



HOMELESSNESS & ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY 2023-2028

Introduction

Having to leave accommodation is stressful, and finding somewhere else to live is a challenging experience for many people. This is illustrated by the fact that on average around 800 people approach the Council each year for housing options advice.

The Council's 2023 [Review](#) of Homelessness assessed the levels of homelessness in East Staffordshire over the last 5 years from data collected by the Housing Options service.

Key Findings

From April 2018 to March 2023¹

- 3,912** enquiries were made to Housing Options
- 1,170** households received a duty
- 30%** of enquiries were owed a duty

Categories of Homelessness

Homelessness has varied root causes but the applicant's circumstances immediately preceding their homelessness is always identified by the Housing Options Team. The Review identified categories of homelessness in the Borough as:

- The ending of private rented tenancies, including for rent arrears, and increasingly for termination of Assured Shorthold Tenancies. This represents almost half of homelessness enquiries
- The parents, relatives or friends no longer able or willing to accommodate.
- Breakdown of relationship with partner, in

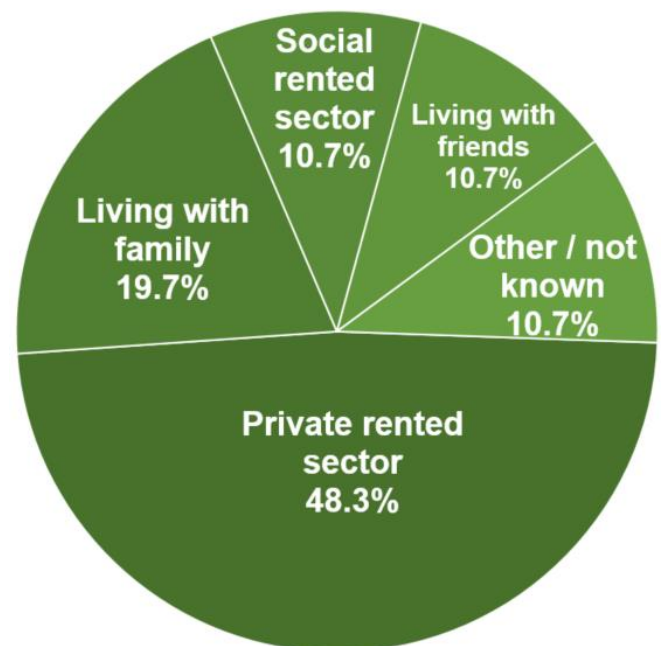
more cases non-violent rather than violent.

Housing Status on Enquiry

Close to 50% of homeless originates from the private rented sector, which correlates with the second and third ranked category for homelessness in section 4. Another 29% of applicants are residing in lodging arrangements with friend and family, which have virtually no security once relationships become strained.

The '0.0%' are included for completeness, as these are categories of applicant who are recorded in a particular way for national statistics.

Chart: Housing Status of 96% of Households at First Enquiry 2018-2023²



¹ Homelessness Review, Table 1, Page 6

² [Tables](#) on homelessness - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

The remaining 4% are broken down as follows:

Owner-occupiers	2.0%
Institutional departure	1.1%
Refuge	0.5%
Rough sleeping	0.2%
Temporary accommodation	0.2%
No fixed abode	0.0%
Asylum Seeker accommodation ³	0.0%

In summary

Of all households enquiring with Housing Options⁴...

