

Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029

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Foreword

The Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy sets out how Shropshire Council and partners will prioritise the prevention of homelessness and ending of rough sleeping in the county, covering the period 2024 to 2029.

The risk of homelessness stems from various structural and personal factors, constraining individuals, and families from achieving resilience and securing a positive future. Without addressing these underlying issues, individuals' risk being trapped in a cycle of homelessness, impacting all aspects of their lives. Homelessness goes beyond just lacking shelter, affecting physical and mental health, educational attainment, employment prospects, and straining personal and familial relationships.

In recent years, the situation with homelessness has faced many changes and challenges, requiring councils and public sector organisations to shoulder additional responsibilities to prevent and ease homelessness. The profound effect of homelessness warrants a collaborative effort with partners and stakeholders to prevent precarious housing situations, such as temporary accommodation, hostels, and B&Bs, and to provide support for individuals on their journey to build their lives.

The introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act and the Domestic Abuse Act are positive steps for vulnerable groups, this has been set against a backdrop of other challenges, notably, Welfare Reform, Universal Credit, and the Covid-19 pandemic. Whilst we are all recovering from the pandemic, a national cost of living crisis has emerged. These converging factors create a challenging period, and we acknowledge the significant strain they place on individuals' ability to cope, which can increase their vulnerability to homelessness.

This strategy aims to help people as soon as possible and emphasises the importance of getting the right advice and support at the right time, maximising opportunities for early intervention and prevention work. Preventing homelessness is more cost-effective but more importantly delivers far better outcomes for the individuals concerned. The strategy sets out how the council and its partners will respond to these challenges.



Dean Carroll, Portfolio Holder for Growth, Regeneration and Housing

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The '*Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy*' sets out the direction and priorities for Shropshire's homelessness services from 2024 to 2029, with an emphasis of working together in partnership with a wide range of partners and key stakeholders to tackle homelessness and ensure that appropriate accommodation and support solutions can be accessed. We recognise that homelessness and rough sleeping cannot be tackled by the Council alone and requires a partnership approach.
- 1.2 The strategy recognises the unprecedented circumstances presented by the Covid-19 pandemic and how we can be flexible to meet the challenges of similar emergencies in the future. Importantly, the strategy also recognises the opportunities presented by strong partnership working and collaboration to maximise resources and expertise. The success of delivering priorities depends on effective partnerships with organisations and identifying how we can work together across the public, private and voluntary sectors, aiming to make a real difference to reducing homelessness.
- 1.3 Shropshire's rural landscape poses challenges for individuals experiencing homelessness, hindering access to basic necessities such as transportation and support services. The unique rural setting often comes with higher costs and limited resources, particularly for specialist services, especially mental health support, often requiring significant travel distances. This demonstrates the need for tailored approaches to address the complexities of rural homelessness, including ensuring access to essential services and overcoming barriers posed by geographical remoteness and cost constraints.
- 1.4 This strategy has been developed following a detailed review of homelessness and rough sleeping, and the data has shaped the four priorities of the strategy, which were consulted upon with service users, the public, key partners, and stakeholders, through a series of focus groups, one-to-one meetings, and a survey, where valuable feedback has been collected. This input ensures that the strategy aligns with the aims of Shropshire Council and meets the needs of our partners.
- 1.5 To further support this strategy, a detailed action plan will be implemented, designed to flexibly evolve, and adapt in response to local and changing factors.

2 Strategic context

- 2.1 The implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017¹ represents a shift in focus towards prevention and early intervention, with an emphasis on providing better support for single people and joining up services to provide improved support for people, especially those leaving prison/hospital and other groups who have an increased risk of homelessness, such as people fleeing domestic abuse and care leavers.
- 2.2 While the Act introduced new duties and a comprehensive restructure, evidence from the review suggests that while the new approach has been fully embedded by Housing Services, there is still room to enhance the focus on prevention and positive prevention outcomes. We remain committed to delivering the service to a high standard in line with government guidance and good practice, with a continual drive for improvement.
- 2.3 The Homelessness Act 2002 requires that all Local Authorities carry out a review of homelessness in their areas and formulate and publish a strategy based on the findings of this review. It is also required that the strategy is kept under review and consultation occurs with other local or public authorities and voluntary organisations before modifying or adopting a strategy. Detailed in Appendix III, the Homelessness Review 2023 Executive Summary summarises homelessness characteristics in Shropshire from 2020 to 2023, informing the present strategy.
- 2.4 Under the Act², the Homelessness Strategy, based on the results of the review, should consider the following objectives in the local housing authority's area:
- (a) the levels, and likely future levels, of homelessness in their district
 - (b) the activities which are carried out for any the following purposes (or which contribute to achieving any of them):
 - (i) preventing homelessness in the housing authority's district
 - (ii) securing that accommodation is or will be available for people in the district who are or may become homeless; and
 - (iii) providing support for people in the district who are homeless or who may become at risk of homelessness; or who have been homeless and need support to prevent them becoming homeless again; and,
 - (b) the resources available to the housing authority, the social services authority for the district, other public authorities, voluntary organisations and other persons for the activities outlined in (b)
 - (b) above.
- 2.5 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 amends Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 to strengthen the support available to victims of domestic abuse. The Act extends

¹ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/13/contents/enacted>

² [Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities - Chapter 2: Homelessness strategies and reviews - Guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

priority needs to all eligible victims of domestic abuse who are homeless as a result of being a victim of domestic abuse.

- 2.6 In line with the Council's corporate plan, the Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029 outlines the key issues concerning homelessness. Homelessness prevention is integral to Shropshire's overall housing approach, prioritising across a range of services. It is intricately linked with the Council's overarching vision and ongoing commitment to its residents.
- 2.7 The Council's vision is that *"All homes are well designed decent homes of high quality, which will protect Shropshire's unique urban and rural environments and ensure it is a great place to live. That all Shropshire residents have access to the 'right home in the right place' to support and promote their health and wellbeing throughout their lives"*³
- 2.8 The vision of the Council's [Shropshire Plan 2022-2025](https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/media/22599/housing-strategy-2020-2025.pdf) is 'Shropshire living the best life', the plan has four priorities:
- Healthy People
 - Healthy Economy
 - Healthy Environment
 - Healthy Organisation
- 2.9 All four of these priorities interlink and reinforce each other to improve the opportunities, wellbeing, and quality of life of our communities from tackling inequality, preventing homelessness to making best use of the Council's resources. Of key importance to this strategy is an objective of the Healthy People priority.

