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Herefordshire Homeless Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026 – 2031

Our Strategic Vision –

Work in partnership to reduce the risk of all forms of Homelessness occurring in Herefordshire and where it occurs, to make homelessness and rough sleeping rare, brief and non-recurring.

Welcome

This 2026-2031 strategy sets out what the priorities are to achieve the strategic vision set out above. The Delivery Plan that sits alongside this strategy, sets out five themes with forty-two key delivery targets to achieve these themes with the sole intention of reducing the risk of Homelessness in Herefordshire. We recognise that the best way to end homelessness and rough sleeping is to prevent it before it happens. That is why we are focusing on developing more social and affordable homes, building more efficient multi-agency services that put prevention at their heart and when needed supporting individuals through homelessness.

Homelessness is not just about people rough sleeping, it includes people who are at risk of losing their home, are in unsuitable accommodation and those who cannot afford to remain in their current home. It also includes people being discharged from hospital, leaving the military or released from prison with no home to go to, and people that are in temporary accommodation provided by the council.

People become homeless due to a wide range of underlying factors. Many of these factors are beyond the control of the people affected by them. Factors include, relationship breakdown, domestic abuse, a decline in mental or physical health, unemployment, adverse childhood experiences, the escalating cost of living, poverty and eviction. Research tells us that some of these factors have a lifelong impact, especially upon children and young people.

These factors make tackling rough sleeping and preventing homelessness a huge challenge. One that can only be met by statutory agencies and voluntary, charitable and faith sector organisations all working together to achieve more than the sum of their individual agency roles.

Many people that experience rough sleeping or homelessness are already vulnerable, with mental health support needs, physical illnesses, injuries and problematic substance use. These complex needs should be considered when planning to address the wider issues surrounding their accommodation needs. This, already complex picture is exacerbated by the increasing cost of living, escalating rents in the private rented sector and a national shortage of social and affordable accommodation.

During the global COVID-19 pandemic, Herefordshire shifted its approach to addressing homelessness so that the emphasis was on multi-agency working and creating new pathways into accommodation and support. At the time we called this approach Project BRAVE. Over the five years of the previous strategy, we have worked collaboratively to develop the BRAVE pathway to accommodation and support. This has led to huge improvements to homelessness services and the development and delivery of many initiatives that have resulted in:

- The development of a homeless early intervention service which focus on early prevention of homelessness.
- A significant increase in number of homelessness preventions through our housing solutions service.
- The joint development of a commissioned service to deliver a winter night shelter.
- Securing access to increased capital and revenue grant funding, funding opportunities.
- Increased support to help people sustain their tenancies across the county.
- The development of an accommodation pathway and more specialist accommodation with support for those sleeping rough or at risk of becoming homeless.

In the new national strategy, 'A National Plan to End Homelessness'¹, the Government has focused upon five key themes or pillars:

- universal prevention.
- targeted prevention.

- preventing crisis.
- improving emergency responses; and
- recovery and preventing repeated homelessness.

Government funding to tackle homelessness, has enabled Herefordshire to develop services that are more proactive at the point of homeless crisis. It has also enabled our early intervention service to flourish and means that we are able to offer ongoing support to our most vulnerable homeless people. As a result, we have seen numbers of people rough sleeping reduce in Herefordshire.

The positive outcomes for people experiencing homelessness evidence the need for continued multi-agency and cross sector collaboration to maximise the impact of our limited resources. This strategy aims to tackle these issues in a practical and effective way, recognising our roles and the strength of working together.

Councillor Gandy Statement

¹ MHCLG 92025) *National Plan to end Homelessness*. MHCLG; HM Government; Downloaded from [A National Plan to End Homelessness](#); last download 15/12/25

Developing the Strategy

The Homelessness Act 2002 requires that all Local Authorities carry out a review of homelessness in their areas, formulate and publish a strategy based on the findings of this review, keep the strategy under review and consult with other local or public authorities and voluntary organisations before modifying or adopting a strategy.

