

Community Wellbeing Directorate

Project Brave Strategic Approach

DRAFT 2

1. Overview

Project Brave is a multi-agency partnership initiative enabling and finding solutions for very vulnerable people, at risk from;

Homelessness Substance use Mental Health Criminal experience Exploitation

It is about new homes and changing lives for vulnerable people in communities. It is a creative and joined up approach by the council and its partners to fulfilling their public duties to those who are most vulnerable.

Project Brave was instigated as an early response to the Covid19 pandemic, focusing on people who were very vulnerable but are not eligible for or fall between various statutory services. Initially, the Project delivered rapid and very effective response to the Government's "Everyone In" initiative. It then evolved into an ambitious but earnest intent to eradicate high risk homelessness in Herefordshire. It recognises that homeless people need homes and sets out to find those homes and support people to live in them.

Project Brave is also about multiple complex vulnerability, connecting with and embracing the lived experience of people for whom services and systems have persistently failed. Agencies challenge themselves and each other to work in a joined up and personalised way to enable people to be safer and achieve better outcomes.

The project began rapidly and naturally during a national emergency and has evolved pragmatically and within available resources. Following award of MEAM network membership, progress review and stakeholder engagement in late 2022, approval is now sought for this strategic approach, guiding the onward development of Project Brave.

2. Overall Aims

- Greatly improving outcomes for vulnerable individuals
- New homes and sustainable support models for homeless people
- Empowering people with multiple complex vulnerability to direct their own lives
- Reducing avoidable demands on health, housing, social care and police systems
- Making high risk homelessness largely a thing of the past
- Promoting safe, healthy, independent living and community participation and preventing the next generation of people with multiple complex disadvantages
- Developing and galvanising accommodation assets

3. Building Blocks of Project Brave and Specific Objectives

3.1 Homes for Homeless People Objectives;

- Ensuring sustained provision of emergency and transitional accommodation, in Hereford City and other locations.
- Ensuring appropriate accommodation and support during extreme weather and winter
- Delivering a continuing pipeline of long term homes for homeless people, utilising capital grants and linked to appropriate support
- Enabling homeless people to move into social housing tenancies through a continuing partnership with registered housing providers.

3.2 Support which is joined up and personalised Specific Objectives;

- Ensuring all people rough sleeping and in emergency and transitional accommodation have a named link worker through outreach or homelessness hub teams.
- Ensuring an effective, reliable and well promoted out of hours emergency response to homeless people in crisis, with access to temporary or emergency accommodation.
- Ensuring that everyone who needs it has a personal housing plan.
- Ensuring that all new housing schemes for homeless people have dedicated link workers or support teams, including transitional accommodation.
- Enabling a “team around the person” approach via link workers, giving access to professionals in health, housing, social care, communities and criminal justice.
- Sustaining a “deal” with registered housing providers which ensures support for homeless people given tenancies, linked to a homelessness/eviction prevention protocol.
- Ensure trauma informed training for all staff working with homeless people and more widely.

3.3 Multiple Complex Vulnerability Specific Objectives;

- Multi disciplinary working adopted routinely for all with multiple complex vulnerability and risk of serious harm or death.
- Sustain and review the “breaking the cycle” approach to case review and problem solving.
- Maximise appropriate referrals for assessment and intervention under a Care Adult Risk Management (CARM) processes where adults are vulnerable, linked to multi agency interventions as appropriate.
- Sustain and expand existing Multi-disciplinary Team (MDT) approach in Accident & Emergency A&E attendances amongst people with multiple complex needs, where mental health is the main presenting need.
- Develop and action plan for identifying and managing risks of drug and alcohol deaths in the community, linked to wider strategic and partnership work and MDT approaches.
- Establish a new, workable protocol for supporting and risk assessment for vulnerable people not engaging with services.
- Establish an action plan for optimising access to primary care for people with multiple complex vulnerability, including take up of immunisation and health checks programmes.