We will tackle inequalities, including rural inequalities, and poverty in all its forms; providing early support and interventions that reduce risk and enable children, young people, adults, and families to achieve their full potential and enjoy life.

These areas are inter-linked; employment, a safe and attractive environment, good quality housing, community safety and an active population all play a huge part in achieving a prosperous and thriving local economy, as well as being vital to good health and wellbeing.

³ <https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/media/22599/housing-strategy-2020-2025.pdf>

2.10 This strategy aligns with the Council's various strategic, framework and policy documents.

- [Housing Strategy 2020-2025](#) key priorities align with the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 which encourages local authorities to intervene at an earlier stage to prevent homelessness and to improve the provision of support to anyone who is eligible and homeless, regardless of priority need or intentional homelessness.
- [Allocations Policy and Scheme](#) It sets out the criteria and procedures used to prioritise applicants for housing owned by the Council and homes owned by housing association partners in the county.
- [Shropshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2027](#) aims to ensure that everyone, including those with physical and learning disabilities, older people, and people who may identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and other (LGBTQ+) at any life stage have equal opportunities for well-lived lives.
- The [Tenancy Strategy](#), as required under the Localism Act 2011, sets out Shropshire Council's expectations to registered providers of social housing (housing associations) when formulating their own housing policies for their own stock relating to the kind of tenancies they grant.
- The adopted [Local Plan](#) ⁴ and emerging [Shropshire Local Plan](#), 2006-2026
- [Shropshire Safe Accommodation Strategy](#) Shropshire's strategy for domestic abuse safe accommodation, as required by Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.
- [Empty Homes Strategy](#)
- Independent Living and Specialist Accommodation Strategy (*currently subject to an eight-week public consultation*)

3 Strategic partnerships

3.1 The Council has established strategic partnerships locally and across Shropshire, taking an active role as both facilitator and member in diverse forums, with a primary commitment to addressing homelessness issues.

- Shropshire Homelessness Forum Group
Our Homelessness Forum is open to local stakeholder representatives from the statutory and voluntary sectors. The aim of the forum is to actively engage partners on the homelessness review, the strategy development process and implementation, including the monitoring of performance.
- Rough Sleeping Outreach Forum
- Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board
- Armed Forces Covenant Board
- Mental Health Partnership Board

- Shropshire Safeguarding Community Partnership and associated subgroups.
- ASB Professional Practitioners Group
- Social Task Force
- Hardship & Poverty subgroup
- Health and Wellbeing Board
- Shropshire Independent Place Partnership (ShIPP)
- Early Help Partnership Board
- RESET (The RESET team is made up of Shropshire Council, With You at Shropshire Recovery Partnership, Midlands Partnership Foundation Trust (MPFT), Shropshire Domestic Abuse Service (SDAS), The Shrewsbury Ark, and Intuitive Thinking Skills).
- SSCP Drug and Alcohol Misuse group

4 Key achievements

- 4.1 Following the development of the last Homelessness Strategy there have been several significant achievements in delivering its overall vision and aims, these successes have been achieved through the priority placed on homelessness and prevention, and the continuing work in delivering practical homelessness solutions. Many of which have been delivered through a strong network of successful partnerships and services which have been developed to support those who are either threatened with or experiencing homelessness.

These include:

- Revised allocations policy and scheme with an enhanced emphasis on prevention and tackling homelessness, including the introduction of formal nominations.
- Improved access to family orientated temporary accommodation.
- Recent reductions in the use of bed and breakfast accommodation.
- Rates negotiated with hotels to reduce subsidy loss and overall spend on emergency accommodation.
- Launch of the Homelessness Partnership Forum.
- Maintaining lower levels of rough sleepers through Inreach/outreach work.
- The development of the Ending Rough Sleeping Plan to address rough sleeping, primarily focused on actions aimed at assisting rough sleepers and facilitating their transition off the streets.
- Creation of specialist posts within the housing options team to work with vulnerable customers.
- Armed Forces Champions Point of contact within the service, resulting in improved partnership working with the Armed Forces.
- Shropshire Council has been awarded £1.4m to provide substance misuse treatment and support services for rough sleepers and people at risk of rough

sleeping. The money is part of the Rough Sleepers Drug and Alcohol Treatment Grant provided by the Office of Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID). RESET, a multi-agency team, was launched early 2023 to provide holistic support services for rough sleeping communities.

- Streamlining and monitoring housing support workload to include establishing designated geographical areas for housing support officers to oversee and manage (largely to manage out of area placements).
- Closer partnership working with Adult Social Care and Childrens/Safeguarding to aim that no one slips through the cracks or is overlooked.
- Review of the Homeless Prevention Grant – change has expedited the payment process resulting in more prompt support for individuals in need.
- Development of a pipeline of suitable and sustainable temporary accommodation schemes and dwellings across the county
- Shropshire Council has been awarded £2.134m in capital and £1.32m in revenue funding from the Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme (SHAP) to deliver additional supported accommodation to meet gaps in the homeless pathway for vulnerable single people.

- 4.2 As there is still more work to do, this strategy is our commitment to further our existing approach to preventing and relieving homelessness, and to focus our efforts on identifying new and innovative ways to respond to the challenges we are likely to face over the coming years.

