

Local Housing Strategy

Herefordshire

2021 - 2026

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Introduction

The aim of this strategy is to provide an overview of the housing related work delivered by Herefordshire Council. It outlines what is being currently delivered and why, as well as detailing the improvements that the council intends to make over the next five years. The Strategy does not seek to duplicate existing strategies, policies or action plans, but will signpost to these throughout. The council has a range of roles in relation to housing including:

- Assess local housing needs and understand the local housing market.
- Develop effective partnerships to increase the supply of affordable housing.
- Prevention and relief of homelessness.
- Improve conditions in the private sector.
- Enable people to live independently in their own homes.
- Ensuring safe and controlled development of new homes across the county through the Core Strategy.

Herefordshire County Plan

Our [County Plan](#) shapes the future of Herefordshire and aims to encourage and strengthen our vibrant communities, create a thriving local economy and protect and enhance our environment to ensure Herefordshire remains a great place to live, visit, work, learn and do business. Underpinning this plan are the themes of **connectivity, wellbeing and sustainability**, which sit at the core of our policy making, planning and design for the future.

The plan says that Herefordshire needs more genuinely affordable homes delivered through carefully planned policies for growth and commits to the following actions:

- We will use our Herefordshire Area Plan, communities' own Neighbourhood Development Plans, and an updated Core Strategy to make sure we deliver sustainable development, which meets the needs of local people while respecting our heritage and our natural environment.
- Investing in improved community infrastructure is an important factor in delivering community resilience as the county's population grows.
- We will work with housing associations and developers to enable them to build more homes for sale and for long-term rent. To drive the delivery of affordable housing, the council will look to develop its own housing stock to provide over 1,000 additional genuinely affordable homes for local people in Herefordshire.
- Increasing the number of private properties to rent is also important, so we will work with landlords and local people to speed up the rate at which empty properties are brought back

into active use and to support community land trusts and community-owned housing projects to succeed.

Development in Herefordshire – Core Strategy

The [Core Strategy](#) seeks to balance environmental issues with economic and social needs and ensure that development is sustainable and does not cause irreversible harm to important resources and features in line with the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF). It sets a vision as to how the county should look and function and how development needs will be met up to 2031. The Core Strategy has a range of aims including meeting the housing needs of all sections of the community (especially those in need of affordable housing), by providing a range of quality, energy efficient homes in the right place at the right time.

[Policy SS2](#) sets out a housing requirement for the delivery of a minimum of 16,500 homes (825 per annum) in Herefordshire between 2011 and 2031 to meet market and affordable housing need. It outlines a distribution of development across the County, which seeks to focus development in Hereford (providing 6,500 dwellings); followed by the market towns of Bromyard, Kington, Ledbury, Leominster and Ross on Wye (4,700 dwellings), with more limited development in rural settlements (5,300 dwellings).

Understanding Housing Need

Herefordshire Council commissioned a Housing Market Area Needs Assessment in 2020 (HMANA). This document is used to assess housing need across the county and inform our plans, strategies and projects. This document will be published in April / May 2021.

Review of this Strategy

Progress against the improvement actions in this strategy will be monitored via the performance indicators detailed in appendix 1 and will be accountable to the Housing Board, which brings together the teams involved in the delivery of housing related services across the Council. The full strategy will be reviewed towards the end of its five-year term. It may be reviewed sooner if prompted by central government legislative changes, or significant council policy developments which impact upon it.

Herefordshire in Context

Key Facts about Herefordshire

- **Population:** As of mid-2019, Herefordshire's resident population was estimated to be 192,800.¹
- Herefordshire had 85,995 dwellings in April 2019.
- **Herefordshire's land classification:** 95% of land classified as 'rural'. Over half of the population live in rural areas.
- **Distribution of population (mid-2017):** Just under a third of the population lives in Hereford city (61,400 people), and just under a fifth in one of the three largest market towns of Leominster (12,200), Ross (11,400) and Ledbury (10,100).
- **Population aged 65 years or above (mid-2018):** 24% (Herefordshire); 18% (nationally)
- **Households in fuel poverty (in 2018):** 12.9% (Herefordshire); 11.4% (West Midlands); 10.3% (England).
- **Housing affordability:** The median house price-to-earnings ratio in Herefordshire in 2019 was 11.9, which is significantly higher than both the West Midlands and national averages, at 6.2 and 7.1 respectively, pointing to stronger relative affordability pressures. This is based on workplace-based earnings.
- **Earnings in Herefordshire** are consistently significantly lower than the average in England and the West Midlands. In 2018 the median weekly earnings for people who work in Herefordshire were £461.10, compared to £536.60 in the West Midlands and £574.90 in England.
- **Geographical Barriers to Services** is one of the domains that make up the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). In 2015, almost half (55) of Herefordshire Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs)[1] were among the 10% most deprived in England. In contrast there were just eight LSOAs among the 25% least deprived in England.

¹ <https://understanding.herefordshire.gov.uk/population/> - 06.01.2021

Housing Tenure Profile

Herefordshire had a total dwelling stock of 85,995 dwellings in April 2019. Of this 86.5% is in private sector ownership and 13.1% by Registered Providers, and 0.4% by other public sector bodies. Private sector ownership is above the England average (82.6%). Over the period since 2011, whilst levels of both affordable and market housing have grown, the strongest growth has been in market housing resulting in growth in the proportion of market housing rising from 85.8% to 86.5% of the stock; with a corresponding reduction in affordable housing as a proportion of the stock².

A detailed profile of the split of market housing between owner occupied, private renting and shared ownership is not commonly available. The 2011 Census showed that 68.7% of households were owner occupiers in 2011 in Herefordshire compared to 65.6% across the West Midlands and 64.2% across England. The social rented sector accommodated a lower proportion of households in 2011 at 13.1% compared to 19.0% across the West Midlands and 13.9% across England. Within Herefordshire private renting accommodated 15.2% of households across the County in 2011, compared to 14.0% across the West Midlands region and 16.8% across England³.

House Type

The profile of homes of different types in Herefordshire is biased towards larger detached and semi-detached properties. Detached properties represented 42.7% of the housing stock in the County compared to 23.7% across the West Midlands and 22.6% across England and Wales. Semi-detached properties represent 28% of stock across the county. Conversely, flats and terraced properties are less well represented. Flats/maisonettes represented a notably smaller proportion of housing stock within the County at 12.1% compared to 16.2% housing stock in the West Midlands and 21.6% within the England and Wales. The 2011 Census data showed a profile of homes of different sizes which is focused more towards larger properties. Just over two thirds of the County's housing stock comprises family-sized housing with three or more bedrooms⁴. There is a concentration of smaller dwellings in Hereford and the larger market towns.

There is a mismatch between existing social housing stock and demand, with the greatest demand being for one bedroom accommodation. We have larger numbers of two and three bedroom properties available. Exceptionally there is also a requirement for large family homes, which are also hard to secure via registered providers in Herefordshire.

² Draft Housing Market Area Needs Assessment– August 2020, p18, Iceni Projects Limited

³ Draft Housing Market Area Needs Assessment– August 2020, p19, Iceni Projects Limited

⁴ Draft Housing Market Area Needs Assessment– August 2020, p20, Iceni Projects Limited

House Prices and Affordability⁵

- The median value of house sales across Herefordshire in 2019 was £235,000. The median house price-to-earnings ratio in Herefordshire in 2019 at 11.9 is significantly higher than both the West Midlands and national averages, at 6.2 and 7.1 respectively, pointing to stronger relative affordability pressures. This is based on workplace-based earnings.
- Over the last 15 years the median house price-to-earnings ratio has increased by almost 4 points, from 8.0 in 2003 to 11.9 in 2019. It has seen significantly greater comparative growth than has been evident across the West Midlands or nationally pointing to a stronger comparative deterioration in affordability in the County. Much of this increase (60%) has occurred over the last 5 year period (2014-19).
- Median monthly rents vary from £412 for a Room and £380 for a Studio to £995 for 4+ bed properties in Herefordshire. Whilst the median rent for all properties is 7% below the West Midlands average (£600 per month compared with £645 per month), rents in Herefordshire for rooms in particular, and for 3-bed properties are above the regional average; £412 compared to £355 per month and £750 compared with £715 per month respectively⁶.

Overall Housing Need

The calculation for overall housing need has changed since Herefordshire's Core Strategy was published in 2015. It was revised in 2018 through the revised National Planning Policy Framework. Using the current methodology Herefordshire's minimum annual housing need is 846 per annum.

Social Housing in Herefordshire

Registered providers are an essential partner in the delivery of housing in Herefordshire. The Council does not have any general needs housing stock⁷ instead social housing in Herefordshire is supplied by a range of registered providers. The Council works in partnership with registered providers to allocate social housing to those most in need via the [Home Point](#).

Home Point is a choice based lettings scheme that enables registered customers to bid on properties as they become available, giving people more choice about where they want to live. Home Point advertises approximately 75% of social housing for rent that is managed by the main housing associations operating across the county. A new [housing allocations scheme](#) was

⁵ Draft Housing Market Area Needs Assessment– August 2020, p41-42, Iceni Projects Limited

⁶ Draft Housing Market Area Needs Assessment– August 2020, p36, Iceni Projects Limited

⁷ Note: General needs housing means housing that is not purpose built, adapted or managed for a particular client group.

introduced in 2020. The new scheme introduces an increased number of criteria within the Bands A to D, to help us to better understand housing need across the county. It also introduced the option for people with a housing want, rather than need, to register for properties. This is called Band E and enables registered providers to advertise properties that sit outside of the housing allocations scheme (e.g. the remaining 25% of their stock), or properties that have not been allocated through the Home Point system; enabling and encouraging effective use of housing stock. Band E is open to existing housing association tenants and general applicants.

In addition to this, registered providers support the work of the Council in delivering specialist housing for vulnerable groups, by developing bespoke housing schemes on a needs led basis. They also contribute to the wider housing market by building new, mixed tenure, developments across the county.

Future Impacts

There are a number of challenges facing Herefordshire Council and our partners which will impact on the delivery of priorities in this Housing Strategy. These include:

Welfare Reforms

Welfare Reforms will continue to reduce the income of many households across the county, particularly households who are already facing financial exclusion; the roll out of Universal Credit is not yet complete across Herefordshire. Universal credit and local housing allowances have been increased in 2020 due to Covid 19, but it is unclear if this increase will continue beyond the pandemic.

Intensive Housing Management

Supported Housing is provided to tenants who are disadvantaged with a wide range of complex and changing needs. There are a significant proportion of tenants whose high support needs, poor housing management awareness and lack of practical skills, mean that there is a requirement for a much more intensive housing management provision to ensure that the tenants can sustain their tenancy⁸. Intensive Housing Management is essentially a series of Housing Benefit eligible tasks that go beyond normal housing management functions because of the tenants' greater needs. Supported Housing Schemes across Herefordshire are finding it difficult to qualify for Intensive Housing Management, meaning that it is increasingly challenging for housing providers to run supported housing schemes in the county.

