



North Warwickshire Borough Council

Homelessness Strategy

2018 - 2023

Our vision is to prevent homelessness and meet the housing support needs of vulnerable households through the provision of high quality and accessible accommodation, support, information and advice

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Forward

The prevention of homelessness in North Warwickshire continues to be a key priority for the Council and its partners. We recognise the negative impacts that homelessness has upon the health and wellbeing of affected households who are often trapped in cycles of deprivation.

The Homelessness Strategy 2018 sets out how the Council, alongside its partners, intends to meet the challenge of preventing homelessness over the next 5 years, ensuring support is available to help people avoid being without a home and sustain their existing accommodation. With demand upon our services likely to increase over the next few years, based on current trends, the form this support takes will vary with an emphasis on identifying people at risk as early as possible. The Council's existing partnership networks will need to be developed and widened to ensure that this is achieved.

Since the publication of North Warwickshire Borough Council's last Homelessness Strategy in 2012 the Housing Options Team has endeavoured to deal with the causes of homelessness within the Borough. This has included increasing the supply of affordable homes; work with private sector landlords to remove potential barriers to the private rented sector, making more efficient and better use of the housing stock and offering a more sustainable service.

Preventing homelessness has always been a key priority by using a variety of prevention tools and we continually look to identify new prevention initiatives that will help to address homelessness in North Warwickshire. We recognise that homelessness is a cross cutting issue which cannot be tackled by one agency alone. North Warwickshire has a strong history of working in partnership to tackle homelessness. This includes work with statutory and voluntary agencies, housing related support providers, money advice and domestic abuse services. We are one of the partners of the PHIL (Preventing Homelessness Improving Lives) trailblazer project which is piloting ways of assisting households at a very early stage by offering enhanced housing options.

Our new Strategy aims to continue to work in this spirit by having a focus on preventing people from becoming homeless in the first place and supporting those who are homeless to build a more positive future in good health, sustainable accommodation and offering pathways into employment and financial inclusion. To achieve this we will be looking more and more to work collaboratively with our key partners.

Thank you to all partners who have contributed to this document.

Chapter 1 Aims of the Homelessness Strategy

1. Purpose

This Strategy introduces a fresh approach to tackling homelessness in North Warwickshire and incorporates the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. It provides the necessary framework for effective partnership working and for the delivery of efficiently managed and co-ordinated advice, housing and support services for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

The overall aim of this Strategy is to detail how the Council will work to reduce both the causes of homelessness in North Warwickshire and provide a quality response to those affected by homelessness, offering a range of solutions where possible.

The overall aims of the Strategy are therefore to outline how the Council will:

- Continue to prevent homelessness by early intervention
- Ensure that homeless people have access to quality services to assist them when faced with or when facing homelessness.
- Proactively work with all relevant local organisations to provide a co-ordinated approach to tackling and preventing homelessness.
- Meet the Government's expectations, aims and outcomes relating to tackling and preventing homelessness.

Delivery of the priorities as outlined in Chapter 3 will ensure that North Warwickshire Borough Council is able to offer a range of quality services to meet the needs of those people that are in housing need.

This Strategy supports the Corporate Plan, Asset Management Plan, Local Investment Plan, Local Development Framework and Tenancy Strategy.

It is essential that North Warwickshire Borough Council do not work in isolation to meet the needs of people who may have multiple complex needs that extend beyond the basic need for a home. This is when partnership working can really help to look at preventing homelessness and offer housing options that are sustainable. Therefore, this Strategy should be seen as a multi agency document focused on prevention work.

It is intended that the Strategy is inclusive in its approach and partner agencies continue to work closely with the council to assist in the delivery of its objectives and priorities.

2. Profile of North Warwickshire Borough

North Warwickshire has a number of characteristics which impact on the ability of households to afford a home and to manage a home independently and/or to access advice or support to help them to do so or to find a new home when circumstances change.

NORTH WARWICKSHIRE HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

The majority of North Warwickshire is rural, with three market towns and no natural centre. North Warwickshire neighbours major urban areas including Birmingham and Solihull, Coventry, Tamworth and Nuneaton.

People living in rural areas face a number of challenges when they have housing or related support needs:

- Services mainly exist in the market towns or outside the Borough altogether and transport links are poor
- Housing in these areas is attractive to people moving into the Borough particularly commuters from neighbouring urban areas
- House prices are high compared to household income and in some cases, would warrant 8 times their income to afford to purchase a property

Many residents in North Warwickshire have a strong connection to where they live. Communities tend to try to support their families more in times of crisis.

The strong sense of community can have implications for people who find themselves in need of help:

- Their family, friends and neighbours may try to assist them and this may mean signposting to people who can help, or in a crisis situation providing somewhere to stay
- A number of problems can escalate to result in homelessness, for example, debt or health. These are not necessarily problems that people will want to share with their community, resulting in leaving it too late to resolve; the person may lose their home and have to leave the area altogether
- The households that stay with family and friends may hide the extent of true housing difficulty and homelessness in the Borough, which makes tracking and demonstrating need difficult.

Although there are floating support services that will involve visits to someone in their home, there is only a small amount of schemes with support on-site. This can result in someone having to leave North Warwickshire in order to access support services which defeats the object of preventing homelessness and enabling independence and can lead to feelings of isolation.