3.4 Homelessness Prevention Specific Objectives;

- Sustaining and promoting use of the Client debt alleviation fund, relieving barriers to tenancies and accommodation
- Ensuring homelessness outreach and duty teams provide holistic support and advice to people homeless or at risk, including home-finding, arrears and financial issues and support planning.
- Optimising take up of specialist mediation services, including for 16-25 year olds, enabling people to maintain their existing housing and support networks.
- Consolidating and maintaining a homelessness and eviction prevention protocol with registered housing providers.

3.5 Talk Community Prevention Specific Objectives;

- Identify research and models of practice around incidence of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) in communities and early intervention related to risk of complex vulnerability.
- Development of trauma informed engagement approaches through commissioned community services and training for volunteers and Talk Community Hubs.
- Sustain and promote the network of trained volunteer mental health first aiders as part of Talk Community Hubs.
- Develop and pilot “active community plans” for vulnerable people, promoting participation in communities, including online and other communities of identity/interest.
- Ensure access for vulnerable people to financial and debt advice and healthy lifestyle support through Talk Community Hubs and commissioned services.
- Deliver Training in identifying and engaging with people with multiple vulnerability for volunteers and staff working in signposting roles.
- Ensure community hubs and services promote access to primary care for vulnerable people

3.6 System Working Specific Objectives

- Commitment from all agencies to multi-disciplinary practice and joint risk management.
- Establishing simple data sharing arrangements between key agencies to support identification of and joined up working with people with multiple complex needs.
- Agreement to joined up approaches to maximising external grant funding for Project Brave, utilising the eligibility, networks and expertise of all partner agencies.
- Agreed, documented and shared protocol/process for use of CARM approach with people with multiple complex vulnerability

4. Selected Outcome Measures

- A. To make rough sleeping rare, infrequent and non recurring in Herefordshire.
- B. Optimum take up of transitional accommodation, with appropriate lengths of stay and access to support.

- C. Significantly more formerly homeless people sustaining long term tenancies, with support where required.
- D. Everyone identified within Project Brave has a named link worker
- E. Every person identified with multiple complex vulnerability including a mental health or substance use diagnosis has a treatment plan or pathway plan.
- F. New long term housing for homeless people is of high quality and well maintained.
- G. A reduced rate of deaths among people with multiple complex vulnerability or as part of Project Brave.
- H. All people identified as at risk from serious harm or death subject to proactive engagement, MDT working and risk assessment/monitoring.
- I. Every homeless person known to Project Brave has a personal housing plan
- J. Total provision of newly available transitional and long term housing for homeless people reaches 120 units
- K. Fewer blue light emergencies and A&E attendances by people with multiple complex vulnerability.
- L. Increased use of CARM processes to identify vulnerability and multi agency responses
- M. Continued take up of new tenancies with registered housing providers by Project Brave cohort, with support where required.
- N. Increased take up of community services and engagement in volunteering and community activities by people identifying as having mental health needs, substance use needs or experience of exploitation.
- O. Growing numbers of volunteers trained in mental health first aid, trauma informed practice and identifying complex vulnerability.

5. Principles of Project Brave

- A whole system collaboration, with multi-disciplinary practice embedded
- Knowing who everyone is, not relying on referrals
- The team around the Person
- Listening to and led by lived experience
- Strengths based and promoting independence
- Real Homes for Homeless People
- Participation in communities aids prevention
- Joint approaches to training and information sharing
- Robust project and performance management

6. Impact of Project Brave

Project Brave has had a significant impact so far on the lives of individuals and on the scale and incidence of high risk homelessness in particular. Since March 2020,

- 252 households have been accommodated in total
- 157 households moved into transitional or long term housing
- More than 70 people helped initially by Project Brave have found their own solutions, by finding accommodation or relocating outside Herefordshire.
- 62 units of new housing have been created for homeless people so far through Project Brave, including long term homes and transitional housing, with support.
- Approximately 20 homeless people have been supported into tenancies with registered housing providers in existing social housing stock
- In January 2023, the Rough Sleeper Outreach Team continued to work with 98 people at risk of rough sleeping, including 16 current rough sleepers.