In developing this strategy, we have undertaken a detailed needs analysis, delivered through the following steps: -

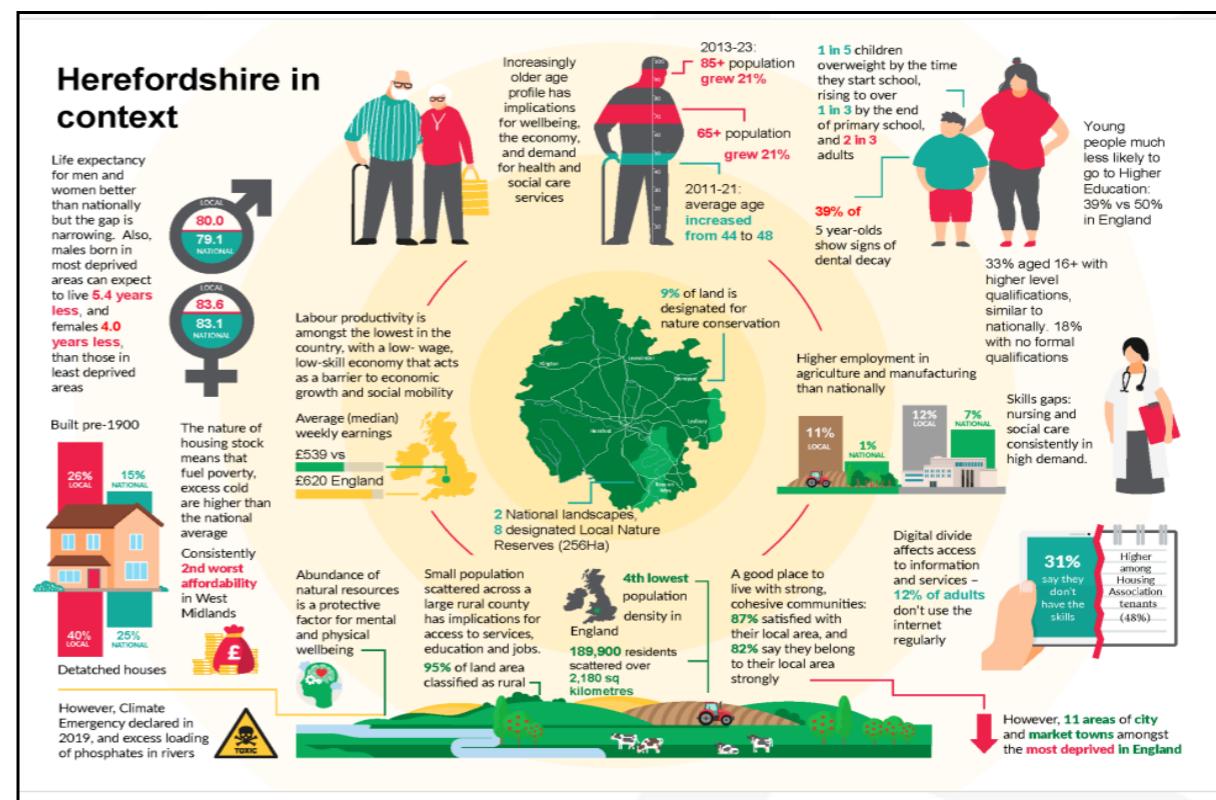
- Delivered focus groups, workshops, drop-in sessions and surveys with delivery partners, accommodation providers, service delivery partners, the public and most importantly the users of these services this took place during 2025. These consultations had a particular emphasis on reviewing the achievements of the 2020-2025 Homeless Prevention and Rough Sleeping strategy, whilst securing their experiences, knowledge and advice to shape the strategic direction of this new strategy.
- A review of relevant legislation and legal precedent.
- A review of the national and international literature to help inform Herefordshire what 'the best' looks like. This literature review focussed upon the following areas: -
 - Co-production
 - Health and Wellbeing
 - Early Intervention
 - Finance / Funding and Employments
 - Strategy
 - Management and oversight systems; and
 - Accommodation models.
- We undertook a detailed review of the demographics of Herefordshire.
- Reviewed the 2018 Herefordshire Homelessness Health Needs Audit, Data from the Health Audit from Herefordshire's Winter Night Shelter 2024/25 and made comparisons to the 2025 National Homeless Link Health Needs Audit.
- Analysed homelessness data over the period of the 2020-25 Homeless Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy.
- Assessed the strength of our partnerships and current resources, in order to effectively plan for the future.

The full review can be found at Appendix D.

This strategy will be supported by a detailed action plan that will evolve to reflect local issues and national changes over its lifetime.

The full action plan is available in Appendix J

Herefordshire in Context



Herefordshire is the third most sparsely populated county in England. It is a largely rural county of some 2,180 square kilometres. This means that some of our residents live in very isolated areas so we have to think differently about how we deliver services and support across the county.

Deprivation

Fifty-two of the 116 wards within Herefordshire are in the bottom 10% Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) Statistics in 2019 in terms of access to housing and services.