Map of North Warwickshire



3. National and Local Challenges

Nationally homelessness is increasing. The financial year 2010/11 saw a 10% increase in homelessness acceptances by local authorities, representing the first financial year increase since 2003/4. Homelessness acceptances continued to rise over the next three years but fell by 3% between 2012/13 and 2013/14. The 2014/15 financial year recorded a further increase, with acceptances 36% higher than in 2009/10. The 2015/16 financial year saw acceptances increase by a further 6% on 2014/15 and this is a continuing trend.

Research into the causes of homelessness has identified a number of factors, some of which relate to the wider state of the economy and the housing market and others which are personal to the individual or family.

Structural factors contributing to homelessness include:

- A lack of affordable housing supply in England which is more acute in some areas than others. Research conducted by Centrepoin in 2013 for Cambridge University concluded that by 2021, at current rates of construction, there could be a shortfall of submarket rented homes of over 900,000.
- The social housing sector has declined as a proportion of all housing in recent years. This reflects sales under the Right to Buy, when the discount levels were increased in 2011 and reduced investment in the development of social housing.
- The affordability of home ownership has been impacted by tighter mortgage regulation and the requirement for higher deposits from first time buyers. Even in areas where house prices are relatively affordable, mortgage regulation can act as a barrier to access.

Personal factors that trigger homelessness include relationship breakdown, mental illness and addiction issues, discharge from prison and leaving the care system. The immediate causes of homelessness have remained fairly constant over the years. The circumstances in which families become homeless tend to differ from those of single homeless individuals; with the latter experiencing more chaotic lifestyles.

Two specific areas which are felt to be contributing to the increase in homelessness are the ending of an assured shorthold tenancy and changes to Housing Benefit entitlement. Our experience suggests that private landlords are increasingly unwilling to let to claimants in receipt of Local Housing Allowance (LHA). A further challenge for most single people under the age of 35 is that since January 2012 they have been restricted to the LHA rate for a room in a shared house (the Shared Accommodation Rate).

There are a number challenges particularly apparent in North Warwickshire:

Increasingly, people are presenting as statutory homeless because an assured tenancy has ended. Domestic abuse and parental exclusion are also significant reasons for why people become homeless in North Warwickshire.

Deprivation and associated poverty/low incomes are key barriers for accessing social housing and maintaining stable and financially sustainable tenancies. Access to employment is a key mechanism for preventing homelessness. Poor financial management and a failure to maximise household income also limits people's ability to access and sustain housing.

North Warwickshire has a growing population, which is putting increasing pressure on the existing housing stock. Whilst there has been a steady flow of affordable new build homes over recent years there is a need for this to continue particularly in the provision of 2 bedroom family homes.

Increasing difficulties experienced by people under 35 to secure affordable, independent accommodation – particularly for low-income and unemployed young people. Whilst there is a relatively good supply of accommodation of this type, it is often not affordable for this group. People who are subject to benefit restrictions face additional difficulties. This

contributes to a need for additional larger homes as young people are living with their family for longer representing a new and growing housing need in the Borough, as well as an affordable housing offer, for young people including young workers. Young people are the most disadvantaged in the housing market because they are likely to have a low income and are viewed by Landlords as potentially high risk. 56% of those applying to the Council as homeless are young people. 35% have been asked to leave by a family member or friend.

There needs to be more focus on preventing future homelessness by addressing the underlying causes of people's experience and assisting people with a variety of housing solutions.

There is an increasing number of families who are homeless and/or in temporary accommodation. This affects social bonding, school performance as well as linked to disadvantage in future generations. Almost half of applicants applying as homeless have children – either with a lone parent, or as dependents of a couple. The difficulties that people experience trying to find and secure suitable housing has a direct impact on their health and well being; this places increased pressure on health services, family doctors and mental health services in the local area.

4. Homelessness and Housing Need in North Warwickshire

During 2017/18, the Council received 185 homelessness applications, compared with 142 the previous year. The most common causes of homelessness were:

- Asked to leave by family/friends (65) – 35%
- NTQ private rented accommodation (60) – 32%
- Domestic Abuse (33) – 18%
- Relationship breakdown (10) – 5%
- Repossession/Eviction (8) – 4%
- Discharge from prison (2) – 1%

The main causes of homelessness continue to be households being asked to leave by family/friends, termination of an Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST) and domestic abuse. This is a trend across all 5 districts in Warwickshire.

Warwickshire is a two tier rural county with five districts and boroughs – North Warwickshire, Nuneaton and Bedworth, Rugby, Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick. All districts have noticed increasing numbers approaching housing advice services at crisis point, creating fewer opportunities for homelessness prevention. There is an increasing cohort of clients with complex needs including issues from traumatic life events, periods in care/prison, domestic abuse, mental and physical health issues, learning difficulties, substance misuse and offending. There were 659 households accepted as homeless and in priority need in Warwickshire in 2016/17.

Table 1 below shows the top three reasons for homelessness in Warwickshire. Analysis of the 2016/17 year shows that the overall number of households accepted as homeless are increasing. There has been a steady growth over the last 3 financial years in the proportion of households accepted as homeless due to termination of an Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST), with a fall in the proportion accepted due to violent relationship breakdown and

parental evictions. Further research into 40 precarious deposit guarantee scheme ASTs revealed issues around disrupted Housing Benefit (45%), rent arrears (32%) and affordability issues (20%) as causes of instability. Further wider analysis identified triggers including; landlords selling/moving (43%) and where reasons for homelessness related to tenant behaviours/circumstances, affordability issues accounted for 10% and 7% involved rent arrears. Triggers for these issues were pregnancy, substance misuse, health issues, relationship breakdown and loss of employment, leading to reduction in income and affordability issues or rent arrears. A failure to claim benefits or get benefits reassessed was also identified as issues.