The pattern of outcomes being achieved for individuals is complex and not regular, with people's journeys progressing and then reversing or stalling. Some people can find resolutions very quickly and for others it takes a long time. It may be that 10 people move into settled housing in one week, but this could be the culmination of many months of work and different steps.

The following case examples illustrated a typical range of experiences and how Project Brave has had real impact on people's lives;

A 54 year old man rough sleeping, with a history of evictions, rent arrears and substance use, had faced various barriers to finding housing. He was moved quickly into temporary accommodation and with the building of trust was supported around his debts and to apply on Home Point. He was successfully matched to a social rented home and has remained there for 18 months, with support from the outreach service.

A 34 year old man has a complex range of needs as an ex-offender, including substance use, domestic abuse and a diagnosed serious mental health need. He had been rough sleeping intermittently for years, punctuated by periods of family life, hospital admissions and relationship breakdown. These patterns led to significant risk of serious harm or death. He was encouraged to move into the Whitecross Homelessness Hub in 2022 and engaged with professional intervention for his mental health and substance use. Having made significant progress, he has now taken a social housing tenancy, with continuing light touch support from council teams.

A 34 year old man has a history of offending and substance use. He was accommodated under the Everyone In scheme at Hedley Lodge. Following a period of support from Vennture and the Outreach Team, he secured a home via Home Point in March 2021, where he continues to live.

A 26 year old man was sofa-surfing, with a recent history of offending, relationship breakdown and anger management issues. Previous accommodation in supported housing had broken down. Early in the Covid pandemic he was accommodated under Everyone-In and engaged with support through Project Brave. He began bidding on Home Point and gained a social housing tenancy in March 2021. He continues to live there successfully, with light touch outreach support.

A young couple returning to Herefordshire after living elsewhere, experienced a series of problems in maintaining housing, despite managing to find jobs, first in Hereford and then in Leominster. They were supported in temporary accommodation through mental ill health, and relationship breakdown and eventually in November 2020, moved into private rented housing secured by the outreach team. They remain there, living successfully together.

A 31 year old man who had been trying to manage his own mental health and alcohol use, was evicted in January 2021 for economic reasons. This led to an escalation of his health needs, against a backdrop of past domestic abuse and relationship breakdown. He was supported into temporary accommodation and continued to try to manage his own needs. In view of these needs, he moved into supported housing at the Whitecross Hub and was enabled to make progress in various aspects of his life, including having an autism diagnosis. Council teams have continued to support him as he has made two further moves and now has a social housing tenancy. He is volunteering with a local health provider and receiving training, building upon his lived experience.

7. Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM)

MEAM – Making Every Adult Matter – working for people affected by multiple disadvantage. MEAM have a network of 42 local authorities across England who subscribe to the seven key principles of the MEAM approach. (see below)

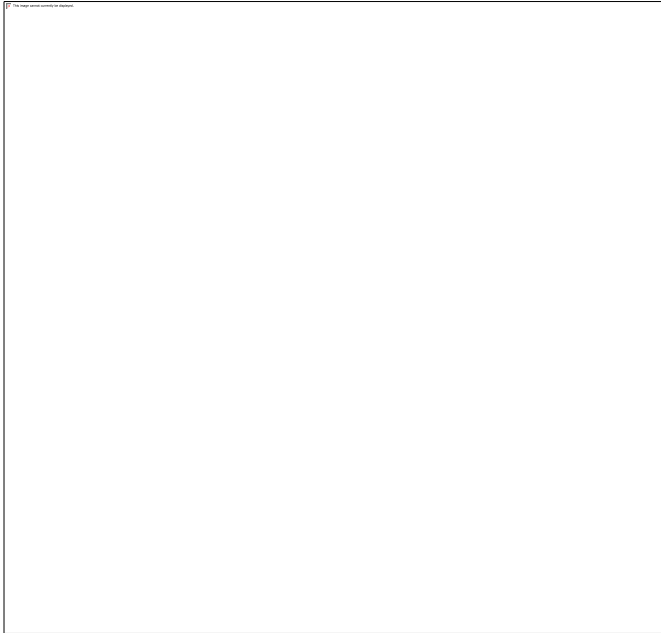
In June 2022, MEAM opened up the network in order to recruit 10 new local authority areas to it. Herefordshire's multi agency / cross sector partnership, Project BRAVE, who work collaboratively as part of our response to Homelessness and rough sleeping, submitted an application and secured an interview to become one of these new Local Authority areas. In August the multi-agency / sector partnership, were successful at interview and became one of the 42 Local Authorities that now make up the MEAM Network.