Ten percent of Local Super Output Areas in Herefordshire are among bottom 25% in England in terms of levels of whole deprivation.

It takes 11.9 times the average local income to purchase the average priced three-bedroom family home in Herefordshire.²

Herefordshire has the second lowest levels of average pay per head of population in England.

Population & Ethnicity

Herefordshire has a population of 189,900, (51% female, 49% Male) – 2021 Census data. There have been one thousand fewer births than deaths since 2018 and without net-migration the population of Herefordshire would have shrunk.

Using the national homelessness average as an indicator, Herefordshire has a homelessness rate that is currently 0.15% of total population or 1.5 per 1000. (This equates to approximately 285 people homeless, hidden homeless and rough sleeping at the time of the census).

Herefordshire has an older population than the national average, with around a quarter (27%) of residents aged 65 or over, compared with 19% in England and Wales and older working age adults aged 45 to 64 (28% vs 25%), but lower proportions of younger working age adults aged 16 to 44 (30% vs 38%) and children (16% vs 18%).

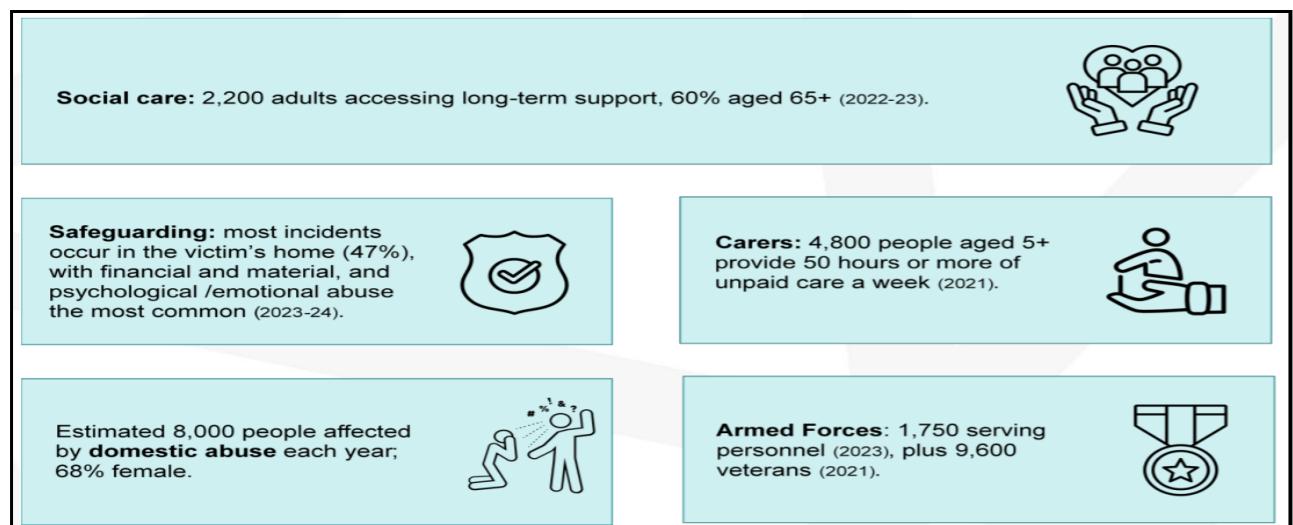
² https://shapeatlas.net/place/E54000019#11/52.1173/-2.7164/b-05F/sc-pc,sc-sc/it-all,is-deprivation:,ii-deprivation_2015_ID and [HEREFORDSHIRE JSNA SUMMARY 2024](#) – pg. 58

In 2021, 8.9% of the county's total population identified themselves as being of an ethnicity other than 'white: British' - this is still extremely low compared to national average (26%).

People of 'white: other' origin (i.e. not British; Irish; Gypsy or Irish Traveller) made up the largest single minority group: 5.1% of the population (approximately 9,500 people), and this group grew the most rapidly over the previous two decades following the eastward expansion of the European Union (EU) in 2004.

Of the 16,000 county residents who were born outside the UK, 94% (15,040) have been here for longer than 2 years. Only 6% for fewer than 2 years. (Note that these estimates are based on the resident population, meaning that people who come to Herefordshire from outside the UK for less than a year will not be included in the figures - including the several thousand seasonal workers from overseas that come to work on Herefordshire farms over the spring and summer.)

Safeguarding



Herefordshire Safeguarding Adults Board

There were 1,300 safeguarding concerns received by Herefordshire Council in 2023-24, and 120 safeguarding enquiries were opened. Due to a change in practice, the number of concerns being referred to the safeguarding team reduced substantially from the previous year (2,250).