Table 1: Reasons for homelessness in Warwickshire

Reason for homelessness	14/15	15/16	16/17
Termination of Assured Shorthold tenancy	232 households (32%)	209 households (33%)	229 households (35%)
Violent relationship breakdown, involving partner	109 households (15%)	118 households (18%)	73 households (11%)
Parents no longer willing to accommodate	108 households (15%)	108 households (17%)	80 households (12%)

Source: Warwickshire trailblazer bid/P1E returns

Table 2 below shows the breakdown of all homelessness applications received in North Warwickshire over the last 3 years. There has been an increase in both the total number of homelessness applications received and the number accepted by the local authority as owing a full duty.

Table 2: Breakdown of homelessness applications for North Warwickshire

	15/16	16/17	17/18
Total number of homelessness applications received	131	142	185
Accepted	74	85	115
Intentional	3	2	4
Non Priority	50	50	58
Not homeless	4	5	7

Source: NWBC P1E returns

Single people (45%) are the largest group applying as homeless, single parents with dependent children account for 31%, couples 5%, couples with dependent children (15%).

Where a household is homeless and in priority need the Council has a duty to provide interim accommodation. There has been an increase in the number of households placed in temporary accommodation with 56 placements made during 2017/18 compared with 24 for the whole of the previous year. The Council provides hostel accommodation on a licence agreement and its own stock (non secure tenancies). Bed and Breakfast is used only where there are no other options available.

Table 3: Households in temporary accommodation

	15/16	16/17	17/18
Number of households	45	24	56
Average time spent in temporary accommodation	47 days	104 days	57 days

Source: NWBC Performance indicator reporting

Chapter 2 Outcomes from previous action plan

The Council will seek to prevent homelessness where ever possible. The number of preventions has decreased over the last 2 years. More work is required to develop existing and new prevention initiatives.

Figure 1: Statutory homeless and prevention statistics

	15/16	16/17	17/18
Number of households accepted as statutory homeless	74	85	115
Number of households prevented from becoming homeless, or had their homelessness relieved	50	38	22

Source: NWBC Performance indicator reporting

Figure 2: Summary of homelessness prevention cases 2016/17 2017/18

Prevention Tool	2016/17 Number of cases	2017/18 Number of cases
Withdrawn Notice to Quit	15 (39%)	2 (9%)
Found alternative accommodation	14 (37%)	7 (32%)
Accessed Supported Accommodation	4 (10%)	4 (18%)
Illegal Eviction	2 (5%)	2 (9%)
Prevention of Eviction	1 (3%)	1 (4%)
Returned Home	1 (3%)	6 (27%)
TOTAL	38	22

1. Outcomes from prevention work

- We have assisted people to access the private rented sector where this has been possible as part of our Housing Options Service and the Revenues and Benefits Section have been proactive in assisting with Discretionary Housing Payments to prevent homelessness.
- Long standing and effective partnership networks have assisted customers with a variety of needs to deal with their housing issue. These include North Warwickshire Citizens Advice Bureaux (CAB), Housing Benefit, Probation Service, North Warwickshire Children's Team and Doorway Young Persons Service.
- Housing related support services were reviewed in 2016 by Warwickshire County Council in conjunction with the district councils. These services ensure that customers receive housing related support appropriate to their needs that will help them to sustain their accommodation and aim to break the cycle of homelessness.
- Drop in services are available for young people between 16 – 25, both at the Council's One Stop Shop and in other areas of the Borough. Young people are offered support to enable them to sustain their tenancies.
- Drop in services are also held in the Council's One Stop Shop for other client groups that are homeless or threatened with homelessness. P3 hold drop in's and provide generic floating support for people aged 25+ and there are drop ins for veterans to receive advice and assistance.
- Support and advice is available to support victims of domestic abuse to remain in their home or access a place of safety. The Council also facilitates and chairs the Northern Warwickshire Domestic Abuse Forum, which brings together relevant partners who need to work together, to ensure that a robust and comprehensive service is provided.
- Liaising with Private Landlord's to enable tenants to sustain their tenancies.
- Close working with the Council's Housing Options Team to give housing options advice including assessment for social housing and access to the Councils Housing Register.
- Legal advice provided to prevent homelessness due to illegal evictions and invalid notice to quit
- 4 households were referred to supported accommodation projects in 2016/17 and 4 in 2017/18
- Mediation services are available and have been used to enable a household or applicant to return to their home. For example, the Council has contacted a parent to see if they are willing for their child to return home, whilst alternative accommodation is being sought.
- Referrals are made to the CAB for debt advice and the Council has a Tenancy Sustainment Officer who provides financial and other advice that will enable people to maintain their existing accommodation.
- The Tenancy Sustainment Officer provides support to households placed in temporary accommodation to assist them to address their housing issue and prepare them to take on a new tenancy.