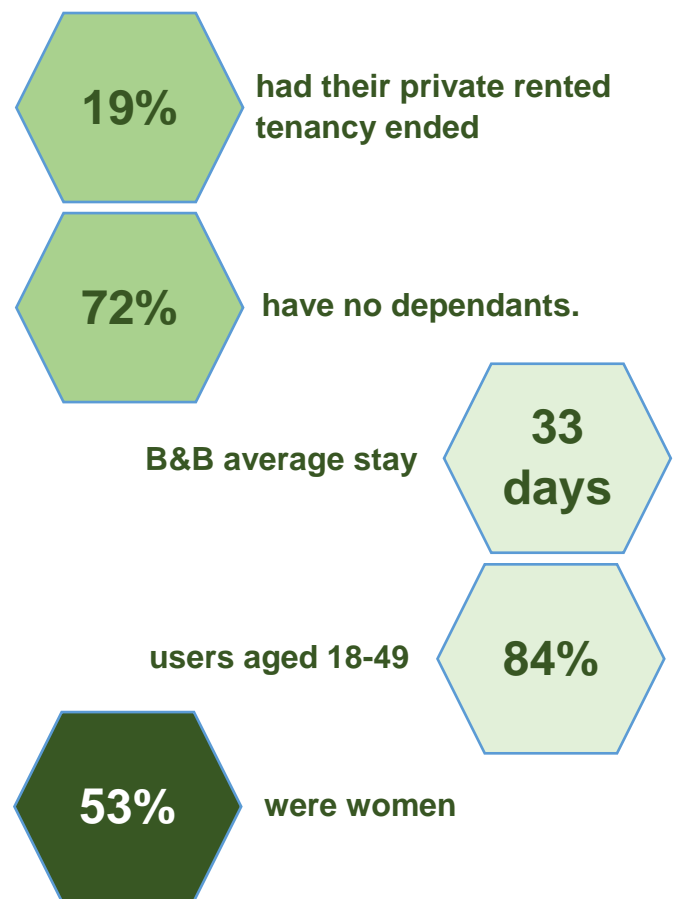


Table: Homelessness Triggers

Triggers of Homelessness as identified by Applicants	2018 to 2019	2019 to 2020	2020 to 2021	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023	Grand Total
Family no longer willing or able to accommodate	113	125	168	129	169	704
End of private rented tenancy – not assured shorthold tenancy	100	68	29	105	142	444
End of private rented tenancy – assured shorthold tenancy	49	60	41	70	74	294
Relationship with partner ended (non-violent breakdown)	60	73	71	65	72	341
Eviction from supported housing	23	28	51	52	68	222
Friends no longer willing or able to accommodate	38	34	43	54	49	218
Other	278	223	81	105	46	733

³ National Asylum Seeker Service Accommodation

⁴ Housing Options Team Data

How did we respond?

A change to the homelessness legislation in 2018 redefined the Council's responses to homelessness. A household is to be formally accepted as being at risk of homelessness if this could occur within 56 days, and the Council must accept a duty to try and prevent the homelessness if the household is eligible⁵ for assistance.

If the prevention activity is unsuccessful or if the presenting homelessness cannot be prevented, a Relief Duty must be accepted⁶ to help the household secure a long-term solution to their homelessness.

Prevention activity peaked in the first year of the new legislation, and has since stabilised