MEAM defines multiple disadvantage as including, homelessness, substance misuse, mental ill health and contact with the criminal justice system. Where services in a local area do not work in partnership with each other, the combination of these multiple disadvantages can lead to people not being able to engage with local services. This in turn can lead to additional disadvantages such as poverty, ill-health, homelessness, relationship breakdown, loss of employment, amongst others.

Herefordshire's Project BRAVE approach to homelessness and rough sleeping has helped a range of statutory agencies and Community, Faith and Voluntary groups to work more collaboratively, to reduce the risks of becoming homeless in Herefordshire and is working towards the goal of making homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring.

Herefordshire is now working with a dedicated MEAM project delivery officer, in order to focus our work to ensure that our collective efforts reduce the opportunities for multiple disadvantages to occur in Herefordshire and when they do people and communities are supported to overcome them.

The MEAM Approach



8. Policy and Legislative Context

Project Brave starts from a recognition that people can be very vulnerable despite not being eligible for certain statutory services or not being able to engage with those services. Nonetheless, the initiative takes place in the context of a wide range of legislation and national policy. This includes;

Housing Act 1996 Part VII 1

Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (now part of the Housing Act 1996, as amended

Care Act 2014, including s42

Mental Health Act 1983, as amended

Mental Capacity Act 2005, as amended

Equality Act 2010

Human Rights Act 1998 and European Convention on Human Rights

From Harm to Hope; a Ten Year Drugs Plan to cut crime and save lives

The Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI)

9. Stakeholder Engagement

There are many local stakeholders in Project Brave and its various streams of work. The most important stakeholders are people with lived experience of homelessness and /or

multiple complex vulnerability .The council is seeking to maintain direct, credible and sustainable ways of engaging with and learning from that experience.

Key public sector and voluntary or community stakeholders in Project Brave include;

Herefordshire Primary Care Networks and Taurus GP Federation
Wye Valley Trust
Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care Trust
Herefordshire and Worcestershire ICB
West Mercia Police
West Midlands Probation Service
Herefordshire Homelessness Forum
Herefordshire Community Safety Partnership
The Diocese of Hereford
Vennture,
Ethos
Connecting Communities and People
Turning Point
Connexus Housing
Stonewater Housing Group
Citizen Housing
Platform Housing
Herefordshire Community Partnership
Talk Community Hubs
Hereford BID
Herefordshire MIND

In Autumn 2022, Herefordshire Council embarked upon stakeholder engagement for the purpose of consolidating review of Project Brave, preparatory to its relaunch. Three workshops were held in November and December with agencies and professionals and a fourth with experts by experience. In the workshops for professionals, which were well attended, there was considerable interest and positive engagement in the ideas and practice involved with Project Brave. This was accompanied by a clear commitment from multiple agencies to continue working together in advancing this initiative.

The themes emerging from the professionals workshops included;

- The need for wider and more consistent joint working between agencies
- The necessity of effective multi-disciplinary practice in assessment and intervention to support people to achieve the best outcomes.
- Support for more strategic focus and direct work on longer range prevention
- The importance of recognising and taking proper account of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).
- A commitment to appropriate yet pragmatic sharing of information in order to ensure joined up working and risk management.
- Tapping into the networks within Talk Community and opportunities they present for vulnerable people and prevention.

The experts by experience who participated in engagement in December, drew mainly on their experience of homelessness. Some themes from their input include;

- The need for help earlier in people's lives.