In 2023-24, 34% of all concerns involved people aged 18 to 64, while 24% were 85 or over.

Almost half of incidents involved those in their own home (47%), with 'financial and material' and 'psychological/emotional' the most commonly reported types of abuse, each mentioned in 25% or more of incidents.

The 'source of risk' was personally known to the individual in 48% of concluded enquiries and providing a service to the person in 23% of concluded enquiries.

Domestic Abuse

There are currently no official estimates of the prevalence of domestic abuse, however, SafeLives³, a leading charity, estimate that around 8,000 people a year in Herefordshire experience it: 5,500 (68%) females and 2,500 (32%) males.

In 2023-24, 931 households approached Herefordshire Council for housing assessment and support. 133 (14.3%) of these households gave fleeing domestic abuse as the reason for needing housing support.

³ [We are SafeLives - Ending domestic abuse](#)

⁴ [Housing prices in Herefordshire](#)

Reflecting the hidden nature of domestic abuse, it was estimated that of these victims, only 34% of females and 24% of males accessed services. It is therefore unlikely that numbers recorded by services will ever give a complete picture.

West Mercia Police recorded 2,100 DA offences (recorded crimes) in Herefordshire in 2022-23; slightly lower than the 2020-21 peak of 2,200 but still much higher than the 1,400 in 2017-18. Whilst this may suggest an increase in offences being committed, it may also be linked to better recording, recognition and reporting of domestic abuse.

There is a clear link with deprivation, with over 40% of both offences and incidents (when police attend an incident, but no crime is recorded) occurring in the most deprived quintile (IMD 1) of the county.

Housing

Herefordshire had a total dwelling stock of 85,995 dwellings in April 2019. Of this 86.5% was in private sector ownership and 13.1% by Registered Providers (of social housing), and 0.4% by other public sector bodies. Just over two thirds of the County's housing stock comprise family sized housing with three or more bedrooms. There is a concentration of smaller dwellings in Hereford City and the larger market towns. 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.

Affordability is a key issue in Herefordshire. The median value of house sales across the county in 2025 was £294,000⁴. The median monthly rent was £825 PCM. These are both higher than the regional and national averages. The median house price-to-earnings ratio in Herefordshire in 2025 was 8.7⁵; this is significantly higher than both the West Midlands and national averages, at 6.7 and 7.4 respectively, pointing to stronger relative affordability pressures.

In line with our aging population data, Herefordshire has a higher proportion of lone pensioner households, 16 per cent compared to the West Midlands and England and Wales (both with 12 per cent).

Herefordshire has a higher proportion of households who own their home outright and a lower proportion who own their home with a mortgage, compared with England and Wales. It has a slightly lower proportion of households that privately rent their home from a landlord or letting agency and a lower proportion that are in social rented accommodation, compared with nationally.

In Herefordshire around 19.2% (c.16,300) of households were in fuel poverty in 2021: a higher proportion than in England (13.1%) and the West Midlands (18.5%) and an increase from 17% (c.14,000 households) in 2020.

In 2022/23, 19.7% of children under 16 in Herefordshire (c.5,900 children) were living in relative low-income families; a similar proportion to England (19.8%) but lower than the West Midlands (28.4%). 15.0% of children (c.4,500 children) were living in absolute low-income families, compared to 15.6% in England and 21.7% in the West Midlands. (It is important to note though that these figures do not take account of housing costs. Third sector research suggests that after taking account of housing costs, in 2021-22, 30.7% of children in Herefordshire were living in poverty; a higher proportion than nationally (29.2%) but less than the West Midlands region (38%). This equates to around 10,900 children in Herefordshire living in poverty. Poverty and childhood trauma are both key indicators of a likelihood of homelessness in adulthood.

⁵ [Topics relating to housing - Understanding Herefordshire](#)

Our Homelessness Data

Herefordshire Homelessness Data

In this section the data surrounding households who present to Herefordshire Council's Housing Solutions Team with a housing support need, is reviewed. This data is from HM Government DELTA tables to which Herefordshire's data is added.⁶

Each data set between 2018 and 2023/24 has been distilled into one combined sheet, to support ease of comparison between years.

DELTA data sheets capture the number of 'households' who make an application for housing support due to being at risk of or being homeless. A Household has a lead applicant and dependents. A household could be a single person or a family of several people.

Appendix 'E' has a full breakdown of all data from this period by category.