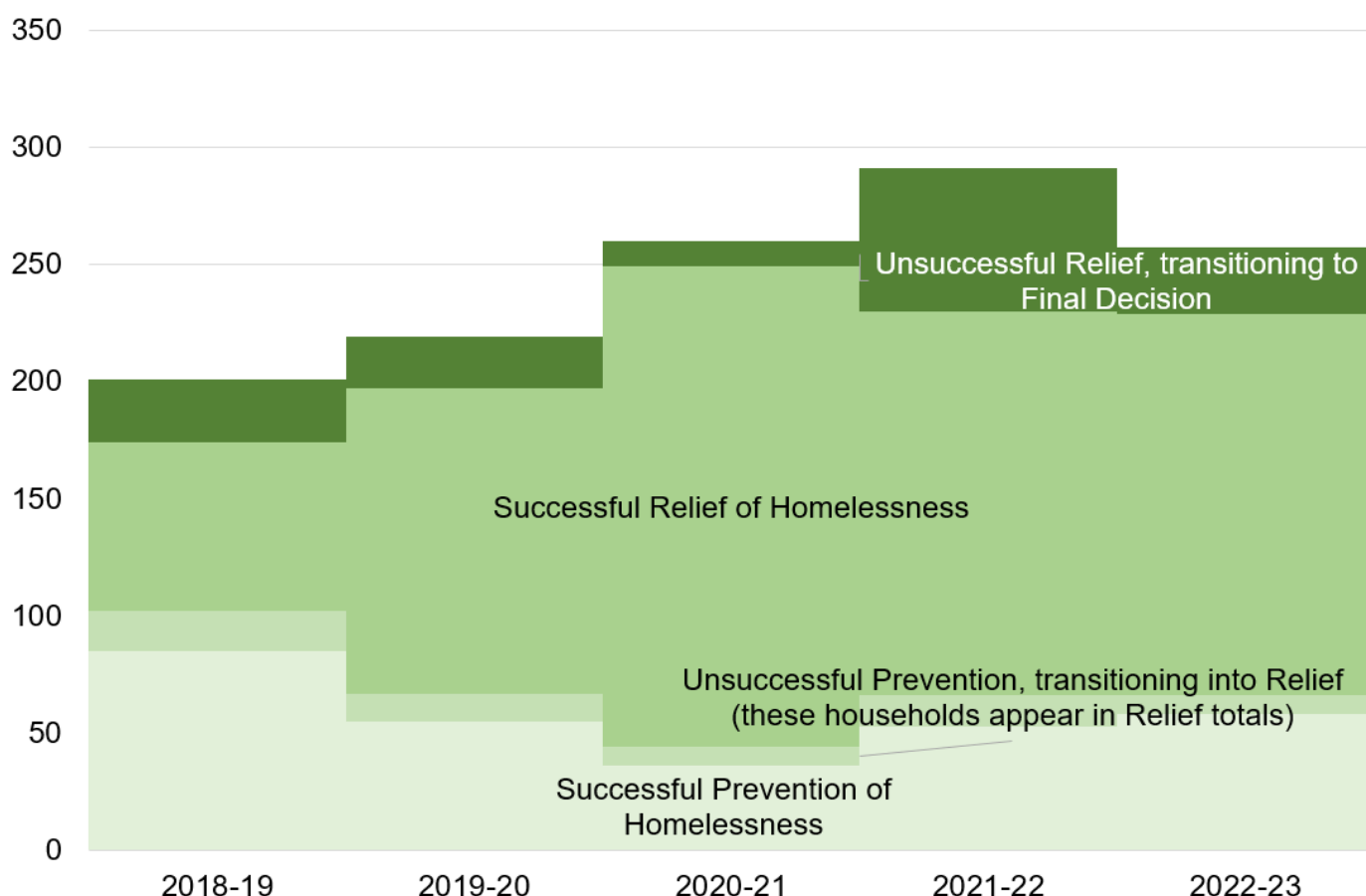
with the exception of 2020-21 when Covid-19 restrictions applied.

The year 2021-22 was peak demand, seeing the largest amount of final decisions, because the routes into accommodation were under abnormal pressure, increasing wait times beyond the 56 day limit of the Relief Duty.

When the Relief Duty is unsuccessful, the household may be considered for a main homelessness duty which means the Council finds them to have a priority need and to be homeless unintentionally.

The vast majority of households considered at this stage (the darkest green section in the graph below) were owed this main homeless duty.

Bar Chart of Homelessness Duties by Year



⁵ This is largely an immigration test for determining recourse to public funds, but can include a test of habitual residence.

⁶ Subject to the aforementioned eligibility, and also a Local Connection test (see [Chapter 10 of the Code of Guidance](#)).

Future Challenges

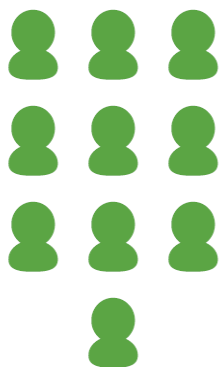
Availability & Affordability of housing in East Staffordshire

According to the Office of National Statistics, East Staffordshire was 254th out of 330 local authorities for affordability in 2022⁷. The median house price was 6.37 times median gross annual residence-based earnings (an increase from 5.74 in 2014). By comparison the ratio in Lichfield was 7.92 and in Stoke it is 4.82. The East Staffordshire figure has increased from 5.74 in 2014 to 6.37 in 2022.

Therefore in comparison to many places, a larger proportion of East Staffordshire residents should be able to move into home ownership. However the reality is that the Council's 2014 Strategic Housing Market Assessment identified 65% of households as being unable to afford the median house price, and the increase in the affordability ratio to 6.37 identified above will have meant this proportion has increased from 65% since 2014.

Private renting is increasingly unavailable for people who rely on welfare benefits, have low and insecure incomes or substantial debts. The Social Rental Sector in the borough is also under pressure.

***On average
there are***



to



10 applications to 1 dwelling let⁸

National Policy Implications for Homelessness

Local Housing Allowance

LHA was introduced in 2008, being the maximum amount payable to assist tenants on low incomes with rents, and was set to cover the lower 50th percentile of rents, ie the median rent. In 2012 this was re-set to cover the 30th percentile. Thereafter it was increased yearly according to the Consumer Price Index, resulting in some areas LHA rates drifting downwards from the 30th percentile.