2. Strengthening Partnership Working

We have worked hard to engage with our partners and examples of strong partnership working include:

- Working in partnership with our Registered Social Landlord partners (RSL's) to provide more affordable housing within the Borough. North Warwickshire Borough Council has built 105 new homes over the last 3 years throughout the Borough by obtaining funding from the Homes and Communities Agency. We have reviewed our existing nomination agreements with partner RSL's to ensure opportunities are maximised for applicants on the Council's Housing Register.
- We are part of the Preventing Homelessness Improving Lives (PHIL) trailblazer project funded by DCLG. The project aims to first identify and then offer support to households at risk of homelessness by using innovative new methods including data matching, enhanced partnership working, lightning referrals and community mentors.
- Provision of financial inclusion initiatives. North Warwickshire Financial Inclusion Partnership is a joint forum attended by a variety of organisations across both North Warwickshire and Nuneaton and Bedworth local authority areas with the objective of providing coordinated financial advice services to people living in the area.
- We are representatives of the Housing Related Support Steering Group that is attended by our district partners and HRS providers which helps ensure that services are co-ordinated to provide the best possible response.
- Working in partnership with support providers to ensure the use of floating support is maximised to assist vulnerable households to remain and sustain their tenancies. This includes the supported housing project within North Warwickshire which is managed by SAHA (formerly Chapter One) at Meadow House, Atherstone to assist young families in learning how to sustain their tenancies before move on.
- Working in Partnership with North Warwickshire Children's & Young Families Services. We work closely with the Intake and Leaving Care Teams to address the particular needs of children, young people and families and this helped in managing and preventing homelessness.
- Working in partnership with North Warwickshire Citizens Advice Bureau to provide detailed debt and benefit advice to customers who are facing homelessness through financial difficulties.
- Working with organisations that provide services to young people who give support and advice to young people facing homelessness.
- Working in partnership with providers of Domestic Abuse Support Services to enable the victims of domestic abuse to have the choice to stay in their home without experiencing fear.
- Working in partnership with Warwickshire Police and Probation with the exchange of information and the Information Sharing Protocol to help facilitate the best options for the customer as well as the service provider.

Chapter 3 Key Priorities and Objectives

1. Vision

Our vision is:

To prevent homelessness and meet the housing support needs of vulnerable households through the provision of high quality and accessible accommodation, support, information and advice.

2. Key Priorities

Following consultation with our stakeholders and an analysis of local needs by reviewing our homelessness data and having regard to the impact of external factors such as the economic downturn, limited employment opportunities and the welfare benefit reforms, the key priorities have been identified as:

- Ensure people are well informed about their housing options
- Prevent people from becoming homeless
- Assist people as soon as possible if they do become homeless so that their homelessness can be relieved by securing sufficient accommodation and support
- Support people to recover from their experience and maintain their accommodation so they do not become homeless again
- Enable people to secure homes that they can afford and maintain

3. Priorities and Objectives 2018-2023

Summary of Key Priorities and Objectives

Priority 1 – Ensure people are well informed about their housing options

Objectives

- To raise awareness and promote the homelessness and housing options service with the public and partner agencies
- To ensure there is easy access to high quality information about the services provided and where to get help
- To improve customer service, involvement and satisfaction

Priority 2 – Prevent people from becoming homeless as early as possible

Objectives

- To further develop and improve the prevention tools to assist households in different situations and to meet local need
- To actively support, promote and develop partnership networks to ensure a coordinated and multi agency approach to homelessness prevention
- To develop strong protocols for multi-agency working to support and appropriately refer individuals and families at risk linking into the work of PHIL
- To design and implement early and targeted interventions for groups identified as higher risk of homelessness linking into the work of PHIL

Priority 3 – Assist people as soon as possible if they do become homeless so that homelessness can be relieved by securing sufficient accommodation and support

Objectives

- To review systems and processes to ensure the Homelessness Reduction Act requirements are fully implemented
- Strengthen partnerships with local housing related support providers and other organisations who provide accommodation and support to homeless persons
- Review temporary accommodation provision and ensure it is adequate to meet

local need

- Reinforce commitments to minimise the use of bed and breakfast provision particularly for families with children and maintain zero usage for 16-17 year olds

Priority 4 – Support people to recover from their experience and stay out of homelessness

Objectives

- To review the effectiveness of the tenancy sustainment service provided by the Council and ensure those most at risk of becoming homeless or losing their accommodation are assisted
- To maximise referrals to housing related support providers to assist people to sustain their accommodation and receive the support they require
- To develop financial inclusion services in conjunction with the North Warwickshire Financial Inclusion partnership ensuring a coordinated approach to offering advice on housing benefit, debt and welfare benefit

Priority 5 – Enable people to secure homes they can afford and maintain

Objectives

- To ensure adequate provision of housing to meet housing need in the Borough to include more supported housing
- To increase the supply of affordable housing through existing and new partnerships
- To review and monitor the Council's Lettings Scheme to ensure best use of stock and that social housing properties are let to those most in need
- To develop work with private landlords and initiatives that will improve access to the private rented market locally
- To ensure those ready to move on from supported accommodation can do so in a timely way

4.1 Ensure people are well informed about their housing options

Meeting the overall aims and objectives of the Strategy and the delivery of key actions will lead to service improvements for customers. Specific areas need to be addressed in improving services to customers. These include:

- Improving the quality of housing options information available to customers and raising awareness of the range of services available, offering earlier advice and assistance to all potentially homeless households
- Ensuring that all literature and information is accessible and tailored to meet the needs of the customer
- Providing appropriate support and assistance tailored to meet individual needs to all homeless and potentially homeless households. A housing options wizard will provide self help information based on individual circumstances
- Improving communication with customers, monitoring customer satisfaction with the services provided and by shaping the services to the needs of the customer

- Developing and monitoring housing options for customers with identified vulnerability and ensuring that they are provided with the relevant support to engage in the process
- Raising awareness and promoting the homelessness and housing options service with partner agencies ensuring they are aware of referral pathways and the services offered

4.2 Prevent people from becoming homeless as early as possible

The aim of homelessness prevention is to help people to stay in their current home wherever possible and where this is not possible, to assist them to make a planned move to alternative accommodation, preventing the need for them to make an application as homeless. In addition, providing support at an early enough stage ensuring that households are placed in the most appropriate accommodation with the right level of support, will prevent either homelessness occurring in the first place, or where it has already occurred, will prevent repeat homelessness. This can be particularly relevant to younger and/or vulnerable people.