Changing Legislation

There are a number of Bills and Whitepapers in progress through government that will impact on our work over the lifetime of this strategy. These include the Renters Reform Bill, Domestic Abuse Bill, Environmental Bill, Changes to the Planning System and Planning for the Future whitepapers, and the Future Homes standard (changes to building regulations).

Changes to Local Authority Funding

The council has delivered substantial savings in response to reductions in central government funding. Herefordshire has a higher than average proportion of people in the county over the age of retirement, resulting in a growing demand for, and cost of, adult social care provision. The costs related to severe flooding across Herefordshire and the delivery of Covid 19 support for people in

⁸ https://www.supportsolutions.co.uk/briefing/issue_12/exempt_specified_accom.html - 07.12.2020

need across Herefordshire in 2020 has placed further pressure on the council's budget. The council awaits the latest spending review which is expected to include the outcome of the local government fairer funding review and it is also not currently possible to assess the impact of the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union.

Funding Programmes

The Government issues housing related funding programmes on an ad hoc basis and Herefordshire Council, along with local registered providers, will seek to respond to these opportunities where they can be used to meet an identified housing need.

Environmental Issues

The accelerating impact of climate change will continue to affect weather patterns across the UK, leading to an increase in flooding and unpredictable weather events. Herefordshire Council have recognised this and declared a [climate and ecological emergency](#). This impacts on every part of the Local Authority's work including the delivery of new net zero carbon homes and work to minimise the negative environmental impact of existing housing.

Demographic Changes

Herefordshire's population is growing. The latest (2018-based Sub National Population Projections) predict that Herefordshire's population will have grown to 209,878ⁱ by 2041. Analysis suggests that the largest growth will be in people aged 65 and over. In 2041 it is projected that there will be 67,200 people aged 65 and over. This is an increase of 18,900 from 2020, representing growth of 39%. The population aged 85 and over is projected to increase by an even greater proportion, 81%. Looking at the other end of the age spectrum the data shows a projected decrease in the number of children (those aged Under 15), with modest increases or decreases shown for adult age groups.⁹ This projected increase in older residents will be a significant pressure on resources available to meet housing need and promote independence. The recent Market Area Needs Assessment indicates that there is a lack of suitable housing for older people and that this will need to be a focus for future supply.

Covid 19

Government data indicates that there were 24,800 claimants on the Government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme in August 2020 representing 31% of employees. Whilst this is marginally below

⁹ Draft Housing Market Area Needs Assessment– August 2020 Iceni Projects Limited

the West Midlands average of 34%, it remains very significant. In addition, 72% of those self-employed had taken up Self-Employment Income Support from Government. As the support mechanisms come to an end there is potential for both further increase in unemployment and in homelessness levels¹⁰.

The full impact of Covid 19 and the resulting national recession on the demand for, and affordability of housing in Herefordshire is not yet known. This applies to all types of housing; from temporary accommodation, used to house the homeless during the initial local down period, through to the implications for the wider housing market. Covid 19 has also had an impact on the council's ability to deliver some of our housing related work as staff have been redeployed to Covid 19 related tasks.

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¹⁰ Draft Housing Market Area Needs Assessment– November 2020 p29: Iceni Projects Limited

Key Achievements over the last 5 years¹¹

- Registered Providers have delivered 464 units of affordable housing since January 2016, including 124 units of shared ownership.
- 671 units of accommodation have been developed through section 106 agreements since January 2016 of which 270 were affordable.
- 746 disabled facilities grants have been awarded across all housing sectors for essential adaptions to support independent living.
- The Government's Help to Buy scheme has supported the purchase of 41% (380 out of 936) new build sales between 2014 and 2019.
- Empty Property Officer appointed in December 2019. Progress in this area has been hampered by Covid 19, but 6 empty properties were still brought back into use during 2020.
- Development of 18 new units of supported accommodation for vulnerable young people.
- Development of 6 new units of supported accommodation for people with a learning disability.
- With key partners, the development and delivery of a purpose built refuge for survivors of domestic abuse.
- A grant of £285,000 was secured in 2016 through the Department of Health's Housing and Technology Fund. This enabled the retrofitting assistive technology such as assisted automated doors, video door entry/contact systems and telecare systems into 12 existing Learning Disabled designated supported living/housing schemes (81 units of accommodation) during 2017/18.
- £1,495,437 grant funding secured to support Rough Sleepers, people at risk of rough sleeping and homelessness during 2019/20.

¹¹ Note- 5 years between January 2016 and January 2020 unless otherwise stated.

Our Housing Vision

To effectively meet the housing needs of people living in Herefordshire, promote independence and create healthy and sustainable communities.

Having reviewed and considered the current housing market area needs assessment, population changes, health data, environmental and housing policy, we have established five priorities for the next 5 years:

1. Maximise the amount of affordable homes available for rent or buy.
2. Improve health through housing; by promoting healthy lifestyles, reducing health inequalities and supporting people to meet health needs through housing options.
3. Improve the quality and accessibility of existing homes and bring long term empty properties back into use.
4. Reduce the negative impact that our homes have on the environment.
5. Work in partnership to assess and deliver solutions to identified housing need.

In order to achieve this vision we will work with a wide range of partners including statutory organisations, developers, registered providers, private sector landlords, individual home owners and charitable organisations across Herefordshire.

1. Maximise the amount of affordable homes available for rent or buy

Affordable housing, as defined by the [National Planning Policy Framework](#), is housing for sale or rent for those whose needs are not met by the market. The provision of affordable housing is a key element of the Government's plan to end the housing crisis, tackle homelessness and provide aspiring homeowners with a step onto the housing ladder.¹²

The housing market area needs assessment for Herefordshire (2020) includes a detailed assessment of affordable housing need and indicates a need for 422 rented affordable homes per year, and 175 affordable home ownership homes per year. It should be noted that a significant proportion of this need is related to existing households who are resident in Herefordshire but need (or aspire to) live in a different tenure¹³.

Core Strategy Policy H1 sets out an affordable housing targets for new developments of 25% in the Leominster; 35% in Hereford and surrounding areas and West Herefordshire; and 40% in Ledbury, Ross-on-Wye and the Rural Hinterlands and the Northern Rural areas on eligible sites of over 10 dwellings/ 1000 sq.m¹⁴.

How will we achieve this?

Affordable Home Ownership

- The council works proactively with developers and housing associations to maximise housing growth across Herefordshire, including affordable housing through market led housing development via Section 106 agreements (for developments of 10 or more units).
- Exceptionally, affordable housing may be permitted on land within or adjoining an established rural settlement which would not normally be released.
- Affordable home ownership continues to be a priority for the government and grants are available for providers committed to developing affordable homes.
- The Government's Changes to the Planning System and Planning for the Future proposals will shape development in Herefordshire, once they become legislation.
- The Government's Help to Buy Scheme, which offers an equity loan of up to 20%, mainly to first time buyers, has proven a popular route to affordable home ownership. Take up of this scheme has grown year on year and has assisted 760 households to purchase a home in the county since 2015.

¹² <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-affordable-housing-funding> - 23.02.21

¹³ Draft Housing Market Area Needs Assessment– August 2020 p56: Iceni Projects Limited

¹⁴ Draft Housing Market Area Needs Assessment– August 2020 p56: Iceni Projects Limited

Homes England has launched a new affordable homes programme for 2021-2026. This programme provides grant funding to support the capital costs of developing affordable housing for rent or sale.

Affordable Housing for Rent

- The council works with a range of registered providers, including housing associations and charities, to deliver affordable rented homes. Herefordshire Council runs a choice based lettings system called [Home Point](#).
- Realising the potential of empty properties; the council works with private sector landlords to bring empty properties back into use. In November 2019 there were 269 properties identified as long term empty across Herefordshire. The council can award grant funding to eligible property owners to support them to bring empty properties back into use; in exchange, we ask that the property be let at an affordable rent for a set number of years.

Self-Build

The Herefordshire self and custom build register was established in April 2016. It allows us to monitor the demand for self and custom build within Herefordshire. The Council continues to develop its support for people to build their own homes. Between the 1st April 2016 and the 31st May 2020, there have been 530 registered expressions of interest in a serviced plot of land. A number of these are from outside the county and the Council is introducing a local connection test to enable it to gather further information on this matter.

The Council, as the local planning authority, is required to meet the demand, in terms of the number of entrants, on the self-build register through the granting of suitable planning permissions. The register is made up of different base periods for the purposes of monitoring. The council has 3 years from the end of each base period to grant suitable planning permissions to meet the demand from each base period. In the first monitoring (base) period (01.04.2016 to 30.10.2016) 174 expressions of interest added to the register and the Council granted sufficient planning permissions to meet that demand. The second base period ended on 30 October 2017. Monitoring of the number of planning permissions granted for housing that the Council considers to be self or custom build housing demonstrates that the demand for 139 self or custom build dwellings has been met.

Self-build can potentially be a means of securing an affordable home but within Herefordshire only 16% of registrants would be first time buyers, with just under half of the total registrants not requiring a mortgage to deliver their new home. However, in 2019 the council, recognising the multi benefits that can be associated with group self-build projects, transferred land to Stonewater Housing to enable the [Veteran self-build](#) in Leominster, a development of 19 new homes.

Community Led Housing

There are clear benefits from community ownership of housing in terms of supporting affordability and long-term stewardship of the asset. The Marches Community Led Housing Hub is currently working with around 12 groups across Herefordshire which are at different stages with some progressing to development, whilst others are at an early stage or dormant¹⁵.

There are a range of Community Land Trusts (CLT) in Herefordshire who aim to deliver low-cost homes for sale and rent in their locality. The national picture would indicate that CLT groups face a range of challenges including the acquisition of land and access to funding to bring forward schemes.

Rural and Entry Level Exception Sites¹⁶

Rural exception site development and the new 'entry level exception sites' have a role to play in helping younger households and family households to secure suitable housing within their local community. The NPPF identifies that local planning authorities should support the development of entry-level exception sites, suitable for first time buyers (or those looking to rent their first home), unless such needs are already being met within the authority's area.

Rural exceptions sites are different to entry-level exception sites; and described as small sites used for affordable housing in perpetuity where sites would not normally be used for housing. The purpose of rural exception site development is to recognise that more rural communities need new housing to help maintain their vitality and also to assist residents to find accommodation that meets their changing needs. For younger individuals and households this includes offering genuine opportunities to secure affordable housing in the area where they have grown up. Rural exception housing therefore offers a policy and financial mechanism by which the choice and mix of accommodation available to younger age groups can help support access to appropriate housing. Rural exception sites also offer opportunities for the ageing population; with the ability to provide for individuals wishing to downsize amongst other avenues.