In 2015 LHA was frozen until 2020 resulting in a progress reduction in the scope of rent levels that LHA covered. 2020 saw the start of Covid and as a response the Government re-aligned all LHA rates to the 30th percentile of rents in each area. This resulted in a significant easing of pressures on tenants dependent on LHA, although LHA was again frozen in 2020. Over the same period rents have increased, therefore once again LHA has drifted downwards from the 30th percentile of rents, increasing pressures on tenants with low incomes at a time of significant cost of living increases.

LHA claimants may also be subject to restrictions according to the number of bedrooms they have or the number, age or sex of people in their household.

Legislative Context

Renters' Reform Bill

The Renters' Reform Bill proposes to abolish Section 21 "No Fault" evictions and also move to a simple tenancy structure where all assured tenancies are periodic. The aim is to enable tenants to challenge poor practice and unfair rent increases without fear of eviction. The new regime will be backed by an Ombudsman service. The Bill will also

⁷ [ONS](#) House Price to Residence-Based Earnings Ratio

⁸ Trent & Dove / Borough Council statistics 2023

strengthen landlords' abilities to evict tenants who are at fault.

As Section 21 Notices are the primary means by which private tenancies are ended, and this form of homelessness is represented by around half of enquiries, this might theoretically result in a reduction of pressures on homelessness services. In practice, however, effects are unpredictable so this is not an area that can be planned for in detail

Domestic Abuse Act 2021

The Act is very wide-ranging. It creates a statutory definition of domestic abuse, emphasising that domestic abuse is not just physical violence, but can also be emotional, controlling or coercive and economic abuse.

In housing matters, it provides that all eligible homeless victims of domestic abuse automatically have 'priority need' for homelessness assistance.

It also places a duty on local authorities to provide accommodation-based support to victims of domestic abuse and their children in

refuges and other safe accommodation.

Supported Housing Act 2023

The Act came into force in 2023 and introduces changes to the way support exempt accommodation is regulated.

Such accommodation is exempt from the usual caps on housing benefit levels – the higher benefit rates provided in this accommodation is intended to assist with the costs of providing support that a tenant wouldn't get in the private rented sector generally.

The Act means the government can now create new National Supported Housing Standards. Standards in the supported housing sector have been under scrutiny for a number of years as some providers have increasingly moved in seeking a return from investment as their priority, with standards of service sometimes coming second.

Further consultation on the introduction of new regulations allowed for by the Act is expected for 2024.

Context

National context

Key Themes

DLUHC use themes to structure in-depth visits, which allowing for focus on particular areas of interest or concern:

1. Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy
2. Funding, Leadership and Corporate Support
3. Use of Homelessness Prevention Grant

(HPG)

4. Embedding HRA and Preventing Homelessness
5. Staffing and service structure
6. HCLIC and Performance Management
7. Access to accommodation
8. Management of Temporary Accommodation
9. Preventing Single Homelessness and Ending Rough Sleeping
10. Partnership Arrangements To Deliver

The Council will work closely to with the

Specialist Team at DLUHC to improve and learn from best practice in the sector.

Homelessness Prevention Grant

The purpose of the grant is to provide support to local authorities in England towards expenditure lawfully incurred in maximising prevention of homelessness activities and reducing reliance on temporary accommodation.

The government expects local authorities to use this funding to maximise homelessness prevention to stop vulnerable households from becoming homeless, as well as helping to meet temporary accommodation costs where necessary. The grant is ring-fenced and must be spent in line with the following principles:

- To fully enforce the Homelessness Reduction Act and contribute to ending rough sleeping by increasing activity to prevent single homelessness.
- To ensure financial viability of services by contributing to the costs of statutory duties, including implementing the Homelessness Reduction Act and supporting with the costs of temporary accommodation.
- To reduce family temporary accommodation numbers through maximising family homelessness prevention and reduce the use of unsuitable B&Bs for families.

Homeless Prevention Grant can be reduced in the event of failure to provide publishable data on homelessness to the government, and there is requirement to co-produce a B&B elimination plan in the event an issue is identified. The Council is to receive [Homeless Prevention Grant](#) until the end of March 2025.