Investment in homelessness prevention services can produce direct cost savings for Local Authorities, such as a reduced use of temporary accommodation and long term pressures on wider services.

Sustaining and developing further homelessness prevention measures is key to providing a more flexible and responsive service to all homeless and potentially homeless households.

A diverse range of services contributes directly and indirectly to the prevention of homelessness through information, signposting and advice. There is a need to ensure the provision of these services meets the need of all customers.

The Council will be undertaking a full review of the prevention tools it currently offers to ensure that these are adequate to meet the needs of applicants. We will look to ensure that all opportunities are made to secure funding to facilitate this prevention work. This will include maintaining current funding for rent deposits and bonds for private rented accommodation and to explore options for utilising Discretionary Housing Payments.

The Council recognises that working in partnership with other agencies is fundamentally important to preventing homelessness. We will continue to work with our partner agencies to ensure there are robust referral pathways in place to enable applicants to secure appropriate accommodation and support. The PHIL project seeks to work with other agencies and use data that will identify those households most at risk of becoming homeless. Their primary aim is to prevent homelessness at an early stage by asking agencies to contact them if they identify a household at risk. The Council support this approach and will promote the work of PHIL with other agencies and the public.

The voluntary sector also plays a key role in providing housing related information and advice for example, Citizen's Advice Bureau and Age Concern. The Council will work with the voluntary sector as part of its homelessness prevention work and has a Financial Inclusion Forum which is represented by many organisations who contribute to the delivery of financial inclusion initiatives. This work has included the set up Community Hubs in semi rural locations where customers can talk to the Council via Skype or a hot line telephone

where they can access services. The Branch Out Bus provided by the Council is equipped with technology that enables clients to access information and services. P3 offer a similar service using Mobile Advice Van Information Support (MAVIS) providing tenancy and benefits advice. The Council supports this approach which is important given the geographical wide spread of the Borough and the challenges of accessing services in a rural area. The Council operates a foodbank and furniture scheme. These types of initiatives all link to the Council's homelessness prevention work and help people to sustain their accommodation.

There are good links & robust systems, established between the Tenancy Services Officers and the Homelessness & Advice Officer, to deal with any Council tenants that may be facing eviction due to rent arrears, anti social behaviour or breaches of their tenancy conditions. The objective of this is to advise the tenant and see if the eviction can be prevented and if not, to ensure that they have the appropriate advice to be able to move on.

The Tenancy Sustainment Officer works in conjunction with both teams. The aim of the service is to assist people to maintain their existing accommodation whether they are Council tenants or are struggling to pay their rent in the private rented accommodation. The service is flexible depending on the issue of the client and includes money and debt advice, help with claiming benefits, financial advice and other work that will enable the client to stay in their accommodation.

One of the 3 main reasons for homelessness in the Borough is private tenants being served a Notice to Quit (NTQ) by their Landlord. Engaging with private landlords has traditionally been difficult however, we will work to develop the relationships that we do have and seek to develop new ones. We will link into the work that PHIL are undertaking in this respect, by raising awareness with Private Landlords and asking them to contact PHIL if a tenant is struggling in their tenancy. We will seek to engage with Landlords at the Nuneaton Private Landlord's Forum as many of these landlords operate across both Nuneaton and Bedworth and North Warwickshire Council areas. We will seek to develop models that will encourage private landlords to provide housing to those in housing need. We will develop our rent deposit and bond schemes so that they are accessible to those that need them. We will offer assistance to private tenants who may be struggling to pay their rent by providing money, debt and benefits advice.

Another main reason for homelessness is people being asked to leave their accommodation by family and friends, many of these are parental evictions. Young people are particularly affected and therefore the Council will work with organisations such as St Basils and Doorway Young Persons services that specialise in this area and provide additional support.

There is a Warwickshire Protocol with Children's Services that looks at joint assessments for 16 and 17 year olds which North Warwickshire Borough Council are signed up to. This is in line with Chapter 3 of the Department of Health's Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families - 2000.

However, we have a lack of emergency accommodation for this age group and therefore, we will be looking at ways of increasing future provision including the provision of an emergency crash pad facility.

Effective joint working with Children Services is crucial in assessing and dealing with the often complex needs of young people. We have arranged joint training to promote partnership working and raise awareness of the joint protocol with housing and Children Services teams. We will continue to develop these joint working relationships.

4.3 Assist people as soon as possible if they do become homeless so that their homelessness can be relieved by securing sufficient accommodation and support

Whilst we will seek to shift the balance to a more proactive, preventative approach, we will also ensure that there is an effective response for those who present as homeless in an emergency or crisis situation. Groups that are recognised as predominantly affected in this area are private rented sector tenants, families with dependent children, people experiencing domestic abuse, young people experiencing parental exclusion, under 35 year olds, people with multiple and complex needs, people with drug and/or alcohol addiction and street homeless people.