Monitoring data suggests a relatively modest uptake of rural exception sites, with 4 sites completed in 2014 and 2015, which each delivered between 8-14 dwellings, but no delivery of rural exception sites since. There has been no delivery of entry-level exception sites in the county since 2015. These sites tend to be expensive to deliver due to a lack of services and the smaller rural nature of the

¹⁵ Draft Housing Market Area Needs Assessment– August 2020 p115: Iceni Projects Limited

¹⁶ Draft Housing Market Area Needs Assessment– August 2020 p116: Iceni Projects Limited

sites. This makes them less attractive to developers who, as Herefordshire does not have a five year land supply, are currently focused on developing larger sites.

New Council owned affordable housing

The County Plan 2020-2024 set out the council's ambition to provide 1,000 affordable net zero carbon housing units in the county over four years. The term affordable is taken in its widest sense – to provide a range of housing that is genuinely affordable to both rent and purchase given local earnings. The council has not owned its own general needs housing stock¹⁷ since 2002 and a review has therefore been undertaken as to the most appropriate role for the council in delivering its ambition. The options and delivery proposals suggested recognise the structures already in place and available to the council.

In November 2020, having considered a range of options to deliver up to 2,500 homes in the county over the next 10 years, Cabinet agreed that the council should proceed and that a pipeline of sites suitable for development as affordable housing should be established in order to support discussions with key partners including Homes England.

Example of Affordable Housing Growth in Herefordshire: Bloor Homes - The Point, Roman Road, Hereford.

Through the Section 106 process Herefordshire Council were able to negotiate with Bloor Homes



about the range of housing provided on this site. The negotiation, which was informed by the Housing Market Area Needs Assessment, has enabled the development of a mixed tenure scheme. When completed the scheme will provide 311 units of general needs accommodation for purchase on the open market as well as 2 accessible bungalows, 4 x 1 bed accessible flats and land for the development of an 80 bed extra care facility. The accessible properties and land are owned and managed by Platform Housing.

¹⁷ Note: The Council do own some specialist housing stock and become a registered provider in 2020.

2. IMPROVE HEALTH THROUGH HOUSING

Good quality housing is critical to health across the life course¹⁸. There are long term consequences for health as a result of poor housing, including increased respiratory conditions, accidents, poor mental wellbeing and excess winter deaths.

The cost of poor housing to the NHS is estimated at £1.4 billion a year¹⁹. Furthermore it is estimated that reducing excess cold in homes to an acceptable level would save the NHS £848 million per annum and reducing falls in the home could save the NHS £435 million. Suitable housing can support early discharge from hospital and allow people to safely remain in their own homes for longer. Good supported housing can allow people with mental health conditions to live independently for longer improving quality of life and reducing the need for out of area placements.

There is a well-recognised shortage of housing, but it's not just the number of homes that is important but the quality. In the longer term we know that good quality housing is also likely to lead to better health through its indirect impact on other factors including improved outcomes in the early years, better employment prospects and strong community resilience and wellbeing, which are all associated with good health²⁰. Herefordshire has poor housing affordability resulting in increased housing costs. This can also have an impact on key staff recruitment such as for health and social care staff in the county as well as viability and resilience of rural areas.

In 2019, a report by BRE²¹ on behalf of Herefordshire Council found that 9797 households were in fuel poverty, which equates to 11.7% of the total number of households in the county. These figures are close to government sub regional data released in 2020 of 10,000²². The BRE report found that higher concentrations of private sector households in fuel poverty are found in the more rural parts of Herefordshire. This, combined with reduced access to healthcare services in more rural areas of the county, demonstrates the importance of prioritising housing quality and eliminating fuel poverty for the local populations' health.

Housing is particularly important in ensuring a healthy start in life and is a key factor in the generation of health inequalities. Health inequalities are unfair and avoidable differences in health across a population and between different groups in society. Unintentional injuries due to poor quality housing are a key cause of morbidity and mortality in children. Children are also more likely

¹⁸ Marmot M, Allen J, Goldblatt P, Boyce T, McNeish D, Grady M, Geddes I (2010). Fair society healthier lives [online]. Available at: www.instituteofhealthequity.org/resources

¹⁹ Building Research Establishment (2015). The cost of poor housing to the NHS

²⁰ Buck D, Gregory S (2013). Improving the Public's Health

²¹ BRE Integrated Dwelling Level Housing Stock Modelling and Database for Herefordshire Council, 28th June 2019

²² <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/sub-regional-fuel-poverty-data-2020>

to be living in overcrowded housing, particularly in low income families (Department for communities and Local Government 2015). Evidence suggests that children living in cold, overcrowded or unsafe housing are more likely to be bullied, to not see friends, to have a longstanding health problem, disability or infirmity and to be below average in key academic areas²³. Children living in cold homes are twice as likely to develop respiratory problems as those living in warm homes and there are clear effects of fuel poverty on the mental health of adolescents²⁴. Outcomes for those who are homeless are far worse. Please see chapter 5 for more information on this.

Due to the substantial impact of housing on health Herefordshire's Health and Wellbeing Board have 'the impact of housing' as one their priorities.

How will we improve this?

- Actively promote the [Keep Herefordshire Warm](#) scheme, this is an energy advice and referral service run by Severn Wye Energy Agency. Keeping Herefordshire Warm has secured funding for a two-year project in which an energy advisor will be embedded within the social prescribing teams in Herefordshire.
- The council has a [Statement of Intent V4](#) to take advantage of the ECO3 Flexible Eligibility scheme. The statement is to direct assistance towards local private sector homes at risk of fuel poverty and those with vulnerabilities including health conditions.
- Actively promote '[Warmer Homes Herefordshire](#)' - funding to install first time central heating.
- Work with developers to ensure a mix of housing that meets the needs of vulnerable people; from housing with support through to general needs housing that enhances people's ability to live independently.
- Improve the quality of housing for homeless people; moving away from shared facilities and updating accommodation to modern standards.
- First contact alert and signposting service for staff entering older people's homes and spotting risk factors (for example, cold home, slips and trips, no smoke detector).
- Maximise the use of assistive technologies to enable people to live safely and independently in their own homes.
- Training about Fuel Poverty and its effects is available for frontline staff through Keep Herefordshire Warm.
- Actively promote the Governments new [Green Homes Grant Scheme](#) across Herefordshire to enable homeowners to improve the energy efficiency of their homes.
- Directly apply for relevant government funding as opportunities arise e.g. Local Authority Delivery (LAD) funding from Green Homes Grant.
- Promote community fuel purchasing schemes via the [Home Energy Webpage](#).

²³ https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/sites/default/files/2018-03/Housing_and_health_final.pdf (1), 87-94.

²⁴ [Marmot Review Team \(2011\). The health impacts of cold homes and fuel poverty](#)



Example of a healthy housing project in Herefordshire

[Keep Herefordshire Warm](#) is managed by Severn Wye Energy Agency on behalf of Herefordshire Council. The team offer energy efficiency advice and referrals for grant funding to help keep Herefordshire residents healthy and comfortable at home. The advice line offers energy efficiency advice on a number of topics, from simple changes you can make to save energy, grants for insulation or heating, switching energy supplier, to information on renewable technologies. During 2019/20 Keep Herefordshire Warm received 476 enquiries from 390 households of which:

- 38.6% had health conditions
- 52% were over 60 years old
- 30.2% were in receipt of benefits
- 12.1% has a child in poverty

These enquiries resulted in 64 energy efficiency measures being installed (+110 further referrals made) and 32 home visits completed identifying £5,843.21 of savings for households.

3. Improve the quality of existing homes and bring long-term empty properties back into use.

As already established in the previous chapter, poor housing conditions affect the health and wellbeing of residents and so it is a priority for Herefordshire Council to increase the quality, accessibility and safety of existing homes across all sectors. We also need to maximise the use of our housing stock, by bringing empty properties back into use.

Housing hazards

The housing health and safety rating system (HHSRS) is a risk-based evaluation tool to help local authorities identify and protect against potential risks and hazards to health and safety from any deficiencies identified in dwellings. It was introduced under the Housing Act 2004 and applies to residential properties in England and Wales²⁵.

The system assesses 29 housing hazards and the effect that each may have on the health and safety of current or future occupants of the property. The HHSRS provides a way that hazards can be assessed and identifies the best way of dealing with them. If a hazard is a serious and immediate risk to a person's health and safety, this is known as a Category 1 hazard. If a hazard is less serious or less urgent, this is known as a Category 2 hazard²⁶.

Hazards include excess cold, excess heat, damp and mould growth, falls hazards as well as electrical, fire and structural hazards. Herefordshire Council has a duty to act upon reports of Category 1 hazards e.g. hazards that are a serious or immediate risk to a person's health and safety.

To understand more about the condition of homes across Herefordshire, the council commissioned BRE to undertake a series of modelling exercises on private sector housing stock in Herefordshire.

The report, published in June 2019, concluded that:

- In 2019 there were 83,765²⁷ dwellings in Herefordshire, 68% owner occupied, 18% private rented and 14% social rented.

²⁵ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/15810/142631.pdf - 24.09.2020

²⁶ <https://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/housing-health-and-safety-rating-system-the-29-hazards#:~:text=The%20HHSRS%20provides%20a%20way%20that%20hazards%20can>this%20is%20known%20as%20a%20Category%202%20hazard>

rd. 24.09.20

²⁷ Note: These figures are different from those in the more recent Draft Housing Market Area Needs Assessment, but remain relevant.

- 19,358 dwellings in the private sector had a Category 1 Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) hazards. This equates to 27% of all properties in Herefordshire.

The report indicates that compared with the regional average, Herefordshire's private housing stock has higher rates of all hazards (27% compared to 14%) and excess cold (19% compared to 3%)²⁸.

Demand for Accessible Homes

Planning Practice Guidance on *Housing for Older and Disabled People* published by Government in June 2019 sets out that the need to provide housing for older people is critical, as people are living longer and the older population is increasing. It sets out that the health, lifestyle and housing needs of older people will differ greatly with housing needs ranging from accessible and adaptable general needs housing to specialist housing with high levels of care and support. The recent Housing Market Area Needs Assessment indicates that there is not enough suitable housing for older people in Herefordshire for this growing area of need.

The incidence of a range of health conditions is an important component in understanding the potential need for care or support for a growing older population. The 2020 Housing Market Area Needs Assessment includes an analysis of Health Related Population Projections to help forecast future need as follows:

Projected Changes to Population with a Range of Disabilities²⁹

Disability	Age Range	2020	2041	Change	% Change
Dementia	65+	3,361	5,527	2,166	64.5%
Mobility problems	65+	8,849	13,731	4,882	55.2%
Autistic Spectrum Disorders	18-64	1,097	1,137	40	3.7%
	65+	459	657	198	43.2%
Learning Disabilities	18-64	2,807	2,928	121	4.3%
	65+	1,010	1,425	414	41.0%
Challenging behaviour	61+	52	54	2	4.2%
Impaired mobility	65+	6,720	6,789	69	1.0%

Source: POPPI/PANSI and Demographic Projections

Of particular note are the forecast large increases in the number of older people with dementia (increasing by 64% from 2020 to 2041) and mobility problems (an increase of 55% over the same period). Changes for younger age groups are smaller, reflecting the fact that projections are expecting older age groups to see the greatest proportional increases in population.³⁰ The Housing

²⁸ [BRE Integrated Dwelling Level Housing Stock Modelling and Database for Herefordshire Council, 28th June 2019](#)

²⁹ Draft Housing Market Area Needs Assessment– August 2020 p92: Iceni Projects Limited

³⁰ Draft Housing Market Area Needs Assessment– August 2020 p91: Iceni Projects Limited

Market Area Needs Assessment indicates that we do not currently have sufficient stock of suitable housing for older people and that this is an area of growing need.