Ending Rough Sleeping For Good

'[Ending rough sleeping for good](#)' is a cross-departmental government strategy setting out how the government and its partners will work together to deliver on the government's manifesto commitment to end rough sleeping

in this Parliament (2019-2024).

The strategy sets out a whole system approach to deliver:

- better prevention, so that you can be confident that fewer people sleep rough in the first place.
- swift and effective intervention, with a tailored offer of support to meet the needs of the individual.
- extra help to aid recovery for those that need it, ensuring that services are working together to deliver the help people need to get off the streets
- a more transparent and joined-up system, which holds those responsible to account.

This strategy is supported by a number of funding streams, the Council currently receives funding from the [Rough Sleeping Initiative](#) as well as the [Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme](#).

Staffordshire Context

Staffordshire County Council is the Children's Services Authority and therefore has primary responsibility for accommodating homeless young people aged 16 and 17 and for supporting young people leaving care.



East Staffordshire Borough Council is a partner in the Staffordshire Housing Partnership for Young People, a county-wide partnership of districts, boroughs and the County Council aiming to ensure that the housing needs of all 16-17 year olds and care leavers are met in order to prevent homelessness in the 16-24 age group.

The Council is signatory to the renewed 2023 Protocol to assist Homeless 16-17 year olds across Staffordshire. The Council also follows an established protocol for the housing of care leavers.

The County Council commissions and funds the only outreach/floating support available in

the borough which is New Era, the holistic Domestic Abuse (DA) service operating across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent since 1 October 2018. In addition, there are quarterly county wide meetings Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Duty Meeting to monitor performance across the range of services to this cohort.

The Staffordshire Migration Partnership was founded in 2022, with the regularity of meeting determined by developments in the sector. The partnership was pivotal in monitoring supporting activity around refugee resettlement programmes and asylum seeker dispersal.

East Staffordshire Context

Corporate Objectives

- Improving Local Democracy
- Creating a prosperous East Staffordshire
- Developing a Green New Deal for Staffordshire
- Protecting our heritage
- Standing up for communities

Tackling homelessness and rough sleeping will help us stand up for communities, as well contribute to creating a prosperous East Staffordshire.

Links to other strategies

Tenancy Strategy

In January 2013 the Council adopted its first Tenancy Strategy. In the strategy the Council set out its support for the use of fixed term tenancies in order to make best use of the social housing in the Borough, but with very clear provisions to avoid affected households becoming homeless which remains in effect.

Allocations Policy

The Council periodically reviews and revises the [Housing Allocations Policy](#). The last revision was in 2021.

Housing Strategy

The Council's current [Housing Strategy](#) was adopted in 2025, taking account of this Homelessness Strategy.

Working in Partnership

The Council recognises the role that other partners play in addressing homelessness within the Borough and is keen to continue to work collaboratively.

The Burton and East Staffs [Homeless Partnership](#) was formed in 2019 out of a shared commitment to build a more collaborative approach. Representatives from key parties have come together to develop a partnership approach to tackling the issues of homelessness. The aim of this partnership is to offer a significant promise for an improved collaboration in the town on this critical issue and to raise awareness of services and interventions available to those who are homeless.

The Council also wants to acknowledge the big part played by [Trent & Dove Housing](#). It continues to maintain the housing register and to make allocations on behalf of the Council. It also employs dedicated staff who actively support their tenants to maintain tenancies. Trent and Dove and the Council have successfully partnered in a number of bids, including the Rough Sleepers Accommodation Programme which gave rise to the Stage 2 Project, as well as Local Authority Housing Funds 1 & 2. Trent and Dove have also achieved exception results over several years in delivering the Housing First Project.

The Council is delighted to work in partnership with [Burton YMCA](#) and their great work in East Staffordshire preventing and relieving homelessness through the Reconnect Hostel and outreach projects such as the Family Mediation Scheme, the Young People's Schools project and the Council-commissioned Rough Sleepers Outreach Team. Burton YMCA are also commissioned to deliver the 'off the street' offer to rough sleepers with the Emergency Bed Spaces, and wrap-around support to single homeless people provided by the Navigator project.