Crisis prevention and relief is defined as a range of responses that support prevention and relief of homeless crisis. We will aim to respond at the point of crisis, where the threat of homelessness is imminent or has occurred. A range of interventions that seek to resolve the homelessness or threat of homelessness will be considered and include:

- Homeless prevention services, housing options and advice
- Outreach services that make contact with the street homeless population. Whilst street homelessness is not a big issue in this Borough, where someone is identified as sleeping rough, we will utilise outreach services knowledgeable in engaging with this client group.
- Support and intervention for adults and children affected by domestic abuse including the provision of specialist accommodation such as refuges
- Immediate and direct hostel provision
- Bed and Breakfast and temporary accommodation where this is appropriate and no other options are available
- Fast path into supported accommodation or young persons crash pad

As a result homelessness is prevented through intervention at the point of crisis; emergency accommodation is secured for those without other housing options and there is coordinated action to prevent street homeless by moving people into accommodation. Some of these services are provided by other agencies so a multi agency approach is required.

There is a need to both minimise the use of temporary accommodation and at the same time ensure that the accommodation that is provided to homeless households in emergency situations, for which there is always likely to be a need, is of a high standard and suited to the needs of those placed there.

Preventing homelessness in as many cases as possible will help to ease the pressure on temporary accommodation, as will the provision of new units of social rented accommodation.

North Warwickshire has doubled its hostel provision in the last 2 years to meet an increasing need. We have also used vacant properties to accommodate homeless families on a short term basis. We avoid using bed and breakfast accommodation. It is only used when the temporary accommodation referred to above, is either full, unsuitable or it is an 'out of hours' emergency placement, which is usually for 1 or 2 nights only. We will seek to provide more temporary accommodation if this is required and will explore the possibility of adopting the 'Housing First' model of delivery if this is feasible.

4.4 Support people to recover from their experience and stay out of homelessness

People who have experienced homelessness are more likely to have additional needs around their mental, physical and emotional health and may need extra support to make a sustained recovery into stable housing and onward to a positive future. This is particularly true for children, young people and vulnerable adults. Providing this extra support is critical to limiting the impact of homelessness as well as preventing homelessness reoccurring.

Homelessness recovery means key agencies work together to support people to ensure they have access to a range of support that will improve their physical and mental health and wellbeing, access education or training, enter or maintain employment, stabilise the family income and strengthen social networks. Warwickshire County Council has commissioned housing related support providers who aim to support people to sustain their accommodation. The providers specialise in dealing with particular client groups:

- P3 (People Potential Possibilities) – Generic Floating Support (Ages 25+)
- Home Group Homeless and ex-offenders (Ages 25+)
- Salvation Army Housing Association (SAHA) - Young people (Ages 16 – 25)
- St Basils & Doorway – Young People (Ages 16 – 25)
- Together – People with disabilities (aged 16+)

The Council recognises the importance of the support provided by these support agencies and will work in partnership to ensure these services are directed to those most in need. The providers work with some of the most vulnerable people often with multiple and complex needs. Their work is essential in ensuring that these people are supported to sustain their accommodation and to acquire the skills they need that will prevent them from becoming homeless again. The Council will seek to maximise the number of referrals to these services.

The Council also operates a tenancy sustainment service. People who are at risk of becoming homeless or who are struggling to maintain their tenancy will be referred to the service. An action plan is developed that will assist the tenant to retain their accommodation. Additional support is given to households in temporary accommodation and preparing them to move into a new tenancy. The Council will undertake a review of the service to ensure that it is working effectively and assisting those most in need.

4.5 Enabling people to secure homes they can afford and maintain

Affordable Housing: The Council has been working with its Registered Social Landlords and developers to increase the supply of affordable housing within the Borough.

Figure 3: Affordable Housing in North Warwickshire

Year	Number of affordable homes built	Social Rented	Shared Ownership
2012/13	19	15	4
2013/14	35	27	8
2014/15	76	56	20
2015/16	31	26	5
2016/17	120	102	18
2017/18	88	79	9

Social Rented Sector:

The Council has managed to increase its stock of Council Housing by a further 105 homes in the last 3 financial years. This has included much needed family homes although there has been a mix of properties for families, older persons and young people. .

We continue to work with our Registered Social Landlord Partners to increase the level of Social Housing within the Borough, but all new properties that are being built with grant funding from the Homes and Communities Agency are now subject to the affordable rents regime which can go up to 80% of current market rent. This is still classed as affordable housing within North Warwickshire as the rents still come within the levels indicated within our 4 Broad Market Rental Areas (BMRA). The provision has included an Extra Care Scheme in Mancetter which has helped to free up larger much needed family accommodation.

The provision of new social rented housing and other affordable options has helped to reduce the length of time that homeless households have to wait for permanent, settled accommodation.

At the same time, however, recognising that demand continues to increase at a faster rate than supply and that as a result the number of new social housing units is unlikely to match the level of need. It is equally important to make the best use of existing social stock by addressing under occupation with the offer of incentives to move and to introduce the re-designation of sheltered schemes for use by younger people. We have made good progress with both of these initiatives following the introduction of the Tenants Incentive Scheme in 2013 which has assisted 88 households to move to more suitable accommodation and freeing up much needed family accommodation. The re-designation of sheltered ground floor flats in some areas has helped to address the need of younger single people some of whom required ground floor accommodation for medical reasons.

The Council introduced a separate Housing Transfer Register following the introduction of the Localism Act in 2012 which has assisted to aid mobility. We also subscribe to Home Swapper mutual exchange scheme which assist our tenants to move to more suitable homes.