Social Housing Stock

Herefordshire Council does not currently own any general needs housing stock, instead we work with local registered housing providers to meet housing need. Each registered provider is responsible for the maintenance and management of their own stock. The [Decent Homes Standard](#) is a minimum standard that all social rented housing must meet and means that homes provided by registered providers should:

- Be free of category one hazards under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System.
- Be in a reasonable state of repair.
- Have reasonably modern facilities.
- Provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort.

There are nine active registered providers in Herefordshire with a total of 12,290³¹ properties. Registered Providers are required to report to the Housing Regulator about the condition of their stock. The Sector Risk Profile 2019 indicated that the importance of ensuring that stock meets high standards for health and safety and that overall stock condition has been increasingly identified as a major issue for many providers.³²

The 2019 BRE report estimated that 10% of social housing stock in Herefordshire have one or more category 1 hazards, the vast majority of which are related to excess cold or fall hazards³³.

Private Rented Housing Stock

Poor housing conditions continue to be an issue within the private rented sector and so improving the quality of these homes is a priority for the Council. The BRE report estimated that:

- 3,813 dwellings in the private rented sector have category 1 HHSRS hazards. This equates to 25% of properties in the private rented sector.
- 23.8% (17,149) of *private sector* dwellings and 20.6% (3,131) of *private rented* dwellings in Herefordshire are estimated to have an EPC rating below band E.

³¹ Herefordshire Council Housing Stock Summary – September 2020.

³² Sector Risk Profile 2019; Regulator of Social Housing, Updated 6 March 2020.

³³ [BRE Integrated Dwelling Level Housing Stock Modelling and Database for Herefordshire Council, 28th June 2019](#).

Comparing Herefordshire to the English Housing Survey (EHS) England average figures for the private sector stock suggest that Herefordshire again has significantly higher levels of all hazards and excess cold³⁴.

Homes of multiple occupancy (HMO's)

The quality of HMO's across Herefordshire is a particular concern. Any property that is let to five people or more, in two separate households, who share either bathroom or cooking facilities, is required to be licenced by the Local Authority. In 2019, there were an estimated total of 1,590 HMOs in Herefordshire, of which approximately 544 would come under the Government's mandatory licensing scheme. The quality of un-licenced HMO's varies hugely.

Long Term Empty Properties

Statistics published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) put the number of empty homes in England in October 2019 at 648,114. This represents a 2.2% increase on the previous year's total. Of the 648,114, 225,845 were classed as long-term empty properties (empty for longer than six months)³⁵. There were 284 long term empty³⁶ properties in Herefordshire in January 2021. An empty property is a waste of a valuable resource and they have a significant impact on the local environment and community. Empty properties can have an impact on anti-social behaviour, property prices and other environmental issues.

Most long term empty properties are privately owned. Common barriers that prevent owners from returning their property into use include:

- Issues with inheritance and/or delays with probate;
- Lack of finance to carry out necessary repairs and /or refurbishment;
- Perceived problems associated with letting of properties;
- Owner unwilling to bring the property back into use.

What are we doing to improve this?

Increase Accessibility and Reduce Household Hazards

³⁴ [BRE Integrated Dwelling Level Housing Stock Modelling and Database for Herefordshire Council, 28th June 2019](#) p5.

³⁵ [House of Commons Library Briefing Paper Number 3012, 21st October 2030 – Empty Homes \(England\)](#)

³⁶ Note - The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) classes problematic empty properties as those that are inactive in the housing market and have been empty for more than 6 months.

The council run an accessible homes register to assist people in need of social housing with adaptations to access properties where these are already in place. This service sits within the Housing Solutions Team. Working with registered providers means we are able to make the most effective use of our adapted housing stock. Over the next year we will be working with registered providers to encourage them all to use the accessible homes register. The council does not currently have a policy that includes the development of lifetime or accessible new homes, but standards will be considered as part of the Core Strategy review process.

The Council's Planning and Strategic Housing teams negotiate with developers to ensure that new housing developments address the areas of housing need in Herefordshire. This is done through the Core Strategy and supported by a supplementary planning document, which uses information from the latest Housing Market Area Needs Assessment to ensure developers are aware of housing need in Herefordshire. The Council also has an [older peoples housing strategy and pathway](#) in place.

In line with Government legislation, Herefordshire Council offers a wide range of grants and services aimed at improving the accessibility and safety of people's homes.

Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants – This means tested assistance is provided in accordance with statute, and is subject to a maximum limit of £30,000 for adaptations to facilitate access into and around the home and for essential provisions within it. A further discretionary grant of up to £15,000 is also available in specific circumstances. In 2019/20 275 applications were received, 178 grants were approved, 99 of these were for £5000 or under. During the same year 163 grants were completed; 56 for owner-occupiers, 115 for registered provider tenants and 11 for tenants in private rented accommodation.

Professional and Technical advice - The Home Improvement Agency offers an advocacy style service to help people stay warm, safe and independent in their own homes by arranging repairs, improvements of adaptations. The advice, guidance and practical support that the agency may be able to offer can range from small repairs and minor adaptations such as fitting a new lock or grab rail, to guiding the client through large adaptations schemes or an emergency repayable grant, or helping to find and manage a reputable contractor to carry out the necessary work.

Emergency Repayable Grant - This is a discretionary grant for emergency and essential works of repair that remedy a serious hazard that could adversely affect health or safety, determined using the housing health and safety rating system. It is intended to provide a safety net for urgent repairs for those most vulnerable in the community. The grant is repaid when the ownership of the property changes, or on transfer of the property to family members.

Technology Enabled Care Services - The council also operates an in-house technology team which helps support vulnerable people to remain living in their own homes with appropriate equipment and technology to summon assistance where required, or to control their home environment and activities within the home safely and appropriately. In addition, the service offers advice and installations to help facilitate effective assessment of people's needs to support them to remain living at home.

Information about all of the grants and services available, along with the eligibility criteria can be found in Herefordshire Council's [home adaptations and assistance policy](#).

Driving up housing standards

- We take a proactive approach to HMO inspection, carrying out approximately 80 inspections per annum. Inspections are used to determine what type of HMO it is, as there are a range of classifications, and for inspecting risk in line with the HHSRS process. We offer advice and support to landlords and where standards are not improved, are able to use enforcement powers.
- Publicise the [Midland Landlord Accreditation Scheme \(MLAS\)](#), which is managed by [Homestamp](#) on behalf of Herefordshire Council and other partners with the primary focus of accrediting professional landlords and agents across the Midlands.
- Work with Registered Providers through the Strategic Housing Forum to drive up standards of Social Housing and promote funding opportunities.
- Lead by example; Herefordshire Council are committed to becoming [carbon neutral](#) by 2030. This includes our buildings and properties.
- Use [enforcement](#) measures when needed.

Bringing Empty Homes Back into use

- Herefordshire Council employed a dedicated Empty Properties Officer in December 2019 to work with homeowners to look at the options for bringing the property back into use.
- If a property is empty for more than two years, the owner of the property is subject to increased council tax. A 100 % premium is added after two years and a 200% premium is added after 5 years.
- Long term empty property owners renovating their properties can contact Herefordshire Council for a letter reducing the VAT on renovations works to 5%.
- An Empty Property Grant scheme is in place to support property owners to bring properties back into use. Grants of up to £10,000 are available.
- The Empty Properties Officer monitors empty properties to ensure they are brought back into use within agreed and appropriate timescale.

- The Empty Property Officer works with Environmental Health colleagues to risk assess known empty properties and provide proactive enforcement when needed.

Example of improving the quality and use of existing housing stock in Herefordshire

The [Herefordshire Handyperson Scheme](#) is provided by Herefordshire Council's 'You at Home' service. All visiting Handyperson staff have been police checked and carry identity cards. Our experienced home improvement team can help with support and guidance for all home improvements and adaptations. We also sometimes provide financial assistance for small-scale emergency repairs. Our handyperson team may be able to help with small adaptations like ramps, half steps, handrails, home safety and security work, and a wide range of small repairs to help people to remain independent or to ensure they can return home from hospital. In some cases, a small fee will be charged for work undertaken.

The handyperson service completed 1759 jobs during 2018/19 and a further 1676 during 2019/20.

4. Reduce the negative impact that our homes have on the environment

The accelerating impact of climate change is a global concern that affects Herefordshire. The council have recognised this and declared a [climate and ecological emergency](#). This impacts on every part of the local authority's work including the planned delivery of 2500 new net zero carbon homes over the next 10 years and work to minimise the negative environmental impact of existing stock. As a county, we have a number of housing related challenges to address in this area:

Energy Efficiency of Private Sector Housing Stock

Herefordshire, as a large rural county, faces exceptional domestic energy challenges in relation to the age and type of housing and the availability of mains gas; from a sample of the 83,765 homes in Herefordshire, BRE (2019)³⁷ estimates that:

- The average Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating for all private sector dwellings in Herefordshire is 52 (E), which is worse than both England (60) and the West Midlands (58)- meaning that there are a significant number of houses that will potentially contribute higher greenhouse gas emissions than similar sized higher rated (D+) properties.
- 28% of homes in Herefordshire were built before 1919, a large proportion of these are solid wall properties making them much less efficient from an energy efficiency and CO₂ emissions perspective.
- Mains gas is available to only around two-thirds (65-70%) of properties, compared to 87% nationally- leaving a large proportion of these relying on expensive high CO₂ emission fuels such as oil, electric, LPG and in some households solid fuel.

Energy efficiency of the Private Rented Sector

The 2019 BRE report estimates that 20.6% of dwellings in the private rented sector have an EPC below band E. Under the Energy Act 2011 legislation that came into force in 2018, these properties would not be eligible to be rented out to new or renewed tenancies as they don't meet the minimum energy efficient standard, which has been set at band E.

³⁷ [BRE Integrated Dwelling Level Housing Stock Modelling and Database for Herefordshire Council, 28th June 2019](#)

What are we doing to improve this?