5 Summary of the homelessness review findings

- 5.1 The review includes data on homelessness levels in Shropshire, the demographics affected by it and the causes leading to homelessness. It considers the challenges faced by households and services, impacting both present and future homelessness levels. Furthermore, it details our approaches to preventing homelessness, securing accommodation, and providing support for homeless households.
- 5.2 In 2022/2023 3,443 households approached housing options and there has been an 8.5% increase in demand over the last three years. Of the 3,443 households, 2,037 were advice cases, representing 59% of customers approaching the service who are not homeless or threatened with homelessness but rather seeking advice. Over the last three years there has been an average increase of around 2,000 advice cases annually. The number of annual assessments increased by 33% since 2022/2023.
- 5.3 Of the 1406 homeless applications made to the council in 2022/23, 70% (991) of them were from people who were already homeless (owed the relief duty), meaning the opportunity to prevent had either passed or never existed.

- 5.4 Only 27% (384) of the 1406 homeless applications made to the council were threatened with homelessness (owed the prevention duty), giving the opportunity for prevention work.
- 5.5 Younger people under the age of 35 are experiencing increasing difficulties to secure affordable independent accommodation, particularly when on a low-income, this can be seen across both the private and social housing sectors. This age group accounted for 29.1% of approaches where the main applicant was owed a prevention or relief duty.
- 5.6 This was followed by the 35 to 44 age group, representing 23.7%, and 18 to 24 year olds, accounting for 18.8%.
- 5.7 Single people represented 64% of all customers owed a relief duty. [The strategic housing market assessment](#) report (part 1) has identified that Shropshire's housing stock is characterised by relatively low levels of flats and maisonettes (9.3%) and on- bedroom properties accounting for 7% of all local dwelling stock.
- On the last census day in March 2021, only 28 shared dwellings were recorded in Shropshire, representing just 0.02% of all Shropshire dwellings. This compares with 0.09% nationally and 0.06% regionally.
 - Single households remain the largest group presenting as homeless, making up around 41% of the total, 45% are households with children.
- 5.8 The three main reasons why people present to the housing service have remained consistent over the last three years.
- family no longer willing to accommodate them (26% in 2022/2023)
 - private rented tenancy is ending (20% in 2022/2023)
 - victims of domestic abuse (13% in 2022/2023)
- Approximately 19.5% of individuals approached the local authority for 'other' reasons falling outside of the predefined categories, indicating a variety of unique circumstances not captured.
- 5.9 As well as considering why people present as homeless, the council recognises that households are either losing their tenancies, or unable to access accommodation due to unaddressed support needs. There has been a 35.9% increase in the number of people with support needs presenting to the local authority from 2021 to 2022/2023.
- In 2022/23, 49% of clients had a support need; a total of 1,113 support needs were identified for 676 households, compared with an average of 52% nationally.
- 5.10 There is a lack of appropriate housing options for people with complex or additional support needs, including those with poor mental health, substance misuse and a history of homelessness and rough sleeping. There is a clear correlation between complex support needs and those people repeatedly

presenting as homeless. It is therefore important to secure appropriate accommodation for this group with the right level of support to prevent evictions and repeat presentations.

- 5.11 The most frequently occurring support need is mental health, accounting for 26% of all declared support needs. Other frequently occurring support needs include physical ill health, domestic abuse, and offending history.
- 5.12 There has been a 16% increase in homelessness due to domestic abuse recorded from 2021/22-2022/23. Domestic abuse is a significant reason people present as homeless in Shropshire. The number of people that moved to suitable alternative accommodation when fleeing domestic abuse has reduced by approximately 12.03% between the years 2020/21 and 2022/23. This is due to a lack of readily available affordable housing, resulting in placements into temporary accommodation, which is not a positive solution for families.
- 5.13 There are increasing pressures in the use of temporary accommodation due to the lack of council owed housing stock. This has been exacerbated by the number of people requiring placements increasing since 2019/20, resulting in increased costs to the council.

In 2022/2023

- The average length of stay in bed and breakfasts is 75 days, although the longest period a household spent in a B&B during this time was 425 days.
 - The cost of emergency accommodation was £4,585,513 up from £2,636,494 on the previous year. Expenditure on B&B has increased by 233% over the last four years.
- 5.14 These figures (*below*) demonstrate the dynamic nature of housing placements and highlight the need for ongoing efforts to address homelessness and enhance housing options for vulnerable individuals and families.

Annual placements	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Households placed in temporary accommodation in each year	504	636	596	633
Households placed in B&B in each year	449	576	553	574

Source: H-CLIC (Homelessness Case Level Information Classification)

6 Shropshire's vision

- 6.1 Our vision, agreed collectively with our strategic partners and key stakeholders, is to strengthen, sustain, grow and innovate.

Ending homelessness together with a focus on prevention and empowerment to support people towards sustainable housing solutions.

- 6.2 We will achieve this vision by delivering the following strategic objectives, which are set within the context of the Homelessness Reduction Act.
- Develop a community and partnership approach to homeless prevention and early intervention.
 - Meet the complex and unique needs of our customers to prevent rough sleeping and repeat homelessness.
 - Develop and improve access to a suitable range of settled, supported and temporary accommodation solutions.
 - Deliver an efficient, effective, and accessible housing options service tailored to meet the diverse needs of our customers.

7 Early intervention and prevention

- Reduce homelessness and mitigate its risk through effective intervention and prevention measures.
 - Increase the number of positive outcomes achieved, before they reach the homeless relief stage.
 - Enhance the effectiveness of relief interventions to minimise cases moving into the main homeless duty decision stage.
- 7.1 The homeless review found that 70% of individuals presented in 2022-2023 were already experiencing homelessness, it identified that the window to prevent had either passed or never existed. It highlighted a need to focus on improving the proportion of successful outcomes at the relief stage and reduce the proportion of cases moving to the main duty decision stage.
- 7.2 We want to ensure that an upstream approach to homeless prevention is embedded within the Housing Options Service, it is essential to integrate pro-active measures and strategies that focus on addressing root causes and preventing homelessness before it occurs. This may involve implementing early intervention programmes to provide money advice, budgeting assistance, and debt management guidance. Collaborating with housing associations and the

third sector (community partners, charities, voluntary organisations and social enterprises) is crucial to address systematic issues contributing to homelessness. Additionally, we recognise the importance of embedding housing options into existing drop-in centers or other community spaces to enhance accessibility and support for those in need.