Supported Accommodation:

There is a lack of supported accommodation within North Warwickshire, with only 1 scheme at Meadow House, Atherstone. This has 6 units for young families to receive support with tenancy sustainment, before moving on. This project was officially opened in November 2011 and is currently managed by Salvation Army Housing Association (SAHA). It has proved to be invaluable in accommodating young families and has provided a gateway into independent accommodation. Doorway, Home Group and SAHA are all looking to increase the provision of supported housing in North Warwickshire however; this is likely to be limited.

In regards to other supported accommodation, we have to look outside of the Borough to satisfy these needs and this can often be traumatic for the customer as they will have most of their support networks (formal and informal) within North Warwickshire.

The areas that North Warwickshire tends to use supported accommodation is Nuneaton, which is the neighbouring urban authority to ourselves and Coventry which is further south and is difficult for customers within North Warwickshire to access at short notice and with very little money and poor transport links.

Move on provisions:

We established a need for a Move-on Protocol through Supporting People, to cover the whole of Warwickshire. This involved partnership working between the 5 districts to develop the protocol with our housing partners, to ensure effective move on and prevent bed blocking. The Lettings Scheme gives a high priority to applicants living in supported accommodation, to ensure that they are able to move on effectively into permanent accommodation. The Move-on Protocol was reviewed in 2017 following the commencement of the new housing related support contract and the appointment of new service providers.

Review of the Lettings Scheme:

The Lettings Scheme was reviewed following the introduction of the Localism Act 2012; this included the introduction of a separate Housing Transfer List. A further review of the Scheme is planned during 2018/19 to assist us to achieve our strategy for meeting housing need and preventing homelessness.

Private Rented Sector:

The Localism Act 2012 has enabled local authorities to discharge their duties towards households accepted as unintentionally homeless and in priority need, by offering a private rented tenancy. This is a relatively new power and the Government expects Council's to develop policies to allow them to exercise this duty and offers must also consider the individual needs of each household. Offers must also be suitable and the property must be decent but in making the offer, factors such as established links to doctors, education, social workers, key services and support should be considered. The Council has not discharged it's duty by making a private tenancy offer however, will under take a review of the potential of being able to should the need arise in the future.

Chapter 4 Delivery of the Strategy

1. Risks to delivery of the Strategy

It is difficult to assess the full impact of changes being brought about by the Homelessness Reduction Act which is coming into effect in April 2018. Whilst there is a duty to prevent homelessness, it is possible that there will be an increasing number of people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. This will impact on the level of resources required to meet this demand and deliver an effective service.

We are experiencing an increasing complexity in the support needs amongst homeless people. This also impacts on the resources needed to manage these cases and requires continued effective work with partners to highlight the need for housing related support.

Any changes to the homelessness prevention grant which funds many of the homeless prevention initiatives would be a risk to the delivery of the Strategy. However, we are not aware of any reductions to the government grants currently received.

The risks also include the roll out of the Government's welfare reform plans including Universal Credit which is planned to move to the full service in Atherstone in September 2018 and other changes to the benefit system. The current economic climate together with the welfare benefit changes brings a potential increase in unemployment, failing tenancies and more demand for social housing.

2. Financial Constraints

As well as the government homelessness grants, the Council funds the majority of our revenue expenditure on homeless, prevention and related activities through its General Fund. This includes the cost of providing a comprehensive lettings, housing options and advice service; the tenancy sustainment service and grant funding to third sector organisations such as Doorway who provide services to homeless people. Following the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review it is anticipated that further cuts at local authority level may have to continue.

Although this may impact on local authority budgets, we are not expecting any proposals that would affect our ability to deliver the Homelessness Strategy.

3. Monitoring and Review

The actions detailed throughout the Strategy have been compiled into a detailed action plan (See Appendix 1). The Strategy and action plan will be monitored quarterly and reviewed annually to ensure that our outcomes meet local needs and government policy. These reviews will be carried out in partnership with the agencies that have assisted in the development of both the Strategy and the action plan. The first annual review will be completed in March 2019.

This Strategy covers a 5 year period and will run until the end of 2023. In order to ensure the continued relevance of the Strategy and action plan over the 5 years additional actions

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may be developed and implemented and existing actions changed or updated following a review.

Figure 4: Homelessness Strategy Monitoring Mechanism

Joint Partnership Group	Consideration to be given to establish a partnership group that will contribute to the delivery of the Homelessness Strategy and contribute to future reviews
National Performance Indicators and Statutory Returns	Performance will be monitored through quarterly HCLIC returns and will be reviewed regularly by the Council
Local Performance Indicators	The Housing Division will continue to monitor national and local indicators relating to homelessness as part of its performance indicator suite. Performance against targets is monitored on a monthly basis
Homelessness Team Meetings	The Homelessness Team Meetings review housing options and homelessness data on a monthly basis so that demand can be frequently reviewed and response strategies formulated
Action Plan Update	The action plan will be formally updated on an annual basis and will be made available on the Council's website as well as being circulated to key partners
Reporting to Resources Board	Resources Board will be updated on progress against the action plan annually and advised of any proposals to amend the Strategy or associated policies.