- The [Keep Herefordshire Warm](#) team offers energy efficiency advice on a number of topics – from simple changes you can make to save energy, grants for insulation or heating, switching energy supplier, to information on renewable technologies. This is a free resource for residents across Herefordshire.
- Actively promote the Government's new [Green Homes Grant Scheme](#) across Herefordshire to enable homeowners to improve the energy efficiency of their homes – extended to March 2022. Keep Herefordshire Warm, will provide advice and assistance to those seeking to apply to the Green Homes Grant Scheme. This scheme can also be accessed by landlords:
- Herefordshire Council, working with Shropshire Council have secured Local Authority Delivery (LAD) funding from Green Homes Grant. This will be used to target fuel poor households with a combination of renewable heating and energy efficiency measures.

Sustainable Water Management

Sustainable water management means minimising our impact on the healthy functioning of the water cycle and is considered when development proposals are being determined. Changes occurring to the climate mean that we are likely to experience an increase in the intensity, severity and frequency of extreme weather events such as droughts, storms and floods, which could dramatically affect the way we need to manage water. There is a finite capacity within the environment, and it cannot simply provide more and more water because of increased consumption rates or overall demand. Equally, there is a limit to the amount of waste water that can be safely returned to rivers without having a detrimental effect. The council has developed a guidance note on [sustainable water management](#).

The water quality of Herefordshire's main rivers and their tributaries is of strategic importance. The River Lugg catchment covers predominantly the north of the Herefordshire administrative area. The River Lugg is currently exceeding its limits for phosphates, because of water pollution from both 'point' source (in particular sewage outlets) and 'diffuse' source (in particular agricultural run-off).

Previously the approach taken by the council with the agreement of Natural England has been to allow development to proceed within the River Lugg catchment area despite its exceedance of its phosphate target, as it was considered that the combination of phosphate reductions (planned works at waste water treatments and adaptations to land use through schemes such as Catchment Sensitive Farming) as set out in the Nutrient Management Plan were sufficient to bring the river back into compliance. However, following the judgement in the case of Cooperatie Mobilisation handed down in October 2018 by the Court of Justice of the European Union (Joined Cases C-293/17 and C-297/17) (Known as the Dutch Case) this approach has been reviewed and as an

interim measure development within the area can only proceed if they are nutrient neutral or would lead to betterment.

What are we doing to improve this?

It is envisaged that in the long term the solution will be provided through the revision of the [Nutrient Management Plan](#) which will reflect the measures implemented by Welsh Water through their Asset Management Programme as well as more stringent requirements placed upon land owners to ensure the minimisation of diffuse pollution through appropriate infrastructure and updated environmentally friendly farming techniques. However, it is understood this is unlikely to take effect in the short term and an interim approach is required. The council have therefore [agreed](#) to take the following actions:

- Design, construct and manage up to eight integrated wetland sites set in strategic locations in order to provide tertiary treatment to waste water treatment works within the River Lugg catchment area.
- Commission the development of an interim delivery plan including a phosphate calculator and a suite of recommended mitigation measures appropriate to the River Lugg catchment area. This will enable developers to calculate the phosphate load of their development proposals and therefore agree measures independently with landowners to mitigate or offset the identified phosphate load, although this has to demonstrate with scientific certainty that it will be phosphate neutral or show betterment and any offsetting has to comply with the Habitat Regulations. This has the potential to be further developed as a trading platform for offsetting identified loads in future developments.
- Appoint an environment officer to lead on reductions in levels of diffuse pollution. To liaise with the regulatory bodies and carry out an audit in the River Lugg catchment area, identifying through mapping and farm visits where risk of pollution occurs and working with the farming community to introduce improvements to infrastructure and farming techniques

Air Quality Management

Overall air quality levels across Herefordshire are good^[1]. The main source of poor air quality in Herefordshire is vehicle emissions. We use local transport plans to improve accessibility, air quality and safety, and ease congestion. There are two Air Quality Management Areas in Herefordshire:

- The A49(T) corridor in Hereford, extending from Holmer Road in the north to Belmont Road in the south and extending east along New market/Blue School Street and west along Eign Street as far as Barton Yard. There are approximately 160 houses within this zone.

^[1] [Air Quality – A strategy for Herefordshire and Worcestershire](#) July 2009, p. 6

- An area encompassing the junction between the A44 (Bargates) and B4361 (Dishley Street/Cursneh Road) in Leominster. There are approximately 20 houses within this zone.

What are we doing to improve this?

The Council monitor air quality in these areas and have [action plans](#) for both of these sites focused on a range of measures to improve air quality. The Council also monitor nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) from a number of diffusion tubes located in roadside locations around the city, market towns and county.

The Council is currently undertaking a review of the Hereford Transport Package (HTP), which covers the A49 Corridor in Hereford City. There is a continued focus on the reduction of city centre congestion.

As a new initiative, we are currently testing mobile air quality sampling kits. These portable sampling kits will provide us with detailed air quality measurements in real-time data of particulate matter and nitrogen dioxide. This information will in the future enable us to identify localised hotspots of pollution.

Waste Management

We collect over 87,000 tonnes of waste from households and businesses across Herefordshire each year. 41.3% of the waste we collect from households is recycled, composted or reused^[1]. Our household waste sites are invaluable for our residents to be able to take recycling items that we cannot collect from your home. Last year our household waste sites recycled between 71% and 80% of waste brought to site.

Household waste collected from black bins in Herefordshire is taken to EnviRecover, a state of the art energy from waste facility, where it is used as a fuel to generate electricity. The facility started taking waste from households in both Herefordshire and Worcestershire in October 2016 and it provides the county with a reliable, safe and cost-effective means of dealing with our waste.

What are we doing to improve this?

The council has the ambition to make sweeping changes to bring about a more sustainable county. Resource management, production and waste are significant contributors to carbon emissions. By making changes to how materials are used in production, minimising use of raw materials, discouraging waste, maximising reuse, recycling and recovery we will be able to bring about large reductions in carbon emissions in response to the Climate and Ecological Emergency.^[2] In line with

^[1] <https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/rubbish-recycling/waste-management-herefordshire?documentId=881&categoryId=200138>

^[2] [Waste, A Strategic Review – September 2020](#) p. 6

this ambition, the Council have recently undertaken a [strategic review](#) of waste services across the county. There are three main drivers for this review:

- Arrangements for providing this service expire at the end of 2023.
- The government's Resource and Waste Strategy 2018 labelled a "once in a generation policy change" has significant implications on how the waste management service is provided from 2023 onwards. Further implications are also being considered because of the Environment Bill 2019-2020.
- The Council is ambitious in wishing to tackle the climate and ecological emergency

The review will inform the future delivery of waste services, which will see an increase in recycling and reuse opportunities. The requirement for greater levels of recycling and composting may have an impact on future housing design, as more space may be required for bins and containers both internally and externally.

Connectivity

Transport is vital to the people of Herefordshire. An efficient transport network is essential for the county's economy, supporting delivery of new homes and jobs. The ability to access services and maintain independence is also important and particularly challenging in a large rural county with an aging population³⁸. The Local Transport Plan covering the period 2016-2031 was adopted by the council in May 2016. The Local Transport Plan (LTP) reflects Herefordshire's [Core Strategy](#) 2016-2031 and sets out the council's strategy for supporting economic growth, improving health and wellbeing and reducing the environmental impacts of transport.

The Council is focused on sustainable growth e.g. more homes (including affordable housing) and jobs in the right locations. The Core Strategy sets out our plans for sustainable growth including 16,500 new homes, more jobs at the Hereford Enterprise Zone and other employment sites around the county and enabling infrastructure, which will support this new development.

What are we doing to improve this?

In order to ensure compliance with the ambitions set out in the LTP, a [policy statement](#) has been adopted which includes guidance for developers on sustainable transport infrastructure and the developer's responsibility to mitigate the impacts of developments on the transport network.

The Council is currently reviewing its transport strategy and is due to commence updating the core strategy. Coordination of this work will ensure consistency and clarity for development.

³⁸ https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/2912/local_transport_plan_2016-2031_strategy p. 4

The Council has produced this [Design Guide](#) to aid Developers, Designers and other professionals in preparing transport infrastructure related to new developments. It sets out the Council's requirements for compliance with Legislation, Health and Safety, Environmental and Public Protection and Mobility Impaired users. It explains the design philosophies and criteria, the Council's policies and sets out the procedures for application for adoption of the infrastructure. This document is in the process of being updated to reflect changes in legislation and the council's priorities.

Planning and the Environment

The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. This means planning to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The National Planning Policy Framework has three objectives; economic, social and environmental. This document guides local planning policy. Herefordshire's Core Strategy was adopted in October 2015 and includes a range of environmental measures including the requirement that development proposals include measures, which will mitigate their impact on climate change³⁹ as well as:

- Focusing development on the most suitable locations.
- Delivering development that encourages travel options including walking, cycling and public transport.
- Designing developments to reduce carbon emissions and use resources more efficiently.

What are we doing to improve this?

- The council has now begun to update the Core Strategy in order to plan for a longer timescale up to 2041.
- The council has set a target of zero carbon by 2030 and has published an updated [carbon management plan](#) and associated action plan for council emissions.
- Produce supplementary planning guidance on green building design.

³⁹ [Policy SS7 – Addressing Climate Change](#)

5. Work in partnership to assess and deliver solutions to identified housing need.

Our housing need changes throughout the course of our lives. In order to understand more about changing need and how to meet this Herefordshire Council gather intelligence about existing demand and use a range of information including population forecast to map future demand on services. There are a number of universal challenges faced in the delivery of housing solutions for vulnerable people, which affect all of the groups detailed below:

- The council uses a range of tools, data and specialist advice to assess current and forecast future housing need, but it is not an exact science.
- The value of supported housing as an economic option for commissioners depends on the specific accommodation costs being met. Negotiations around what constitutes intensive housing management for supported housing schemes can be lengthy and challenging; with some providers deciding not to deliver, much needed supported housing as a result.
- Delivering new build housing is a long term and inexact process involving many factors, which are often outside the council's control. After planning permission is granted developers have 3 years in which to start work on site; needs can change during this period.

Housing Needs of Vulnerable Adults

The council commissioned a vulnerable adults housing needs assessment in 2019. This document tells us that as of 1st February 2019 there were 2,225 adults supported by Adult Social Care services in Herefordshire. Below is a summary of Herefordshire's existing and forecast housing need, specifically in relation to vulnerable adults.

Current demand and assessment of need	Proposed solutions to meet future demand
1,210 older adults (aged 65 and over) who are frail and/or disabled supported. Around half (580 customers) have their accommodation related support funded by adults social care; the majority of whom live in	Meeting future growth will be achieved via a mixture of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase the number nursing homes beds over the next 10 years, including provision for people with dementia.