- Recognising and tackling the different causes of homelessness and the different routes people take.
- Recognising that some homeless people move between areas and in and out of Herefordshire.
- Need to accept that people may only be able to seek help and move towards improved outcomes when they are ready and services need to be agile enough to respond when that happens.
- Some frustration around council decisions relating to homelessness duty to individuals and how that is communicated.

Continuing engagement

The project management and internal governance arrangements for Project Brave will provide an opportunity for continuing engagement, particularly amongst professionals. These arrangements include the two operational groups and the regular liaison with the Homelessness Forum

It is proposed to establish a standing/continuing expert experience forum comprising experts by experience to support and advise the onward development of Brave. This will follow good practice identified elsewhere or through research. The group will be developed through the cohorts of people identified and support through Brave. Once this is established, the most effective means by which it and its membership can be heard within the wider management and development of Brave.

10. Resources

9.1 Staffing

The implementation of Project Brave so far has called very substantially on the staff time and resources of the council's Housing Solutions service, including the rapid development and expansion of the Rough Sleeping Homelessness Outreach function. This now includes a team of workers based at the Homelessness Hub and supporting vulnerable homeless people in a variety of locations. New staff and services have also been developed at times by Vennture in particular and the initiative has placed broader demands on teams and services in other agencies.

This Project Brave staffing has been largely dependent on funding from the Department of Levelling up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). Continued staffing of this kind will remain essential to sustaining and building upon Project Brave. Therefore continued external funding is essential to the continuation of Brave.

Grant Funding to date

The new services and activity involved has been largely funded by very significant revenue grant aid, attracted from DLUHC. These have been under a number of grant schemes, including RSI programmes 2 to 5 and RSAP. The Total grant awarded to the council so far for Project Brave for the period 2020 to 2025 is as follows;

£4,183,912 in revenue funding
 £ 824,000 in capital funding

This level of grant aid reflects both the scale of the work within Brave and DLUHC's recognition of and confidence in what Herefordshire is delivering and achieving. There is close working relationship between the council and DLUHC's homelessness and regional teams, who have made a number of visits to the county to view Project Brave in practice. The capital grant funding is overseen and assured by Homes England, with whom Herefordshire Council is now an Investment Partner.

The capital grant has supported acquisitions and conversions or improvement of properties to bring them into use as transitional accommodation or long term homes. The council has also deployed capital spending of around £1.05m to Brave properties over the period.

In total, £1.824M in capital has been spent on delivering 44 units of housing under Project Brave.

Further Funding Opportunities

Current RSI5 revenue funding already allocated to Herefordshire will continue until 2025. DLUHC has now announced a further funding scheme, Supported Housing Accommodation Programme (SHAP), which is available over the next three years, incorporating both revenue and capital grants. This is incremental and complementary to the existing RSI regime and provide opportunities for councils to develop more specialist, targeted provision for certain groups. For Herefordshire, DLUHC will consider funding accommodation and support for 16 to 25 year olds at risk of homelessness.

There are also external funding opportunities available to voluntary and community organisations for which the council is not eligible. These can potentially complement the resources available to the public sector and Vennture in particular has successful attracted funding, notably around Winter homelessness services.

11. Risks and Challenges

The following risks and challenges have been identified in the sustaining and onward development of Project Brave;

- Insufficient engagement or commitment from partner agencies to sustain the joined up and multidisciplinary approaches essential to Project Brave.

Many organisations have maintained their commitment to the Brave partnership over time. The recent engagement has underlined that commitment at various levels in a number of key partners. There is a continuing challenge around consistent engagement from primary Care Networks and GPs given, the many demand on their resources, but there has been valuable contributions to some issues.

- Dwindling resources with which to fund the sustained outreach and support staffing required.

Government has recognised the importance of sustained staffing to deliver this work and so has made an extended funding commitment to Herefordshire to 2025 and is now introducing further funding programmes as well.

- Lack of engagement or offers of accommodation from registered housing providers.

All major stockholding providers in the county have committed to working with project Brave to provide housing with tenancies for previously homeless people. This is based on the council's commitment to providing support for all Brave tenants for as long as needed.

