund. This fund aims to free up hostel and refuge spaces by increasing the availability of affordable move on.

Bed & Breakfast Accommodation

Bed & breakfast (B&B) accommodation is an emergency solution provided to homeless households (families and single people) where the Council has reason to believe that the applicant has a priority need under the terms of the relevant homelessness and housing legislation.

B&B is only used as a last resort when no other accommodation options are available and it is only used until alternative accommodation is sourced.

The Y Project Room at the Inn

The Council supports a 10 bed emergency night shelter provided by a charity. This provides emergency night by night accommodation and day time support for rough sleepers.

New Start

To prepare for the introduction of the HRA the Council launched New Start in June 2017. The Council has investment £1.5m to acquire properties to create Houses in Multiple Occupation for single people and couples.

The New Start project provides shared accommodation and support for adults rough sleeping or using Room at the Inn. There are currently 45 units which provides short term accommodation.

Multi-Agency Housing Panel

The Multi-Agency Housing Panel was established in September 2016 for those who cannot obtain housing through the usual routes. This includes families, couples and single people. An Independent Chair works with a wide range of statutory agencies, commissioning services and the voluntary sector to secure housing.

Priority 3: Support

Reason for this priority:

- 66% of applicants in 2018/19 declared they had support needs
- Many have complex needs beyond the need for housing such as substance misuse, mental health etc.
- Flexible help that is tailored to meet individual needs

Supported Housing

Supported housing is defined as "housing designed to meet specific needs and in which there is some level of on-site support provided as part of the accommodation offered".

It is critical that a person or household who becomes homeless has the right support to ensure that their individual needs are met and they can sustain any future accommodation. Personal Housing Plans will identify short and long term support needs.

The Council currently commissions the following:

Women's Refuge: Warrington Women's Aid provide refuge accommodation and support for 15 women and their children who are at risk of domestic abuse.

James Lee House: The Salvation Army provide 54 units of supported accommodation for single homeless men and women aged 18+.

Verve Place: Your Housing Group provide 38 self contained apartments of supported accommodation for homeless young people aged 16 to 24 years old.

Vulnerable Tenant Support Scheme: housing related floating support to tenants that need support to maintain their tenancy and prevent homelessness.

A needs and gaps analysis has been carried out and the reflective learning has been instrumental in shaping the specification for the retender of homelessness services. The new services commissioned will be provided for a minimum of 7 years to give stability and to encourage investment.

Pathways to Recovery

Change Grow Live provides a free and confidential drug and alcohol service for adults, families and carers in Warrington. This team includes Doctors, Recovery Coordinators, Nurses, Recovery Champions, Peer Mentors and volunteers

New Start Plus

The government invited bids for grant funding under the Rough Sleeping Initiative. A successful joint bid with Forum Housing Association is providing specialist support for 21 residents in the New Start programme.

Employment and Training

It can be difficult for unemployed people to get back into work and even harder for people to find a job when they are homeless. The Council will explore with partners how we can support people into training, apprenticeship and employment.

Health & Wellbeing

Homelessness can often result from a combination of factors such as relationship breakdown, debt, ill health etc. Evidence suggests that the health of people experiencing homelessness is worse than that of the general population. Research by Homeless Link found

that 41% of homeless people reported a long term physical health problem and 45% had a diagnosed mental health problem compared with 28% and 25% in the general population. This research by Homeless Link shows that homeless people use hospital services such as A&E 3 to 6 times more than the general population. Homelessness cases are referred to the Council's Wellbeing Service.

Priority 4: Reduce Rough Sleeping

Reason for this priority:

- Increase in rough sleeping to 21 in 2018
- Health impacts of rough sleeping

The national definition of a rough sleeper is:

"People sleeping about to bed down (sitting on/in or standing next to their bedding) or actually bedded down in the open air (such as in the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments). People in buildings or other places not designed for habitation such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations or "bashes".