<p>a care home (36% residential and 26% nursing home).</p> <p>Increased demand for services will be seen through an increase in the base number of people by 26% over the next 10 years, an estimated increase of 314 people, indicating a rise in the demand for care homes, more specifically complex care nursing homes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of residential beds in the current market. <p>Where possible we will seek to divert some people who would have a care pathway to residential care, into alternatives which will include staying at home.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home care provision will continue to be a core offer and the increased opportunity of the live in care model of support. • Additional growth of the extra care model in Herefordshire. • Shared Lives growth to include older people.
<p>591 adults supported by adult social care have a learning disability.</p> <p>Just under half (264 customers) have their accommodation related support funded by adults social care; most of whom are aged under 65 and live in either a care home or a supported living scheme.</p> <p>It is estimated that there will be an increase of 4% to this customer group in the next 10 years, equating to 23 people.</p>	<p>The accommodation pathway to consider alternatives to residential care and to divert people away where appropriate from residential care. This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced supported living offer for people with complex / forensic history/ dual diagnosis through an enhanced framework • Increase in accommodation models to support tenancies with a minimum number of self-contained accommodation units in one location. • Development of sites and models of accommodation to support the enhanced supported living cohort. • Scope the opportunities for deregistration of some current residential homes for under 65's. • Growth of the Shared Lives offer. • Access to general needs housing as appropriate

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth of background support (both 24/7 and night time) through the use of assistive technology/core and cluster models
<p>560 adults (aged 18 to 64) with a physical disability and/or long-term conditions are supported.</p> <p>Just over a quarter (154 customers) have their accommodation related support needs funded by adults social care; of these customers over half (58%) live in a care home, over a third live in a supported living scheme.</p> <p>There is a projected increase in numbers for this cohort of 1% over the next 10 years, an additional five people.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptations to current property where possible and access to DFG's (Disabled Facilities Grant). • Accessible homes register. • Supported living schemes to have a small number of ground floor/accessible homes where possible. • Growth of background support (both 24/7 and night time) through the use of assistive technology/core and cluster models.
<p>26 adults with an acquired brain injury are supported. Of this number, 11 have their accommodation related support funded by adult social care. There is no anticipated increase in this figure.</p> <p>Projections in the next 10 years show this cohort increasing by 11%, an additional 49 people.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased access to specialist supported living providers. • Continued access to General needs housing as appropriate. • Growth of background support (both 24/7 and night time) through the use of assistive technology/core and cluster models.

Housing Need for Looked after Children and Complex Needs

Herefordshire's Children and Young People's Partnership is committed to supporting the resilience of families to ensure that children only become looked after when there is no other safe alternative and if they do, that a permanency plan that enables them to leave the care system safely is achieved at the earliest opportunity. We endeavour to ensure there is a continuum of services to address the range of needs so that families are equipped to appropriately care for, and meet the needs of, their own children. Where this is not possible and a child comes into care, the Council becomes their Corporate Parent, and shares parental responsibility with their parents. Herefordshire's looked after children population has continued to grow and was 336 in November 2020.

- Herefordshire has an above average number of looked after children; we should expect 180-220 looked after children compared to statistical neighbours.
- Looked after children have a wide range of needs.
- The council spent £18m on placements in 2019/20.

There is a range of accommodation routes for children and young people in care depending upon their age and needs as follows:

Fostering and Kinship Care – Enables children to be looked after in a family home, either with foster carers, or with wider family members. Negotiations are sometimes undertaken to increase the size of a property to enable sufficient space for the larger family unit, especially where the family are living in social housing. This is done on a case-by-case basis, via Home Point or via direct negotiation with the relevant registered provider, depending upon the circumstances.

Children returning to Parents – Where it is safe to do so, the Council seeks to return children home to their family. Where children have been removed from the family home for a period, the housing needs of the family will have changed and they may have moved into smaller accommodation either privately, or via Home Point. Reunification of the family may result in a larger home being required. In these circumstances, the council will support the family to consider their housing options and undertake negotiations to enable the family to move to larger accommodation wherever possible.

Residential Care – Herefordshire Council does not have any in-house residential children's homes meaning that all placements are purchased from the independent sector including those for mainstream looked after children and children with complex behaviours or disabilities. At end of September 2020 there were 41 children placed in residential care, of these 10 were placed within 20 miles of home. In order to improve this situation, Herefordshire Council are:

- Ensuring in-house recruitment targets specialist foster carers to reduce reliance on residential care.
- Strengthening strategic relationships with registered managers of local children's homes to improve access to vacant beds.
- Developing additional relationships with new homes as they open in and around Herefordshire.
- Joining new regional agreement for the purchase of residential placements from January 2019.
- Consider short-term residential care as breathing space before a child returns home or to foster care.

Plus 16 Supported Living – These are placements that are provided by in-house ‘hosts’ and external agencies. The aim is to provide accommodation and support to help young people to achieve independence. At least 104 young people will transfer into the 16+ service between 2019-2024. Estimates suggest that approximately 30 young people in care aged 16 to 17, and 20 care leavers, will require supported living placements each year. There is currently not enough supported accommodation available in Herefordshire so the authority have to place young people out of county. This is costly and means that Young People settle outside of the county. Based on local intelligence and assumptions of the impact of Early Help and Edge of Care work, and combined with comparisons against Herefordshire’s statistical neighbours, it is anticipated (October 2018) that Herefordshire could have c.232-276 looked after children by 2024^[1]. In order to improve this situation, Herefordshire Council have:

- Purchased and refurbished a building in central Hereford, developing eight units of new accommodation for young people with moderate / complex needs. This supported accommodation scheme opened in August 2020.
- Commissioned a specialist support service that is launching in Feb 2021. It will focus on providing accommodation-based support, family mediation and a floating support/outreach service. Mediation and floating support services will be delivered throughout Herefordshire. All those being supported will be vulnerable young people who are in care, care leavers or those homeless or at risk homelessness.
- New accommodation has been sourced in partnership with a registered housing provider. The accommodation is located in Hereford city. All referrals into the accommodation and associated support service will be made exclusively by Children’s Services (ten places) and the Housing Solutions Team (six places). All the young people supported must be aged between 16 to 25 years and have a local connection to Herefordshire.
- A 24-hour support service will operate from within the accommodation based support service and this will operate seven days a week throughout the year. The service will support up to 16 young people at any one time. This includes the emergency accommodation.

In addition to the above, we are developing a local young person’s accommodation and support framework to enable quick and effective provision of accommodation as required. The new contract will be in place by June 2021.

More information about this subject can be found in the Councils [Looked After Children & Complex Needs Placement Sufficiency Strategy 2019 – 2024.](#)

Resettlement of Refugees in Herefordshire

^[1] [Looked After Children & Complex Needs Placement Sufficiency Strategy 2019 – 2024](#), p8.

Ninety-five refugees were resettled in Herefordshire through the government's previous resettlement scheme by February 2020. In June 2020, the Council committed to welcoming a further [125 refugees to Herefordshire over the next five years](#). The Home Office provides the local authority and health with funding to provide services for resettled refugees on government resettlement schemes. The aim of the resettlement scheme is to enable refugee families to develop their independence so that they have the skills and information required to live independently in the UK by the end of the 5th year of their resettlement.

To date, accommodation for refugee families has been secured through the private rental market. Demand for private rented accommodation continues to be high, so we will also work with Registered Providers to find suitable housing solutions for new families as they settle into the county. It is the Council's belief that communities are enriched by a more diverse population.

Rough Sleeping and homelessness prevention in Herefordshire

A review of homelessness in Herefordshire undertaken in 2019 found that Herefordshire has been very successful in preventing people from becoming homeless. However, more needed to be done in our response to rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping, who have complex needs.

The health and wellbeing of people who experience homelessness is poorer than that of the general population. They often experience the most significant health inequalities. The longer a person experiences homelessness, particularly from young adulthood, the more likely their health and wellbeing will be at risk.⁴⁰

Co-morbidity (2 or more diseases or disorders occurring in the same person) among the longer-term homeless population is not uncommon; an example of this would be someone who has a mental health condition alongside drug and/or alcohol dependency. Among homeless people, the mean age at death was 45.9 years for males and 43.4 years for females in 2019; in the general population of England and Wales, the mean age at death was 76.1 years for men and 80.9 years for women⁴¹.

During 2019 - 2020 Herefordshire Council:

- Assisted 1124 households who were experiencing housing difficulties.
- Prevented 262 households from becoming homeless from their existing home.
- Helped to find alternative accommodation for 246 households before they became homeless.

⁴⁰ [Homelessness: applying All Our Health. Public Health England 06.06.2019](#)

⁴¹ [ONS Report – Death of homeless people in England and Wales 2019 registrations.](#)

- Accepted a full homeless duty to 42 households who would have been provided with temporary accommodation, pending rehousing, if needed.
- Provided outreach support to 91 rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping.

The proportion of households that lost their last settled home due to the ending of a private sector Assured Short hold Tenancy has increased dramatically, becoming the biggest single reason given for statutory homelessness nationally and locally in the last few years. A Prevention or Relief duty was owed to 191 households (out of 348) in Herefordshire due to termination of Assured Short hold Tenancy.

Prior to the Covid 19 pandemic, the four main causes of homelessness, or being at risk of homelessness, in Herefordshire were:

- Private sector and social housing evictions
- Family/friends no longer willing/able to accommodate
- Non-violent relationship breakdowns
- Domestic abuse and other violence

The government introduced a ban on section 21 evictions during the pandemic and as a result, the number of private sector and social housing evictions have reduced dramatically; however, it is anticipated that this will continue to be a key reason for homelessness in Herefordshire once the ban ends.

For most people who are at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness and rough sleeping there is not a single intervention that can tackle this on its own, at population, or at an individual level. Action is required to support better-integrated services including health and social care, and to help people to access and navigate the range of physical and mental health and substance misuse services they require in order to sustain stable accommodation⁴².

What are we doing to improve this?

The review of homelessness in Herefordshire informed the [Rough sleeping and homelessness prevention strategy 2020 – 2025](#). This strategy examines the causes of homelessness and sets out Herefordshire Council's priorities for preventing homelessness and rough sleeping across the county. The strategy recognises that homelessness, in its causes and consequences, is a cross-cutting issue, which cannot be tackled by one agency or organisation alone. In order to achieve positive outcomes it is essential that all partner agencies work together in a coherent and integrated

⁴²[Homelessness: applying All Our Health. Public Health England 06.06.2019](#)

way. The council is a member of the Herefordshire Homelessness Forum which brings together organisations across the county that are working to prevent or relieve homelessness. The forum includes representatives from the voluntary sector, faith organisations, commissioned delivery partners and statutory organisations and is focused on meeting the diverse and often complex needs of people who find themselves homeless in Herefordshire.

Our work with rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping and homelessness changed dramatically in March 2020 as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic and the Government's 'everyone in' directive. The council has received 156 presentations as homeless since lockdown began, with up to 80 people placed in temporary accommodation at any one time.

The huge partnership effort required to accommodate and support this vulnerable group of people during the pandemic has been called 'Project Brave'. Project Brave has a purposeful and holistic approach to eradicating homelessness across the county and includes support for people to access and engage with services e.g. substance misuse and mental health. Homelessness is often a complex and multi-faceted issue, there is no one size fits all solution that can be adopted.