- 7.3 We will ensure that there is regular training for Housing Options staff, equipping them with the tools and techniques on upstream prevention methods to improve knowledge and expertise. Regular evaluations and feedback mechanisms can also help to refine and optimise the effectiveness of the embedded prevention strategies within the service and promote good practice.
- 7.4 We aim to prevent homelessness at the earliest opportunity by increasing awareness of the Housing Options Service and other services available to ensure that there is a buy in across all council services and wider stakeholders including landlords (social and private), criminal justice agencies, police and health services and there is a corporate approach to the prevention of homelessness. We aim to increase the awareness of the help people can expect and how to access it which is essential, to empower partners and customers to access timely help and reduce the number of people who present in crisis. Beyond urban areas, we further extend the visibility of outreach to rural communities, enhancing their understanding and tools to prevent homelessness.
- 7.5 Continuing our commitment to raising awareness, we encourage early engagement with our services, especially for single individuals, maximising opportunities for timely intervention and prevention before they face homelessness. We will identify the key triggers of homelessness and work with partners to ensure that they are equipped to prevent homelessness and/or make seamless referrals where necessary.

Priorities for action

- 7.6 **To prevent people from becoming homeless, we will work with registered providers and supported accommodation providers to establish new approaches to reduce evictions and assist people to remain in their homes.**

We aim to strengthen relationships with social housing providers in Shropshire, to build improved pathways and promote early intervention to reduce homelessness. In cases where a decision is made not to renew a tenancy or a provider plans to evict a tenant due to tenancy breaches without securing alternative housing, communication from registered providers at the earliest opportunity is a measure increasingly important, due to challenges surrounding anti-social behaviour, affordability, and arrears.

- 7.7 Development of a pre-eviction protocol for supported housing occupants will provide early housing options and advice to tenants to try and prevent homelessness or support a managed move. Alongside the development of a local pre-eviction protocol, social and supported housing providers should be encouraged to sign up to the principles of [Homes for Cathy](#).
- 7.8 We encourage partners to sign up for a nomination agreement, where we agree to work towards greater consistency in the allocation policies to maximise the use of housing stock. We will monitor and review protocols to ensure fair access for vulnerable groups and to develop coordinated pathways with key partners.
- 7.9 **Work with family and friends**
- We will enhance our efforts in pro-active prevention work, collaborating closely with friends and family at the prevention stage and promote planned moves. Shifting towards a model where the council requests reasonable notice from family members creates a window of opportunity for prevention work.
- 7.10 **Customer Service Point of Contact and Prevention toolkit**
- Our approach aims to ensure adequate access to services and increase face to face appointments for customers who would benefit most, including vulnerable customers with complex needs (currently delivered through a virtual delivery model). We are committed to ensuring that information remains up-to-date and accessible with delivery through face-to-face interactions, telephone services, and online platforms. This pro-active approach is designed to mitigate the impact of the cost-of-living crisis and enhance the customer's financial capabilities, facilitating access to education, training and employment opportunities. Furthermore, we will implement measures to support individuals potentially excluded from digital access, particularly those who may not be technically inclined or physically able to attend face to face appointments. We are committed to exploring actions such as self-assessment and self-referral, involving key partners, housing associations, charities, voluntary sectors, and all departments with Shropshire Council to provide necessary support and prevent individuals falling through the gaps in the system.
- 7.11 The current [Housing options and homelessness](#) website and [self-serve advice toolkit](#) provides a wide range of information for customers to be able to take initial steps to prevent themselves from becoming homeless and resolve their own housing situation. We will increase the range of information available via technology in order that they can self-serve, where they have the skills to do so.

7.12 Expand membership to the Shropshire Homelessness Forum Group and seek commitment from partners to collaborate to prevent homelessness through a homelessness charter.

We aim to introduce a homelessness charter aimed at making homelessness everyone's responsibility and identifying signs of homelessness to ensure timely referrals, thereby tackling homelessness collectively. We welcome any additional partners to include the police, social services, mental health, substance misuse services, voluntary organisations, charities, and local housing associations - but not exhaustive - to strengthen our commitment to a joined-up approach focused on developing, designing, and implementing solutions to help reduce homelessness.

7.13 Comprehensive Homelessness Prevention and Housing Options Awareness Campaign.

We are committed to undertaking a comprehensive awareness raising campaign focusing on homeless prevention. Additionally, our commitment extends to developing a better understanding of rural homelessness and fostering awareness with how to access relevant services, encouraging people to contact the council at the earliest possible stage to maximise opportunities for early intervention and prevention. Through these initiatives, we aim to build a more informed and engaged community to effectively tackle homelessness and ensure accessible housing options for all.

7.14 We will also enhance awareness and utilisation of the Sanctuary scheme, which provides victims of domestic abuse with a secure and safe environment within their own homes by enhancing security measures such as door braces and window locks and thereby preventing homelessness.

7.15 We will also consider the feasibility of developing creative approaches to working earlier with young people in educational settings and young people within the care system to prevent homelessness from occurring in the first place.

7.16 Increase awareness of Duty to Refer

Despite a significant increase in the duty to refer in 2022-23, we remain committed to emphasising the importance of duty to refer under legislation to allow for early intervention and prevention in cases, enabling pro-active measures to be implemented to prevent homelessness before it occurs. We want to increase the level of these referrals from public authorities as well as those organisations not subject to the duty to refer.

7.17 **Explore and identify future government funding opportunities to improve outcomes for homeless households.**

We will continue to actively explore funding sources to assist people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to include rough sleepers, domestic abuse survivors and people affected by the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis.