The rough sleeper counts and estimates process is not designed to arrive at a single irrefutable number of people sleeping rough. Instead its aim is to provide a snapshot of the numbers of people likely to be sleeping rough so that trends nationally and locally can be tracked.

Nationally the number of people sleeping rough in England has risen each year since 2010 except for last year. The table below sets out the outcome for the counts and estimates over the last few years.

Year	Number
2010	7
2011	11
2012	7
2013	11
2014	5
2015	5
2016	5
2017	4
2018	21

Effective Outreach

An effective outreach service can play a key role in identifying rough sleepers and their needs at an early stage.

Street Begging

Not all beggars are homeless, although the public perception often assumes that they are. There is concern that those who are begging do so to fund drug and alcohol dependency. This can sometimes lead to non-engagement with services preventing access to accommodation.

To address these growing concerns the Council will need to explore ways for people to donate which does not inadvertently support and encourage begging. This will need to form part of a communication and anti-begging campaign. Further work to develop this will be needed to consider the role of enforcement and how to change perceptions without losing public goodwill.

Severe Weather Emergency Provision (SWEP)

Whilst the provision of shelter for rough sleepers during severe weather is not a statutory duty there is a humanitarian obligation to assist. So during severe cold weather such as when the temperature is forecast to fall to freezing or below for 3 days access to emergency accommodation will be explored.

Somewhere Safe to Stay

The Council working in partnership with Forum Housing Association has been successful in obtaining grant funding under the government's Rough Sleeping Initiative. In addition to existing accommodation based services this project aims to deliver a rapid assessment and support to people who are already or at risk of sleeping rough.

Rough Sleeper Action Group

The Rough Sleeper Action Group (RSAG) was established in October 2014 meeting fortnightly. RSAG is a multi-agency group that identifies rough sleepers, produces an action for each individual, responds to public reports of rough sleeping and is responsible for the annual estimate of rough sleeping submitted to the government.

RSAG consists of the following organisations:

- Housing Plus
- Room at the Inn
- Salvation Army
- Your Housing Group
- Cheshire Police
- Change Grow Live
- The Gateway Centre
- Public Health Wellbeing Service

8. Delivery and Monitoring

It is recognised that delivering the Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy is the responsibility of many organisations working together in partnership and not just the Council. The priorities and the Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Action plan will be developed with partners and then subject to wider consultation.

The Homelessness Forum on the 9th October 2019 has reviewed the priorities and developed an outline action plan which will be subject to wider consultation. Following consultation a more detailed action plan with specific targets and timescales will then be developed.

Warrington Housing and Homelessness Action Partnership

The aim of the Partnership is to ensure that this work is co-ordinated in an effective way with all partners influencing and contributing to a coherent agreed strategy. Once the strategy has been out to consultation and updated this will be considered by the Council's Cabinet in December 2019.

The Partnership will monitor the Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Action plan on a quarterly basis and the group will drive forward the delivery and progress in meeting the objectives set out in the strategy. The action plan will be reviewed annually to ensure that any new changes in legislation and policies are reflected within the strategy.

9. Action Plan

The Homelessness Forum on the 9th October 2019 has identified the main areas of work for the next five years for consultation. A detailed action plan will be developed annually from the results of this consultation in order to respond to any emerging needs that may arise. The actions, targets and outcome in the annual action plan will be agreed with partners who will commit to delivering their contribution to the strategy.