Move on accommodation for those accommodated during the lock down period is now being sought through registered providers and the private rented sector. The council has secured funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government for the following activities:

- Funding to keep those accommodated in temporary accommodation because of the Pandemic in that accommodation until 31.03.2021.
- A private landlord's incentive scheme for up to 20 properties for homeless people who need low levels of support.
- Development of a Homelessness Hub in Hereford city including eight units of emergency accommodation and four self-contained flats in 2021.
- Continuation funding for two full time rough sleeping support workers.
- Commissioning of a support contract with Vennture to enable wrap around support.

In addition, we are using some capital funding to convert and extend two city centre properties into six one bed flats for sustainable homes 2021/22.

The [Renters Reform Bill](#) 2019-20 lays out legislation focused on resetting the balance of rights and responsibilities between landlords and tenants including bringing to an end 'no fault' section 21 evictions.

The Government have committed another £151 million to tackle rough sleeping and homelessness during the 2021/22 financial year. The council will continue to bid for funding as it becomes available to move homeless people into supported long term safe and secure accommodation.

Housing Needs of Survivors of Domestic Abuse

A [2019 report by the National Rural Crime Network](#) highlighted the "hidden" problem of domestic abuse in rural areas, concluding that "for rural areas, the scale of the barriers faced is significantly greater than for urban victims. In rural areas a range of additional impacts stemming from geographic, cultural and social differences and isolation have an impact which makes reporting abuse a much harder thing to do for rural victims to the extent they may delay or inhibit reporting altogether"⁴³.

[Herefordshire's Domestic Abuse Strategy 2019-2022](#) includes the following information about the prevalence of domestic abuse in Herefordshire:

- It is estimated that 7.6% (3,800) of females aged 16-59 and 4.1% (2,100) of males aged 16-59 were victims of domestic violence and abuse (DVA) in the county during the year ending March 2017.
- It is estimated that 6.5% (2,100) of children aged 0 to 15 lived in a household affected by DVA in Herefordshire during the last year and around a quarter (26%) of children lived in a household where an adult had at some time experienced DVA.
- The cost to public services in tackling violence against women and girls in Herefordshire has been estimated to be £10.8 during the year ending March 2017.
- West Mercia Police recorded 3,071 victims (16.2 per thousand population) of domestic violence and abuse (all ages) in the year ending March 2017 (2,024 females and 1,047 males). *Note that some offences and incidents have more than one victim.*
- Herefordshire's prevalence rate of reported DVA related crimes (13.5 per thousand population), was relatively low compared with England & Wales as a whole (18.3), the West Mercia area (19.2).
- In Herefordshire, over a six-year period (2011/12-2016/17) there were five domestic homicides.

The above estimates are used as the prevalence of domestic abuse is thought to be much higher than the number of incidents reported. Domestic abuse is recognised to be a hidden issue, which is under-reported.

Male survivors of domestic abuse are less likely to seek support and therefore any data captured is unlikely to capture the extent of need. Male survivors are able to access the domestic abuse support service and housing services in Herefordshire, though it is recognised that the number of men making

⁴³ [Herefordshire Council Equalities Policy 2020-2023](#) p 5.

contact is low. Options around how to identify and respond to the needs of male survivors are currently being explored.

Domestic violence is one of the leading causes of homelessness for women⁴⁴ and the government has recognised that housing provision is a key element of supporting victims of domestic abuse.⁴⁵ For those fleeing abuse, safe, secure accommodation, often of necessity at a distance away from the abuser(s), is an urgent priority. Generally, victims have four options available to them: local authority accommodation⁴⁶, refuge accommodation, friends or family and occupation orders.⁴⁷ A 2017 consultation by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government found that most local authority respondents said that they assign a high or top priority to victims of domestic abuse, either specifically because they have suffered domestic abuse, or because they are likely to be assessed as statutorily homeless.⁴⁸

What are we doing to improve this?

Herefordshire Council commissions the services of West Mercia Women's Aid (WMWA) to support survivors of domestic abuse. WMWA offer a range of services including support groups, helpline support and a refuge. Support is tailored to respond to the needs of each service user. The refuge in Herefordshire has nine self-contained units and generally works at full capacity. During 2019/20 WMWA received the following referrals to their services in Herefordshire:

- 27 for one to one support
- 439 for group support

⁴⁴ [Domestic Violence, Housing and Homelessness](#). Rights of Women, July 2012.

⁴⁵ [Improving Access to Social Housing for Victims of Domestic Abuse in Refuges or Other Types of Temporary Accommodation](#). Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, November 2018, p.4.

⁴⁶ NOTE: A person fleeing violence can approach any Council to present as homeless regardless of whether they have a local connection or not. Multiple applications to different Councils are lawful and although normally the first Council approached would take prime responsibility, all others are still obliged to reach a decision. The duty to provide s188 interim (or emergency) accommodation pending enquiries can be triggered if there is reason to believe the applicant is (eligible), homeless and in priority need as a result of their vulnerability to domestic violence.

⁴⁷ An occupation order establishes who has a right to stay in the home. An occupation order can order an abuser to move out of the home or to keep a certain distance from the home. In order to apply for this type of order, the victim will need to know if they or the abuser (or both of them) are legally entitled to occupy the property.

⁴⁸ [Improving Access to Social Housing for Victims of Domestic Abuse in Refuges or Other Types of Temporary Accommodation: Summary of consultation responses](#). Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, November 2018, p.6.

- 42 for EDNA project (support project for mature women)
- 625 for helpline support
- 99 for refuge

In spring 2020, WMWA, Connexus and the Council secured funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government for four units of additional accommodation for survivors and children fleeing domestic abuse. Connexus provided the houses, which are all occupied by families in need. The funding, which runs to March 2021, also covers additional advocacy and housing management support for families in the community houses, as well as wider one to one support for 'complex' cases and children. The council is looking at the options around sustainability for this project beyond April 2021.

The council and partner organisations are pro-active in pursuing funding opportunities for domestic abuse projects as and when they become available. However, many of these opportunities are short term and sustaining the benefits of short-term projects can be challenging.

The Government's new [Domestic Abuse Bill 2020](#) has implications for the way in which councils operate. The Bill will place a duty on councils to:

- Complete a needs assessment and domestic abuse strategy every three years, with an annual refresh.
- Provide adequate safe accommodation for survivors of domestic abuse and their children in accordance with the needs analysis. Safe accommodation may be a refuge but can extend to various other housing options depending on the need.
- Create a Local Partnership Board with the police, health, registered housing providers and other relevant organisations to ensure that responsibilities detailed within the Bill are being met, in line with local need.

Housing Needs of the Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople

According to a [2019 Government report](#), Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people have some of the worst outcomes of any ethnic group across a huge range of areas, including education, health, employment, criminal justice and hate crime⁴⁹. Traveller communities are diverse; many Gypsies and Travellers choose to live within small kin-based groups where they can enjoy the benefits of their extended family support, which is an essential part of their culture.

⁴⁹ [Herefordshire Council Equality Policy](#) p 15

Data analysis for the Herefordshire Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showperson Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) published in July 2017 identified a total of 129 pitches, 119 households (3 of which have 2 pitches each, bringing the total number of occupied pitches to 122) and 7 unoccupied pitches.

The GTAA found evidence of Gypsy and Traveller pitch need over the next five years (2017/18 to 2021/22) equating to 48 pitches under a cultural definition, and as a subset of this number, 17 pitches under the PPTS 2015 definition of Gypsy/Traveller (those who still travel and/or intend to travel). For the remaining local plan period (2017/18 to 2030/31), the GTAA has identified a cultural need for 74 pitches and, as a subset of this number a PPTS need for 27 pitches.

Taking into account an anticipated annual turnover of six pitches on local authority sites during the remainder of the plan period (2017/18 to 2030/31), this equates to eighty-four pitches becoming available. Therefore, both the cultural and PPTS shortfalls are likely to be addressed. Notwithstanding this, it is recommended that the council should continue to consider applications for appropriate small sites to address the needs of local Gypsy and Traveller families should they be forthcoming over the plan period.

What are we doing to improve this?

- The Council is committed to improving both the quantity and quality of the accommodation it offers for rent, and has committed significant amounts of capital expenditure in order to facilitate this. Funds have been agreed to continue this programme of works and is well supported by both officers and Elected Members.⁵⁰
- The six Council-owned sites provide fifty-three pitches and are audited regularly. Stock condition surveys are carried out to help us identify areas for improvement and plan modernisation works.
- New pitches are proposed on some of the council sites and this is detailed in the [Traveller Site Development Plan](#) adopted in October 2019. This plan also identifies a temporary stopping place that will provide an area of hard standing where basic facilities can be brought onto the site.
- The council reviewed and updated its [Gypsy and Traveller Allocation Policy](#) in 2019. This document sets out how the local authority prioritises applicants to ensure that those with a

⁵⁰ [Herefordshire Council Equality Policy](#) p 15

recognised need are given access to register. This Allocation Policy sets out in detail who is, and who is not, eligible to become a member of the site waiting list and how this assessment is carried out.

- The council has commissioned a new GTAA, which will be published in late spring 2021. This will further the council's understanding of the accommodation needs for the Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showperson communities.

Housing Need of Armed Forces Personnel and Veterans

During 2020, Herefordshire's Armed Forces Covenant Partnership carried out research to gain a deeper understanding of the Armed Forces community in Herefordshire. The resulting report, *The Armed Forces Community in Herefordshire*, includes the following information:

- As at April 2019, 1,670 members of the Regular Armed Forces were stationed in (not resident in) Herefordshire; a 15% increase since 2012 (1450).
- According to the 2011 Census, there were 1,200 people employed by the Armed Forces living in Herefordshire with an associated 1,450 family members (spouse, partner, child or step-child) living with them: a total of at least 2,650 members of the currently serving Armed Forces community.
- As of July 2019, there were 309 properties in Herefordshire owned by the MoD for service personnel use.
- It is not known how many Armed Forces personnel own homes in Herefordshire. However, given the number of Armed Forces stationed in Herefordshire there may be a large percentage that are homeowners or renting privately. It is worth noting that a relatively high number of the serving population may be stationed in Herefordshire, but do not necessarily live in the county.
- The Annual Population Survey 2017 estimated that there were around 14,000 Veterans resident in Herefordshire; 1% of the United Kingdom's Veteran population.⁵¹
- Nationally, around 76% of veterans are homeowners, similar to 78% of the non-veteran population. In the local veteran survey, 82% of respondents live in owner occupied housing. However, it is well documented that the younger the veteran is the least likely they are to be a homeowner, particularly early service leavers and single veterans.
- Veterans and service leavers' access to social housing has improved significantly in recent years due to changes in the 2012 Housing Regulations. These changes have been fully adopted by Herefordshire Council in their social housing allocation policy.

⁵¹ [Annual population survey: UK Armed Forces Veterans residing in Great Britain 2017, op cit.](#)

- According to Herefordshire's social housing register, over the past five years there have been twenty-five registered and either housed, removed or currently trying to still register. Of those, eight veterans have been housed in the past 12 months (2019/20).