- Barriers to a funding continuing pipeline of accommodation through properties acquired or converted by the council.

There appear to be continuing sources of capital grant funding to support the pipeline. The council's own commitment of capital, including when matching government grant will be kept under review, with significant spending so far delivering housing at a good return on investment. There are robust assurances and processes involved in the council's capital programme to manage any risks.

- Rising prices in the local housing market restricting acquisition and wider options.

Whilst prices have risen significantly since 2020, they are thought now to be stabilising somewhat in Herefordshire. Pricing is not for the time being rising so far ahead of grant and other resources to present a major barrier.

- Services and agencies practice retreating to non collaborative working or narrow statutory approaches to eligibility.

This would be a significant risk to the Brave approach but is not being seen generally or currently. The partnership working through Operational Groups and multi disciplinary practice substantially mitigates this risk, given the commitment made at senior level by most agencies.

- Challenges to effective progress in prevention of homelessness and complex vulnerability.

The council has dedicated resources for homelessness prevention and reduction, in the context of clear statutory obligations. A variety of schemes and offers and expert knowledge mean the council is well placed to achieve progress over time.

Prevention of complex vulnerability is itself a complicated proposition and one which in most cases can be achieved only on a generational basis. Behaviours and patterns of substance use are established for many reasons and over a long time and often with very significant impact on people's physical and mental health. There is a commitment within Project Brave to planning for this long range prevention approach, working through Talk Community, health partners and others.

- Risks from non engagement with essential support services.

This is a common factor in multiple complex vulnerability and homelessness and can be associated with high risk of harm for individuals. The Brave model of named link workers and teams around the individual are design in part to address this. Existing training including around trauma can help tackle the issues and more focused training is being considered.

- The potential for poor outcomes for people, despite interventions and support.

The journey to safe, independent health living for many people in the Brave cohort is a complex one, with frequent reverses and detours. This is inherent in complexity of people's needs, lifestyles and personal histories. The Brave approach is designed as far as possible to embrace and tackle that complexity and risk, but positive or linear outcomes cannot be guaranteed in every case.

12. Partnerships and Governance

Formal Governance

- Cabinet is asked to approve the strategic approach to Project Brave in February 2023. Subsequently, other partner agencies are invited to formalise their commitment to the project through their various governance arrangements.
- An annual report on Project Brave to Health and Wellbeing Board is proposed, along with periodical reporting to and review by cabinet members for housing and Health and wellbeing.
- Periodical updates on Project Brave developments will also be provided to the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) Board.
- The work and resources supporting Project Brave will also be reviewed as appropriate by various internal governance boards within Herefordshire council.

Project Governance

- The partnership approach to Project Brave has emerged naturally and rapidly during Covid19 and has persisted to the present day. Somewhat revised internal governance is proposed for the initiative going forward, as follows.
- A strategic project board, chaired by the council and with senior manager representation from Police, NHS agencies and representatives from housing and voluntary and community sectors, complemented by experts by experience, where available. It will oversee the development and delivery for the project overall, its performance and delivery of the action plan.
- An operational Board focused on homelessness, featuring operational managers and other key professionals and experts by experience. To include the council, police, major stockholding housing providers, Herefordshire Homelessness Forum, commissioned accommodation providers and other voluntary organisations.
- An operational Board focusing on multiple complex vulnerability and prevention, featuring operational managers and key professionals, along with experts by experience. Organisations involved will include the council, health agencies, specialist voluntary organisations, adult social care and others.

- Attendance at these boards by experts by experience is expected to be achieved over time and supported through the development of the proposed expert's focus group.

13. Action Plan and Timelines

In order to implement this strategic approach to Project Brave, an action plan will be prepared with clear achievable actions and accountability, based upon the building block areas, objectives and outcomes set out in the document. The action plan will be in place from April 2023, will be monitored by the Strategic Project Board and progress will be reported using Verto and to Health and Wellbeing Board and Cabinet Members.

Clear Timelines will be set out for each action in the plan and monitored through the project governance.