The Strategy: Improving Homelessness Prevention

We define homeless prevention as being an intervention by a service which:

- enables a person who is at risk of losing their home
- allows a person to stay indefinitely in their current home providing it is suitable to do so
- helps make a planned move to alternative, suitable long term accommodation

The Council will promote, support and engage in schemes that aim to tackle the root causes of homelessness such as family relationship breakdowns and will work in partnership to establish pathways and protocols for at risk groups which provide tailored advice and support, and promote planned move-ons.

A focus on homeless prevention also generally gives people what they want: a long-term home.

Achievements since the last strategy:

- ☆ Provided a wide range of advice regarding the causes of homelessness and on how to find accommodation through various means including in person via the Outreach Officer, through publications and on our website.
- ☆ Engaged with the private rented sector through the [Landlords Forum](#), and

through the Landlord Relationship Manager function.

- ☆ Offered advice to 3,912 households over the last 5 years, and continued to deliver homelessness prevention initiatives as part of the Housing Options service.
- ☆ Made use of the Homelessness Prevention Fund which can be used to cover the cost of a range of interventions that result in a homeless prevention or relief. Over the period 2021/22 and 2022/23 the Council has paid out £57,193.67 and £48,303.93 respectively.
- ☆ Supported the Target Hardening scheme to enable households at risk of domestic violence to keep their homes. The scheme has assisted 9 households on average over the past 3 years
- ☆ Established local agreements and joint working arrangements with regard to referrals.

The Council will

Promote housing pathways

- Maintain housing pathways and protocols with key partners that include support and appropriate planned move-on for identified at risk groups, harnessing the benefits of

the duty on public bodies to refer homelessness cases.

- Ensure clear and effective communication and coordination across other universal and specialist service providers. The review identified that the following groups are top in terms of those applicants who identified as having support needs:-

History of mental health problems (27%)

The Council will maintain connections with statutory and voluntary organisations seeking to represent the interests of people with mental health problems, particularly health care professionals who provide the Council with the necessary evidence, support and context to ensure that the applicant's journey through the homelessness system is as smooth as possible.

Young people, care leavers and young parents (20%)

The Council will support an effective ongoing partnership with other Councils as part of the [Staffordshire Housing Partnership](#) for people aged 16-24.

Domestic Abuse Risk & History (17%)

The Council will refer to refuges and will maintain connections with the Pathway Project, Women's Aid and other bodies to maintain support for people experiencing domestic abuse.

Physical Ill Health & Disability (11%)

The Council will ensure that temporary accommodation, where needed, continues to meet the needs of people with physical disabilities and that relevant healthcare professionals continue to be involved in assessing appropriate housing outcomes for applicants.

Continue to support claims for welfare benefits

- Housing Teams will work with the Council's Revenues and Benefits department, the Department for Work and Pensions and voluntary agencies to ensure residents are aware of welfare benefits available, especially those which can alleviate periods of hardship and prevent homelessness such as Discretionary Housing Benefit
- Explore options and pilot more schemes, as well as promote and grow existing schemes. To that end, the Council is piloting a Cost of Living Advisor service over the next 12 months.
- Work in partnership with all relevant agencies, such as Trent and Dove to actively identify at risk households, offer advice and refer them to prevention schemes where needed.

Help young people to avoid eviction from parental homes

- Continue to encourage organisations that do schools work, educating children and young adults about the realities of moving out of the parental home.
- Continue to make referrals to the YMCA family mediation service and support where possible.

The Strategy: Relief of Homelessness

Relief of homelessness is about dealing with an already present homelessness that cannot be prevented by keeping the household in their former home, by enabling someone to find themselves alternative accommodation.

The Council will work with key partners to offer a range of homelessness support to help affected households to find suitable alternative accommodation. A specific example of this in the single homeless context is the supported accommodation sub group of the Homeless Partnership, which meets as required to address specific surges in demand on the pathway.

Achievements since the last Strategy:

- Significantly enhanced the offer to those at risk of sleeping rough, through introducing and maintaining the 'No First Night Out' approach post pandemic.
- Maintained and developed a rough sleeper pathway to ensure effective individualised support to secure move on from emergency accommodation.
- Maintained an average of less than 3 days from appointment to initial decision on a homelessness application.
- Updated the Housing Register Allocations policy to take into account the new duties introduced by the Homelessness Reduction Act.