What are we doing to improve this?

- A great deal of work has been done by the Armed Forces Covenant and local authorities to ensure those who serve or who have served in the Armed Forces, and their families, are treated fairly. This commitment has been integrated into the Councils Equality Policy 2020-2023.
- Regular Armed Forces personnel are eligible for the Forces Help to Buy scheme. Service men and women are able to borrow up to 50% of their salary to a maximum of £25,000, interest free to buy their first home or move home. The scheme was launched in April 2014 and has been extended to 2022 to address low rates of home ownership in the Armed Forces. As of 31st March 2018 around 37,600 applications had been received and payments had been made to around 17,800 applicants totalling around £267 million and averaging £15,000 per claim.⁵²
- In line with legislation, Herefordshire Council has adopted the qualification criteria for the Armed Forces and the revised housing regulations into its housing allocations policy. This means that while applicants normally must have lived in Herefordshire for the past five years, this does not apply to veterans in the first five years after they have left the Armed Forces.
- Work is underway to better understand the housing landscape through more robust and regular data from Home Point and also to provide more transparent information on accessing social housing for the Armed Forces.

Examples of housing projects for Veterans in Herefordshire

Herefordshire has two initiatives that not only provide housing for homeless veterans but also the opportunity to gain new sustainable skills and qualifications:

⁵² [Forces Help to Buy Quarterly Statistics Q4 2018-19, Ministry of Defence, 2018.](#)

- The [veteran self-build](#) project based in Leominster was completed at the end of 2020, and has enabled nine veterans obtain construction qualifications whilst building their own home.
- The [Buchanan Trust](#) offer a range of short-term accommodation alongside land-based skills training and work experience.

Both of these projects have had direct support from Herefordshire Council.

Housing Need for Prison Leavers and Ex-Offenders:

Repeated studies have established that securing adequate housing for ex-offenders reduces rates of recidivism. Getting prisoners into settled housing can act as a gateway to effective resettlement and prisoners who have housing arranged on release are four times more likely to have employment, education or training than those who do not have housing in place.^[1] Because housing problems are often a key underlying factor for people's involvement with the criminal justice system, housing interventions can help lessen criminal justice involvement in the first place.^[2]

In the case of individuals who have served a custodial sentence, the support a prisoner can expect will depend on the sentence they received: prisoners with shorter sentences are supported by the relevant Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC) within the prison, although some may be supervised by The National Probation Service. In either case, the CRC or probation representative can offer help with the prisoner's housing situation, for example by contacting the relevant local council on the prisoner's behalf. However, those with very short sentences may not have time to get an appointment with a CRC or probation worker before release. Prisoners with a sentence of 12 months or more will be allocated an offender manager, who is appointed by the Prisons and Probation Service. The offender manager has a broad role in integrating the offender back into a settled way of life in the community, which may include help in finding suitable housing in order to reduce the risk of reoffending.^[3]

Despite this, ex-offenders continue to be at a disproportionately high risk of homelessness: people who have been to prison just once experience homelessness at a rate nearly 7 times higher than the public and those who have been incarcerated more than once have rates 13 times higher than the

^[1] Shelter, (August 2010). [Housing and reoffending](#).

^[2] Kimberly Burrowes, *Housing Matters*, (27 February 2019). ['Can Housing Interventions Reduce Incarceration and Recidivism?'](#)

^[3] National Homelessness Advice Service (NHAS), (October 2017). [A guide to housing options for offenders \(England\): Positive steps and good practice in preventing homelessness and improving access to housing amongst offenders and their families](#). p.6.

public.^[4] This “revolving door of incarceration” is perpetuated when people are not connected to the housing services they need after release.^[5]

If an individual held a tenancy at the time of their incarceration, the tenancy will continue provided that the prisoner intends to return to their home in the future. Case law has confirmed that even where a prisoner is given a long sentence, provided their rent is maintained, the property is looked after and there is an intention to return, then the tenancy will continue.^[6] If the prisoner held a mortgaged property, contractual mortgage payments must be maintained during the period of the prison sentence in order to reduce the risk of possession action by the lender. If there is another person left in the property, such as the prisoner’s spouse, they can continue to make payments even where they are not named on the mortgage.^[7] Inevitably, maintaining a tenancy or mortgage while in custody is, for many, unsustainable and they will need to find new accommodation upon their release. It is suggested that around two-thirds of prisoners need help to find accommodation when approaching a release date, or probation. Gaps in the system mean that a proportion of them find themselves homeless, or in temporary and unstable homes.^[8] Barriers to securing suitable accommodation can include:

- A shortage of affordable housing for offenders and other low income groups nationally.
- A scarcity of supported and temporary housing for people with lower end needs.
- Many offenders have a poor tenancy history and appear to be treated less favourably as a group by many housing providers.^[9]

The prevalence of housing need amongst ex-offenders in Herefordshire is a gap in our current understanding and one that we will seek to address over the term of this strategy. Statistics indicate that 10 people approached the Housing Solutions Team during 2019/20 having left institutions without accommodation. This is in addition to those being released from prison who had pre-planned accommodation in place.

Herefordshire does not have any hostel accommodation (also known as approved premises), so the only route available for those leaving prison is through the Housing Solutions Team. There are a thirty

^[4] [Nowhere to Go: Homelessness among formerly incarcerated people](#). Lucius Couloute, Prison Policy Initiative, August 2018.

^[5] [Return to Nowhere: The Revolving Door Between Incarceration and Homelessness](#). Texas Criminal Justice Coalition, February 2019.

^[6] [A guide to housing options for offenders \(England\): Positive steps and good practice in preventing homelessness and improving access to housing amongst offenders and their families](#). National Homelessness Advice Service (NHAS), October 2017, p.7.

^[7] [A guide to housing options for offenders \(England\): Positive steps and good practice in preventing homelessness and improving access to housing amongst offenders and their families](#). National Homelessness Advice Service (NHAS), October 2017, p.8.

^[8] Housing support for ex-offenders (England and Wales). Wendy Wilson, House of Commons Briefing Paper, No.2989, 17 October 2017, p.4.

^[9] [Impact Pathways](#).

supported housing units for single adults that include ex-offenders, mental health and or substance misuse spread over two locations in Hereford city. These units are designated to those in housing crisis, not solely ex-offenders.

What are we doing to improve?

- Herefordshire Council commissioned Caring for Communities and People (CCP) to deliver a Housing-related Support Service for vulnerable adults aged 18+ who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in 2019. In addition to supported accommodation, the service can provide advice and support for tenancy issues, housing rights & homelessness, budgeting & benefit take-up, housing-related debt, training & employment and social & community inclusion. Customers may or may not have complex needs, including ex-offenders and people with substance misuse or mental health needs. The service helps turn customer's lives around by offering an alternative to homelessness services and supports the development of life skills. Tailored support packages, developed and delivered in conjunction with a range of key partners, will support a move back to independent living and integration within the community.
 - Ex-offenders who are homeless will also be linked into the Project Brave work outlined above.
 - During 2020, the council have supported the development of 6 units of en-suite accommodation and 2 units of move on accommodation at the local charity based in Hereford City, who provide accommodation and support to homeless people, including ex-offenders.
 - Further research is needed into the barriers that prison leavers and ex-offenders face when accessing services, including housing, in Herefordshire, so that they can be overcome.
 - Explore funding opportunities that aims to improve the outcomes of people leaving prison. We know that when people leave prison they face a wide range of challenges, such as securing employment and financial security, obtaining safe and stable accommodation, and building positive relationships with family, friends and the wider community.
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Appendix 1 – DRAFT Performance Indicators to measure progress against this strategy

Environmental Health Department	Baseline 2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Number of HMO inspections	100	5 to Sept 20				
Number of single family dwelling inspections	46	1 to Sept 20				
Number of HMOs registered	18	14 to Sept 20				
Housing enforcement notices served per year	39	10 to Sept 20				
Successful housing prosecutions / fixed penalty notices / formal cautions per year	2	0 to Sept 20				
Housing Solutions	Baseline 2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Number of households assisted that were experiencing housing difficulties	1121	1171 YTD				
Top 3 Causes of homelessness	S21 Notice to Quits, Domestic Abuse and parental / other evictions	S21 Notice to Quits, Domestic Abuse and parental / other evictions				
Number of household provided a Prevention or Relief duty who would otherwise have become homeless.	348	371 YTD				
Number of households provided with temporary accommodation, pending rehousing, were needed.	48					
Number of people provided with proactive outreach support - rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping.	92					
Number of people rough sleeping in Herefordshire - annual rough sleeping count.						
Number of ex-offenders / prison leavers supported by the Housing Solutions Team						

Number of veterans supported by the Housing Solutions Team						
Number of Domestic Abuse cases supported by the Housing Solutions Team						
Sustainability Team	Baseline 2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Number of households living in Fuel poverty (government data)	10000					
Co2 Data for Herefordshire*						
Domestic Carbon Sum*						
Number of households assisted by Keep Herefordshire Warm	390					
Cumulative savings for those assisted by Keep Herefordshire Warm	5843.21					
Number of Green Homes Grants awarded in Herefordshire (government data)	Grant not available					
Number of Local Authority Delivery Green Homes Grants	Grant not available					
Residual household waste per household (kg/household)(Ex NI191)	525.2					
Percentage of total waste we collect from households that is recycled, composted or reused	41.3					
Percentage of municipal waste sent to landfill (Ex NI193)	19.8					
Strategic Housing and planning	Baseline 2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Total number of affordable units developed		110 YTD				
Number of affordable units developed for sale (low cost market / shared ownership / shared equity)						
Number of affordable units developed for rent						
Number of supported housing units developed						

Number of long term empty properties in Herefordshire (Council tax data)						
Number of empty properties brought back into use	N/A – no officer in post	6				
Number of new homes built by Herefordshire Council	N/A – new project	N/A – new project				
The number of new traveller pitch commitments and completions.	5 commitments 5 completions					
Accessible Homes and Adaptations	Baseline 2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Number of formal applications received for home adaptations	257					
Number of formal applications approved for home adaptations	178					
Number of disabled facilities grants completed	163					
Number of grants completed for owner-occupiers?	56					
Number of grants completed for Registered Providers/Housing Association tenants?	95					
Number of grants completed for occupants living in privately rented accommodation?	11					
For all grants approved, what was the average number of working days between the date of receipt of the formal application and the date of approval?	116					
For all grants completed, what was the average number of working days between the date of approval and the certified date of installing the adaptations?	79					
Number of people that have moved into adapted property via accessible homes register						
Adults	Baseline 2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25

Permanent and short term placements into care homes						
Number of people in supported living						
Number of capacity/voids in supported living						
Number of women and children in refuge accommodation	42					
Number and accommodation breakdown of refugees resettled in Herefordshire as part of the Govnts resettlement scheme						
Children and Young People	Baseline 2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Percentage of care leavers in suitable accommodation						

* This information is only available on an annual basis 2 years in arrears.