- Ensure registered providers of social housing notify when an eviction is planned, or a tenancy is not being renewed when alternative accommodation has not been secured.
- Develop a pre-eviction protocol for supported housing occupants.
- We encourage partners to sign up to a nomination agreement.
- Implement a model where the council requests reasonable notice from family members when approaching the Housing Options service.
- Continue to develop coordinated pathways to accommodation with key partners and monitor and review protocols.
- Enhance access to services and increase face to face appointments. Implement measures to support individuals excluded from digital access. Ensure that information remains up to date and accessible through various delivery methods.
- Increase the range of information available to the customer via technology in order that they can self-serve where they have the skills to do so.
- Expand the membership to the Shropshire Homelessness Forum Group and ensure robust attendance by key partners.
- Undertake a comprehensive homelessness prevention and housing options awareness campaign.
- Increase awareness of Duty to Refer
- Explore and identify government funding opportunities to improve outcomes for homeless households.

8 Addressing the complex and unique needs of our customers

- Meet the complex and unique needs of our customers to prevent rough sleeping and repeat homelessness.

8.1 We are committed to meeting the Government's objectives set out in the Rough Sleeping Strategy, which emphasises prevention, intervention, and recovery within a transparent and joined up system. Following the National Rough Sleeping Strategy (2018) and the '*Ending Rough Sleeping for Good*⁴ Strategy, published in 2022, the Government sets out its aim to ensure that no one should have to sleep rough.

⁴ [Ending Rough Sleeping for Good \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

- 8.2 As a rural county, rough sleeping and homelessness more generally, is often hidden. People who are homeless or in housing difficulty are more likely to try and make temporary arrangements with family and friends, compared with more urban areas with greater provision available. We will ensure that our rural communities are aware of the help and support that is available to people who are at risk of homelessness.
- 8.3 The Homelessness Review identifies that at any one time, there are around 30 to 40 individuals in Shropshire with high levels of support needs and long histories of rough sleeping, often linked to mental health and substance misuse issues. To address this, we will collaborate with key statutory partners to establish a multi-disciplinary team approach aimed at addressing the underlying support needs of these individuals. Additionally, we will develop supported accommodation options tailored to meet their complex needs, including 24/7 supported accommodation and adopt the Housing First model.

Priorities for action

8.4 **Improve data collection.**

We recognise the need to enhance our data collection methods to better understand and address the support needs of individuals experiencing rough sleeping. While the annual rough sleeping count estimate provides a snapshot of rough sleeping prevalence, we acknowledge the necessity for more detailed and ongoing data collection efforts. To achieve this, we will explore adopting a new returner flow model through our outreach team to gather demographic and support needs information. This model focuses on the profile of individuals who experience repeated instances of rough sleeping, often referred to as revolving door cases, following periods of temporary accommodation or support and those people with complex needs. Our aim is to identify underlying factors contributing to their return to rough sleeping and develop clear pathways for both men and women particularly at crisis points where the risk of rough sleeping is heightened, i.e., prison release, hospital discharge and evictions. By implementing this model, outreach teams and service providers can gather more detailed information, enabling a comprehensive understanding of their experiences and needs, thereby facilitating more targeted interventions and improvement of services.

- 8.5 We provide monthly updates on rough sleeping figures to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and will continue to analyse this data, informing adjustments in our service to meet shifting demands effectively.

8.6 **Develop Housing First approach.**

For individuals where existing housing and support models have not been able to meet their multiple and complex needs, there is a need to pilot a different

approach. We will adopt a Housing First approach, based upon national best practice as a potential solution to address gaps in supported accommodation provision, with a focus on gaining commitment from key partners that meets the needs of people with multiple and complex needs.

8.7 Explore the feasibility of developing an assessment centre.

Currently there is a gap in providing a rapid offer of 'off the street' accommodation, with a clear pathway to address immediate needs, so that no-one must spend a second night on the streets as highlighted in the Homeless review. Shropshire has no direct access hostels, meaning individuals cannot access accommodation without a referral. Recognising the critical importance of time limited emergency type provision, we propose establishing an assessment centre. This centre would not only offer a temporary place to stay but also serve as a hub for intensive assessment of individuals' accommodation and support requirements. This comprehensive approach ensures that immediate needs are met, and individuals receive the tailored support necessary for a successful transition from the streets to stable housing.

8.8 Address the issue of revolving doors by developing strategies to support individuals with complex and multiple needs, breaking the cycle of repeat homelessness.

We recognise a significant gap in support for individuals with complex needs who do not currently fit the current criteria of the RESET team, which primarily focuses on addressing rough sleeping and substance use. To address this issue, we are eager to establish a multi-disciplinary team to work alongside the outreach service. This collaborative approach will offer substantial benefits in meeting the diverse needs of customers facing complex challenges. Additionally, we aim to collaborate with key partners to develop services tailored to homeless families' complex needs. Our goal is to advocate for a multi-agency strategy aimed at engaging the most complex individuals experiencing rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping. By adopting a targeted and cohesive approach, we aim to improve health and wellbeing outcomes and prevent intergenerational homelessness.

8.9 Enhancing protocols to protect Rough Sleepers during severe weather.

We will conduct a review of the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) trigger points and the period of measure to ensure there is sufficient capacity and support available. We will work in collaboration with our key stakeholder partner organisation that work directly with rough sleepers. This collaborative approach ensures that the protocol remains responsive to the evolving needs of individuals experiencing homelessness in our community.

SWEP is activated in periods of extreme high or low temperatures. SWEP is an emergency response to support people experiencing homelessness, and ultimately prevents loss of life.

By prioritising the safety and well-being of rough sleepers, we demonstrate our commitment to preventing loss of life on the streets during periods of severe weather and addressing emerging challenges associated with such conditions.

8.10 Evaluation and securing future funding for Rough Sleeping Initiative projects.

We will assess the impact and outcomes of the Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) funded projects, and develop a business case to secure future funding, including a detailed cost benefit analysis.

8.11 Make effective use of clients with lived experience to shape our services.

We aim to improve services for both clients and staff and to improve engagement.

- Improve data collection and analyse data monthly based on regular outreach.
- Adopt a Housing First model for vulnerable individuals.
- Explore the feasibility of an assessment centre.
- Work in partnership to identify and address revolving door approaches to the service.
- Review the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol for Rough Sleepers (SWEP).
- Evaluate and secure future funding for Rough Sleeping Initiative projects.
- Make effective use of clients with lived experience to shape our services.