Priority 1: Prevention & Relief of Homelessness

Action	Outcome
To review the approach to the prevention of homelessness in light of the Homelessness Reduction Act	To provide early advice to reduce the number of people who present in crisis
To expand Duty to Refer to Registered Providers and supported housing provided by the voluntary sector	Signed memorandum of understanding To provide early advice to tenants to prevent homelessness Monitoring reports to the Warrington Housing and Homelessness Action Partnership
Explore the introduction of a visiting advice service for those accommodated by parents, friends or relatives to discuss issues, options and the support available	To reduce the highest cause of homelessness in which parents, relatives or friends are no longer willing or able to accommodate
Develop pre-eviction protocols with private and social landlords	To provide early advice to tenants to prevent homelessness
To target Discretionary Housing Payments as a prevention tool	Ensure payments are targeted where they have the most impact to prevent homelessness
Review availability of information	To make advice more accessible
Review Sanctuary Scheme	Ensure that, when it is safe to do so, more victims of domestic abuse can remain in their existing accommodation with additional security measures
Review the advice and information available on the website	Increase awareness of housing options and accessibility of information
Raise awareness of homelessness and prevention	Better understanding of the causes and consequences of homelessness to increase referrals for prevention
To utilise the full range of powers available to tackle rogue landlords providing poor quality housing in the private rented sector	Improved housing conditions in the private rented sector
To explore how to equip people with information, knowledge and skills to avert a housing crisis	Completed report
To investigate how to increase the number accessing services at an earlier stage to reduce the number of people presenting in crisis	Completed report Increase in early referrals to reduce people presenting in crisis
To raise awareness of homelessness and the Multi Agency Housing panel	Improved awareness of homelessness and understanding that the solutions are not just limited to housing

Priority 2: Accommodation

Action	Outcome
Increase the provision of new build social housing	To increase the provision of affordable housing
Explore the options to increase the provision of supported housing	Completed report
Work with Registered Providers to secure grant funding under the Homes England Move On programme	Increased move on accommodation releasing hostel and refuge spaces
Review availability of grant funding to deliver affordable housing	Completed review
Explore the potential to increase the provision of temporary accommodation	Completed report
Review the nominations agreement between the Council and Registered Providers	Completed nomination agreement
Explore how to increase the number and speed of delivery for affordable housing	Completed report on proposals
Evaluate the Housing First model and how these principles could be used in Warrington	Completed report
Explore the temporary use of land and buildings to provide temporary accommodation	Completed report
Explore options to bring back empty properties back into use for temporary and long term accommodation	Completed report
Review the bond scheme for tenants seeking accommodation in the private rented sector	Completed review
Review the Homeswapper Scheme and its opportunities to meet housing need	Completed review
Explore options for a rent a room and lodging scheme	Completed report

Priority 3: Support

Action	Outcome
Review advice and training for staff working with complex needs customers	To help address the complex needs of those who are homeless
Explore how to fund additional support needs of complex and chaotic lifestyles to enable rough sleepers to sustain tenancies	Completed report To help address the complex needs of those who are homeless
Explore specialist support services that can help those with a mental health issue	Completed report To help address the complex needs of those who are homeless
Explore the options to deliver support needs to meet the individual needs identified from the Personal Housing Plan	Completed report
Review how to assist access by the homeless to access alcohol and drug services	Completed review
Work with partners to address the health of homeless people	Improved health outcomes for the homeless
Review the access to health and GP services for homeless households	Completed report
Assess the support needs of the elderly to register for housing and downsize	Completed report
Tender for homelessness accommodation and support services	Completed tender
Explore the opportunities to provide one to one support	Reduced barriers, raised confidence, upskilled and increased employability of former rough sleepers

Priority 4: Reduce Rough Sleeping

Action	Outcome
Charities to explore how to work together to provide an alternative option for the public to donate which does not encourage street begging and publicise this approach	An alternative method for the public to donate to support rough sleepers Campaign to raise awareness to discourage street begging Co-ordinated approach on the use of donated funds
To develop a pathway for those leaving prison, hospital discharge and evictions	To reduce the risk of rough sleeping
To bid for grant funding to provide an outreach service using navigators to identify rough sleepers and their needs at an early stage	Grant funding service working with partners to reduce the number of rough sleepers
To provide additional capacity to deliver the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol	Assessment and emergency accommodation provided during the winter to reduce the risk of cold related illnesses and death from rough sleeping
Explore ideas to create additional temporary accommodation to meet rough changing demand from rough sleeping	Additional accommodation to reduce the risk of rough sleeping
Develop a communications strategy and campaign	Raised awareness of the homeless services provided