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APPENDIX 1

Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2018-2023

Key Priority	Objectives	Strategic Actions	By when	Lead Officer
1. Ensure people are well informed about their housing options	To raise awareness and promote the homelessness and housing options service with the public and partner agencies	Attend team meetings and other networks and promote the work of the homelessness and housing options service	On going. Initial promotion by May 2018	Housing Services Manager/Housing Options & Lettings Team Leader
		Promote PHIL internally and externally	On going	Housing Services Manager/Assistant Director (Housing)/Housing Options & Lettings Team Leader
	To ensure there is easy access to high quality information about the services provided and where to get help	Develop the information provided on the website and self assessment tools	September 2018	Housing Services Manager
		Develop leaflets that can be issued by hand	September 2018	Housing Services Manager
	To improve customer service, involvement and satisfaction	Develop mechanisms for obtaining feedback from customers	September 2018	Housing Services Manager

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2. Prevent people from becoming homeless as early as possible	To further develop and improve the prevention tools to assist households in different situations and to meet local need	Develop prevention tools to ensure they are robust and accessible. This includes access to Discretionary Housing Payments, the availability of a prevention fund, rent deposits, mediation, home visits, joint working and access to specialist advice services	Initial review by April 2018. More comprehensive review on going	Assistant Director (Housing)/Housing Services Manager
	To actively support, promote and develop partnership networks to ensure a coordinated and multi agency approach to homelessness prevention	Linked to promotion of the service with all relevant partners, develop and promote a coordinated and multi agency approach to achieve buy in from all key agencies. This will include consideration of establishing a strategic homelessness coordination group that could oversee delivery of the action plan	Initial consultation by June 2018. Establishment of a strategic homelessness coordination group by September 2018.	Housing Services Manager
	To develop strong protocols for multi-agency working to support and appropriately refer	Review referral arrangements to other support agencies that may assist to prevent homelessness	September 2018	Housing Services Manager

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	individuals and families at risk linking into the work of PHIL			
	To design and implement early and targeted interventions for groups identified as higher risk of homelessness linking into the work of PHIL	Identify and implement early interventions for high risk groups	September 2018	Housing Services Manager/Housing Options & Lettings Team Leader
3. Assist people as soon as soon as possible if they do become homeless so that homelessness can be relieved by securing sufficient accommodation and support	To review systems and processes to ensure the Homelessness Reduction Act requirements are fully implemented	Review processes to ensure we are meeting the HRAct requirements	Initially by April 2018 to meet requirement then on going review	Housing Services Manager
		Review what accommodation we have available to ensure we can achieve the relief duty for all eligible households	Initially by April 2018 then on going review	Assistant Director (Housing)/Housing Services Manager
	Strengthen partnerships with local housing related support providers and other organisations who provide accommodation and support to homeless persons	Review local provision, ensure robust referral and move on arrangements are in place. Consider how support services provided could be developed further	September 2018 and ongoing	Housing Services Manager/Housing Options & Lettings Team Leader
	Review temporary accommodation provision and ensure it is adequate to meet local need	Review temporary accommodation provision	On going review based on need.	Housing Services Manager/Housing Options & Lettings Team Leader

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		Provide an additional hostel for use as temporary accommodation	April 2018	Housing Services Manager/Housing Options & Lettings Team Leader
	Reinforce commitments to minimise the use of bed and breakfast provision particularly for families with children and maintain zero usage for 16-17 year olds	Review of temporary accommodation provision should avoid the need to use bed and breakfast provision. On going work with statutory and non statutory agencies regarding accommodating 16-17 year olds	Re-enforce commitment and work to joint working protocols for young people – on going	Housing Services Manager
4. Support people to recover from their experience and stay out of homelessness	To review the effectiveness of the tenancy sustainment service provided by the Council and ensure those most at risk of becoming homeless or losing their accommodation are assisted	Review effectiveness of the tenancy sustainment service	June 2018 and on going	Housing Services Manager
	To maximise referrals to housing related support providers to assist people to sustain their accommodation and receive the support they require	Encourage referrals to providers and monitor outcomes. Promote services with Housing Options team	On going	Housing Services Manager/Housing Options & Lettings Team Leader

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	To develop financial inclusion services in conjunction with the North Warwickshire Financial Inclusion Partnership ensuring a coordinated approach to offering advice on housing benefit, debt and welfare benefit	Contribute to the work of the Financial Inclusion Partnership to help ensure there are initiatives that will help support homeless persons or those at threat of becoming homeless	On going	Housing Services Manager
5. Enable people to secure homes they can afford and maintain	To ensure adequate provision of housing to meet housing need in the Borough to include more supported housing	Work in partnership with our Registered Social Landlords and other housing providers to increase supply throughout the Borough	On going	Assistant Director (Housing)/Strategy & Development Officer/ Housing Services Manager
	To increase the supply of affordable housing through existing and new partnerships	Work with developers to determine need for housing schemes coming forward to ensure that appropriate accommodation comes forward		
	To review and monitor the Council's Lettings Scheme to ensure best use of stock and that social housing properties are let to those in most need	Undertake a review of the Lettings Scheme	September 2018	Assistant Director (Housing)/Housing Services Manager

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	To develop work with private landlords and initiatives that will improve access to the private rented market locally	Work alongside PHIL to develop models that will encourage private landlords to accommodate people in housing need	On going	Housing Services Manager/Housing Strategy & Development Officer
	To ensure those ready to move on from supported accommodation can do so in a timely way	Work closely with the support providers in making sure that the Move On Protocol is being used effectively and is reviewed on a regular basis	Start quarterly monitoring from April 2018 with an annual review of the protocol in April 2019	Housing Options and Lettings Team Leader/Housing Services Manager