9 Develop and improve access to a range of suitable accommodation solutions.

- Procure temporary accommodation at a fair price and drive down costs while achieving value for money.
- Reduce the use of nightly paid options, including B&B short term accommodation.
- Ensure the provision of temporary accommodation is sufficient to manage demand and to meet homelessness duties.
- Empower homeless applicants to find their own accommodation.
- Housing Options for single individuals.
- Deliver a balanced housing market.
- Strengthen partnership working with landlords to ensure private rented housing is a more accessible longer term housing solution.
- Develop a coordinated approach to increase provision of supported housing.

- Deliver new social housing and enable delivery of other affordable housing.

Priorities for action

9.1 We will end the use of unsuitable B&B accommodation by exploring alternative options for the provision of emergency nightly paid accommodation.

In response to increased demand, the use of B&B provision for temporary accommodation has risen by 28% over the last three years. Moving forward, we aim to use B&B facilities strictly for emergencies only and for no longer than necessary. Our long-term goal is to phase out the use of B&B accommodation altogether. However, recognising the ongoing need for emergency accommodation, we will explore alternative options with the aim of completely ending the reliance on B&B facilities.

9.2 We will explore the extended use of housing association properties to discharge functions under the homeless legislation.

9.3 Ensure an adequate range of monitoring arrangements, processes and performance management measures are in place to monitor and manage the use of temporary accommodation.

In response to the high demand of temporary accommodation, our efforts are directed towards reducing the number of households placed in such arrangements and minimising their length of stay, which will improve outcomes for families and optimise resources within the Housing Options team. Continual monitoring of the household composition of those requiring temporary accommodation ensures that supply aligns with demand, while regular reviews identify future need and inform options for delivery arrangements. Additionally, we will explore how low demand or obsolete stock could be repurposed to provide temporary accommodation.

9.4 We will continue to work with social housing landlords to ensure it supports prevention and relief activity and maximise access for homeless households within the allocation scheme when making formal suitable offers.

9.5 Enhanced move on plans for all households in temporary accommodation

We will actively work with households in temporary accommodation to continue to review their housing options and plan their move into settled accommodation through individual move on plans, making sure those at risk or without a home get the support they need.

9.6 Introduce weekly meetings to refocus on move-on strategies, ensuring clear priority actions are in place to address barriers. Additionally develop and implement clear, personalised move-on plans for every household in temporary accommodation, including specific actions, timescales, and responsibilities and

support case officers in identifying suitable options at both relief and main duty stages.

- 9.7 We will consider the package of support needed to facilitate successful move-on arrangements from supported accommodation.

9.8 Housing Options for single people across the housing sectors

There is a need to develop a wider range of provision tailored specifically to the needs of single people, particularly those under the age of 35. We will collaborate closely with housing providers, including private landlords and registered social landlords, to expand the availability of suitable accommodation options such as lodgings and house shares. Through collaborative partnerships and targeted initiatives, we are committed to ensuring that single individuals have access to safe, stable and affordable housing solutions, thereby reducing the risk of homelessness and promoting sustainable housing outcomes.

9.9 Deliver a balanced housing market.

We will continue to work with Homes England and Registered Providers (housing associations) to secure funding for schemes with an emphasis on social rents. To maximise the benefits of new housing and related funding, we ensure it meets community needs. The Council's emerging [Local Plan](#) specifically DP1, *mandates that sites with five or more dwellings for residential development are expected to provide a mix of dwelling sizes, types and tenures. Additionally, it mandates that at least 25% of open market dwellings must consist of two bedrooms or less.* This influences negotiations and decision-making on site plans. Opportunities will arise to finalise new housing policies and guidance during the local plan review process, ensuring sustainable developments meeting diverse needs.

9.10 Private rented sector

In response to the challenges posed by the buoyant rental market and high rent levels compared to restricted local housing allowance rates, as well as substantial upfront payments and guarantor requirements, we recognise the need to enhance accessibility to the private rented sector as a sustainable long-term housing solution.

- 9.11 To address this, we have recently recruited an accommodations pathway officer dedicated to working with known rough sleepers to expand our presence in the private rented sector and building strong relationships with landlords.

- 9.12 Additionally, we will undertake a comprehensive review of potential models for assuming management responsibilities of private sector properties. This review will consider options such as direct council management, lettings arrangements, partnership with social lettings agencies, or leasing agreements. If an appropriate

model is identified, we will explore the feasibility of developing a comprehensive landlord offer to incentivise private sector lettings, with the aim of promoting active engagement and partnership with the private rented sector to enhance access to housing solutions for individuals facing homelessness or housing challenges.

- 9.13 Furthermore, we will assess how the private rental sector can be used more widely to assist homeless households and those threatened with homelessness. Our aim is to empower individuals to navigate the private rented sector independently and be well-prepared for tenancy agreements. We are committed to exploring innovative approaches to leverage the private rented sector effectively in both homelessness prevention and relief efforts.

9.14 **Develop a coordinated approach to increase provision of supported housing.**

We will conduct a strategic needs assessment of supported housing and develop a supported housing strategy to meet the requirements of the Supported Housing Regulatory Oversight Act of 2023. Through this process, we aim to develop a coordinated approach to increase the provision of supported accommodation and facilitate transitions to meet identified needs.

- We will continue to work with social housing landlords to ensure it supports prevention and relief activity and maximise access for homeless households within the allocation scheme when making formal suitable offers.
- We will explore the extended use of housing association properties to discharge functions under the homeless legislation.
- Introduce weekly meetings to refocus on move-on strategies.
- Facilitate discussions around a range of affordable Housing Options for single individuals, particularly those under 35 years of age.
- We will continue to work with Homes England and Registered Providers to deliver new social housing and enable the delivery of other affordable housing.
- Promote active engagement and partnership within the private rental sector. Undertake a comprehensive review of potential models for assuming management responsibilities of private sector properties.
- Conduct a strategic needs assessment of supported housing and develop a supported housing strategy.