The Council will

Prioritise the Housing Options Service

- Continue to offer the Housing Options service as the primary front-line service for providing advice and assistance to people facing homelessness in the Borough. The Council will monitor its service delivery in conjunction with DLUHC-appointed specialist advisors using the HCLIC data returns.
- Ensure that first contact through our primary channels is with an appropriately trained Housing Options Advisor.
- Increase the numbers of people that receive advice and support at the earliest possible stage to prevent them from reaching a housing crisis.
- Employ an additional housing options officer to improve the timeliness of casework, and reduce the wait to appointment following initial intake and assessment.
- The Council will continue to work with the County Council on implementation and review of the Staffordshire Protocol for Young Homeless People.
- Ensure personal housing plans are meaningful by exploring further options and tools to combat well-known causes of homelessness.
- Encourage and improve access to local services, such as Children's Service Local Support Team and Citizens Advice.

The Strategy: Accommodation

Securing new accommodation is often the main solution for residents facing homelessness. Therefore, ensuring there is sufficient and suitable accommodation for people to move on to is key in relieving homelessness.

Achievements since the last strategy

The Council has:-

- Supported homeless households to move on more swiftly and successfully by employing a Housing Outreach Officer who meets people and assists them at their own homes or whilst in temporary accommodation.
- Successfully leased and managed 9 properties from Trent and Dove as self-contained temporary accommodation for homeless households, marking an increase of 6 in the last 5 years.
- Maintained the 'Key to Key' void turnaround at an average of 6 working days to maximise the utilisation of the temporary accommodation leased from Trent and Dove.
- Employed a Supported Housing Visiting Officer to drive up standards in the supported housing sector.
- Developed the Stage 2 Accommodation Project to provide a designated route out of

⁹ 631 affordable homes out of 3573 built over the 5 years from 2017-2022 (ESBC [Annual Monitoring Report](#))

shared supported housing for those with additional barriers to living independently.

- Welcomed the provision of 631 affordable homes⁹
- Introduced a selective licensing scheme to improve the quality of private rented property and tenant management practices within the designated area, which has since been extended.

The Council will:-

Emergency accommodation

- Continue to support the YMCA's delivery of outreach support, emergency help and accommodation for rough sleepers.
- Maintain a network of hotel and B&B provision to enable an emergency response at all hours of the day or night.

Temporary accommodation

- Explore options to work with Trent and Dove to secure settled accommodation at the earliest opportunity.
- Aim to not place any families in B&B accommodation unless in an emergency and then for no longer than 6 weeks.
- Regularly review the amount of self-contained temporary accommodation required for performance of homelessness duties.

Settled accommodation

- Improve the Private Rented Sector offer and housing supply for homeless households by:
 - pursuing landlord engagement through the [Landlords Forum](#)
 - continuing to offer a tenant finding

service for landlords who wish to house homeless households (including via developing and offering tenancy security and guarantees to incentivise landlords);

- regularly reviewing the performance of the selective licensing arrangements.

The Strategy: the Process

The legislation requires a Homelessness Strategy that is:

“a strategy formulated by a local housing authority for-

- (a) preventing homelessness in their district;
- (b) securing that sufficient accommodation is and will be available for people in their district who are or who may become homeless;
- (c) securing the satisfactory provision of support for people in their district –
 - (i) who are or may become homeless; or
 - (ii) who have been homeless and need support to prevent them becoming homeless again.”

The process that culminated in this strategy began with an initial assessment of Housing Options data on homelessness in the last 5 years.

[A Review](#) was then produced and circulated to:

- Local voluntary and not-for-profit agencies including the Burton & East Staffs Homeless Partnership
- Staffordshire County Council
- Other public agencies: National Probation Service, Staffordshire Police, Staffordshire Fire Service, Criminal Justice System.
- Housing associations and supported housing providers such as: Trent and Dove Housing, Midland Heart, Derventio, Derwent Living, Sage Housing, Sanctuary Housing, Platform Housing.

This strategy was drafted from the findings of the review and feedback received.

Implementation

The Council will produce and monitor an annual action plan to secure delivery of this strategy.

Abbreviations

B&B – Bed & Breakfast

HCLIC – Homelessness Case Level

Information Collection figures reported to central government quarterly.

LHA – Local Housing Allowance

Further reading

[*The homelessness monitor: England 2023 – Crisis*](#), July 2023

[*Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities*](#) – Department for Communities and Local Government, May 2023

[*Selective Licensing in the private rented sector: a guide for local authorities*](#) – Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), June 2023