10 **Deliver an effective and efficient Housing Options service.**

- Prioritise resources effectively within the approved budgets to deliver an efficient housing options service designed to meet the needs of our customers.
- Enhance Data Recording Practices

- 10.1 In response to findings from the Homeless Review, which highlighted missed opportunities for prevention work and emphasised the need for a greater focus on relief efforts, particularly considering the reduction in successful relief outcomes observed in 2022-23, we acknowledge the importance of prioritising resources effectively and implementing targeted initiatives.

Priorities for action

10.2 Detailed Operational Service Review

To ensure a more streamlined customer experience and enhance service delivery, we will commission a detailed operational service review. This review will analyse the customer journey, service delivery model, legal compliance, and resource allocation to maximise prevention efforts while effectively managing demand. By redesigning our systems and processes, we aim to achieve positive prevention and relief outcomes and better support individuals facing homelessness.

10.3 Introduction of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

We will introduce KPIs to measure our performance in delivering the homeless service, highlighting areas of success and areas for improvement. These indicators will inform decision-making and help us prioritise resources effectively to meet the needs of our customers.

10.4 Enhancing Data Recording Practices

We will enhance data collection to identify individuals at risk of homelessness and design targeted interventions for prevention, accommodation and support. Adopting a reportable format for recording homeless individuals will integrate data into local development plans. Through data analytics, we will gain insights into how homelessness impacts specific demographic groups, including those with mental ill health, those with disabilities, those affected by domestic abuse, those leaving hospital, care leavers, veterans, people with an offending history, and any other disproportionately affected group.

10.5 Review of Staffing Levels and Resources

A review of staffing levels and resources has been conducted to strengthen our prevention approach. Additional staff have been recruited to reduce caseloads, shorten waiting times for appointments, and improve the accuracy and timeliness of homeless case level information submissions to government. This will ensure that we have the right resources in place to effectively respond to requests for assistance and prevent homelessness in our community.

- 10.6 To enhance our service delivery, we will focus on strengthening training, development, policies and procedures. We are committed to training our staff in

trauma-informed practice approaches, ensuring sensitivity and compassion when working with individuals experiencing homelessness, including rough sleepers and survivors of domestic abuse.

- 10.7 We will put customers at the heart of what we do, where we learn from lived experience and effective handling of complaints to achieve a resolution within our published timescales and implement continuous learning throughout the service.
- 10.8 We are prioritising regular communication with service users, providing updates on their progress and available options, including those in temporary accommodation. We recognise the importance of involving customers in service improvement initiatives and seeking feedback regularly.
- 10.9 We will continue with our open-door approach to listen to the community voice so that qualitative data and feedback can help shape future design but also benchmark our progress in this strategy.
- 10.10 Furthermore, we will ensure that the necessary resources and tools are in place to enhance the delivery of the service. This includes implementing measures such as revised notification letters, fact sheets, updated personal housing plans (PHPs), clear policies and procedures, and joint protocols.

- Commission a detailed operational service review
- Enhance data collection and introduce KPI's.
- Strengthen training, workforce development, policies and procedures.
- Regular communication with service users, including updates on progress and available options.
- Monitor the progression of the Renters (Reform) Bill 2023

11 Monitoring and delivery of the strategy

- 11.1 It is acknowledged that the varied circumstances of homelessness cannot be tackled by one agency or service alone. Therefore, the Council must regularly review the way it delivers services to prevent and tackle homelessness, both directly and in partnership with local agencies. As part of the ongoing review process, we will actively engage with the Shropshire Homelessness Forum group, using the existing partnership framework and expertise of its member agencies.
- 11.2 The Council will continue to strengthen and improve multi-agency responses and engagement with a wide range of partners to ensure delivery of this strategy. Recognising the valuable work undertaken by partner organisations, the council will look to support them where appropriate in funding bids that support delivery of this strategy.

- 11.3 Delivery of the actions outlined in Appendix ii to this document will be monitored through quarterly reviews. It is expected that some of the actions may evolve over the lifetime of the strategy, and any such changes agreed by the review group and reported to the management team before being incorporated into the action plan. Regular updates on delivery of the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan will be provided to elected Members, senior and corporate management teams, and other relevant boards and committees. The action plan will undergo quarterly monitoring and annual review to ensure responsiveness to emerging needs, policy and legislative changes, and achievements of contained priorities.

12 Acknowledgements

- 12.1 Shropshire Council would like to acknowledge and thank all service users and organisations that have contributed to the Homelessness Review and development of the Homelessness Strategy by assisting in the completion of questionnaires as well as providing valuable input throughout the consultation process.

Appendix II: Action Plan

Develop a partnership approach to homeless early intervention and prevention			
Priority for action	Timescale	Outcome	Responsible service
Ensure registered providers of social housing (housing associations) notify when an eviction is planned, or a tenancy is not being renewed when alternative accommodation has not been secured.	Ongoing	Assist people to remain in their homes or allow a window of opportunity for early intervention and prevention work to support planned moves.	Registered providers of social housing (housing associations) Supported accommodation providers. Shropshire Council
Develop a pre-eviction protocol for supported housing occupants.	Year 2	Aiming to streamline the eviction process and provide timely support.	Shropshire Council Supported accommodation providers.
We encourage partners to sign up for a nomination agreement	Ongoing	Monitor and review protocols to ensure consistency in allocation policies and maximise the use of housing stock.	Registered providers of social housing (housing associations) Supported accommodation providers. Shropshire Council
Implement a model where the council requests reasonable	Year 1	Creates a window of opportunity for pro-	Shropshire Council to collaborate with relevant social services, housing support, local community groups and other stakeholders.

notice from family members when approaching the Housing Options service		active prevention work and facilitating planned moves	
Continue to develop coordinated pathways to accommodation with key partners and monitor and review protocols	Ongoing	To ensure that the Allocations Policy is kept under review	Shropshire Council Key partners Registered providers of social housing (housing associations)
Enhance access to services and increase face to face appointments. Implement measures to support individuals excluded from digital access. Ensure that information remains up to date and accessible through various delivery methods.	Year 2	Enhancing access to services and support for vulnerable customer and individuals potentially excluded from digital access.	Shropshire Council Registered providers of social housing (housing associations) Social services Housing Support Charities Voluntary organisations
Increase the range of information available to the customer via technology in order that they can self-serve where they have the skills to do so	Ongoing	More customers can resolve their own housing issue using information made available. Up to date website with a wide range of information available.	Shropshire Council Key partners
Expand membership to the Shropshire Homelessness Forum Group and ensure robust attendance by key partners	Year 1	Demonstrate a strong corporate commitment to a joined-up approach with a focus on developing, designing and implementing solutions	Social services Mental health teams Substance misuse services Registered providers of social housing (housing associations) Key partners

Undertake a comprehensive homelessness prevention and housing options awareness campaign	Year 2	Build a more informed community to tackle homelessness and ensure accessible housing options for all. Develop a better understanding of rural homelessness and foster awareness with rural communities on how to access relevant services	Shropshire Council Faith, Charity and voluntary sectors Local communities Housing Options services Key partners, Registered providers of social housing (housing associations) Rural community organisations Educational settings, Young people within the care system Social services Youth organisations
Increase awareness of Duty to Refer	Ongoing	Increased awareness and compliance with duty to refer legislation, resulting in timely support and intervention for individuals at risk of homelessness	Shropshire Council Prisons Youth offender institutions Youth offending teams. Probation Service Jobcentre Plus social services Educational settings (colleges, universities) Community hospitals Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust (urgent treatment centre, emergency departments)
Explore and identify government funding opportunities to improve outcomes for homeless households.	Ongoing	Secure funding to support initiatives aimed at improving outcomes for homeless households, including those for rough sleepers, domestic abuse survivors, and individuals affected by the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis	Shropshire Council

Address the complex and unique needs of our customers to prevent rough sleeping and repeat homelessness.			
Improve data collection and analyse data monthly based on regular outreach	Ongoing	Monitor trends to shape the service	Shropshire Council RESET The Shrewsbury Ark
Adopt a Housing First model for vulnerable individuals	Year 2	Improved housing stability, enhanced well-being and reduced homelessness	Shropshire Council Shropshire Towns and Rural Housing
Explore the feasibility of an assessment centre	Year 2	Comprehensively assess homelessness status and support needs, facilitating tailored interventions and pathways to appropriate housing and support services, reducing revolving door presentations	Shropshire Council Shropshire Towns and Rural Housing
Work in partnership to identify and address revolving door approaches to the service	Ongoing	Mitigate of recurring homelessness by addressing revolving door approaches to service provision through collaborative partnerships and targeted interventions	Shropshire Council to include housing, health and adult social care services. Key partners
Review the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol for Rough Sleepers (SWEP)	Year 1	To provide sufficient beds when SWEP is activated for those who	Shropshire Council

		are on the streets, including an assessment of their accommodation and support needs. To reduce the risk of cold related illnesses and excess winter deaths/ deaths caused by extreme heat	
Evaluate and secure future funding for Rough Sleeping Initiative projects.	Year 2	To assess the impact and outcomes of the Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) funded projects, and develop a business case to secure future funding, including a detailed cost benefit analysis.	Internal only
Make effective use of clients with lived experience to shape our services.	Year 2	To improve services for both customers and staff and to improve engagement	Shropshire Council and Key partners
Develop and improve access to a suitable range of settled, supported and temporary accommodation solutions.			

We will continue to work with social housing landlords to ensure it supports prevention and relief activity and maximise access for homeless households within the allocation scheme when making formal suitable offers.	Ongoing	Improved move-on options and a reduced spend on, and time spent in, temporary accommodation wherever possible.	Shropshire Council Registered providers of social housing (housing associations)
We will explore the extended use of housing association properties to discharge functions under the homeless legislation.	Year 1	Reduce the reliance on emergency and temporary accommodation	Shropshire Council Registered providers of social housing (housing associations)
Introduce weekly meetings to refocus on move-on strategies.	Year 1	Enhance move on plans for all households in temporary accommodation.	Shropshire Council Support services
Facilitate discussions around a range of affordable Housing Options for single individuals, particularly those under 35	Year 2	Expand the availability of suitable housing options tailored to the needs of single individuals to include options tailored to the needs of people under 35	Shropshire Council Housing Providers such a Private landlords and Registered providers of social housing (housing associations)
We will continue to work with Homes England and Registered Providers	Ongoing	To secure funding for schemes with an emphasis on social rents.	Shropshire Council Homes England
Promote active engagement and partnership within the	Year 2	Enhance housing solutions in the private	Shropshire Council Private sector landlords

private rental sector		rented sector	
Undertake a comprehensive review of potential models for assuming management responsibilities of private sector properties	Year 2	Consider the feasibility of developing a comprehensive landlord offer based on findings	Shropshire Council Private sector landlords Estate agents
Conduct a strategic needs assessment of supported housing and develop a supported housing strategy.	<i>Subject to further Government consultations and guidance</i>	To meet the requirements of the Supported Housing Regulatory Oversight Act of 2023.	Internal only
Deliver an effective and efficient Housing Options service.			
Commission a detailed operational service review	Year 1	Analyse service delivery model. Develop a suite of policies and procedures to ensure legal compliance, consistent service delivery, improved customer outcomes while reducing duplication and waste.	Internal only
Enhance data collection and introduce KPI's	Year 1	Embed a culture of performance management by analysing and discussing performance regularly at team	Internal only

		meetings and one to ones. Highlight areas of success and improvement to inform decision making. Introduce a range of local performance indicators to be monitored and reported on a regular basis to focus on key areas of service delivery	
Strengthen training, workforce development, policies, and procedures. Regular communication with service users, including updates on progress and available options	Ongoing	Enhanced service delivery	Shropshire Council Key partners Stakeholders Service users
Monitor the progression of the Renters (Reform) Bill 2023	Ongoing		Internal only