Presentations for Support with Housing

Table 1 below shows the number of households that presented to Herefordshire Council for housing support after being threatened with homelessness or are actually homeless.

		Total Assessments	Total Owed a Prevention or Relief Duty	%	Prevention Duty	Relief Duty
Herefordshire	2024/25	687	672	98	236	436
Herefordshire	2023/24	864	758	88	314	444
Herefordshire	2022/23	1,337	1,330	99	652	678
Herefordshire	2021/22	1,161	1,158	100	599	559
Herefordshire	2020/21	1,138	1,130	99	616	514
Herefordshire	2019/20	1,015	939	93	508	431
Herefordshire	2018/19	956	841	88	548	293
	Average	1,079	1,026	95	540	487

Table 1: 2018-2025 – data for initial assessments and duty owed – broken down to Prevention Duty and Relief Duty.

The average number of presentations for housing support was 1,079 households over this period. Of these an average of 1,026 (95%) were owed a statutory duty, because they had a priority need, by Herefordshire Council, to Prevent or Relieve the household homelessness or threatened homelessness.

An average of 540 households were owed the main Prevention duty over this period and 487 were owed the main Relief duty. Whilst the numbers of households needing 'Relief' from actually being homeless has remained relatively stable, the numbers of households needing support for the 'Prevention' duty has reduced significantly. This is in part due to the work, of the Early Homelessness Intervention work, undertaken by Herefordshire Council, through the Talk Community network of hubs. This service was implemented in 2023.

The top four reasons for a Prevention Duty being owed are: 1. End of Tenancy (all forms); 2. Friends / Family no longer willing to accommodate; 3. Non-violent relationship breakdown; and 4. Home not suitable due to ill-health or not known.

The top four reasons for a Relief Duty being owed are: 1. Friends / Family no longer willing to accommodate; 2. Domestic Abuse; 3. End of Tenancy (all types); and 4. Non-Violent Relationship breakdown.

Priority Need

The top six types of support for people with a priority need were: Mental ill-health, physical ill-health, at risk of or experienced Domestic Abuse, accessing Education Employment or Training, offending history and repeated homelessness.

Previous Accommodation

It is also important that we understand what kind of accommodation the household lived in prior to becoming homeless as this helps us to better understand and mitigate the risk of homelessness. In Herefordshire, when considering the situation immediately preceding becoming homeless at the 'Prevention' duty stage, most households were being accommodated in the Private Rental Sector (PRS), living directly with family or in a Social Rented Sector (SRS). However, if the same question is considered at the 'Relief' duty stage, most households were Living with family, or No Fixed Abode (Sofa Surfing), then living with friends, then Rough Sleeping, in Private Rental Sector (PRS) accommodation, followed by Social Rented Sector (SRS) accommodation or just been released from an institute.

It is worth noting that with a relief duty intervention, most households would have already attempted to prevent their own homelessness by accessing friends and family and hence the increasing numbers that have no fixed abode (NFA) or are rough sleeping at the point of presentation for housing support. This therefore poses the question about what the impact could have been if a statutory agency had been able to intervene and support sooner?

Household Composition

For the purposes of the 'Prevention' duty in every year, single adults (male and female) are the largest combined category, with an average of 136 and 113 individuals respectively over the period. Single parents with dependent children are the next largest category (162 applicants), followed by couples with dependent children (63 applicants), then couples without children (49 Applicants), then three adults with dependent children (7 applicants) (multi-generational or adult children) and three adults without dependent children (10 applicants).

It is worth noting that as a single category, female single parents with dependent children is consistently the largest single group across all sub-categories of household composition with an average 149 applications annually this is reflective of the loss of accommodation following a relationship breakdown or no longer being able to stay with family or friends.

Ethnicity

95% of all applicants for housing support in Herefordshire during this period were white. 89% of applicants are from the UK, 8% from a European Union heritage and the remaining 3% were Ukrainian, Syrian or Afghan heritage.

Household income sources

Of all applicants owed the prevention or relief duty, 36% were unemployed at the time of the application. But it is worth noting that 36% of applicants were actually either working full or part time at the time of the application. 10% were disabled and unable to work, 4% were retired with a pension as their only source of income, 8% were not employed, not registered for benefits or on disability benefits. 6% were for another reason or not known.

Prevention Activity Outcomes

A great deal of emphasis is placed upon preventing homelessness. The Government data sets out what interventions have worked, helping us in better understanding which interventions work and / or are most cost effective.

Over the six-year period 2018 – 2024, there were an average of 518 households per year owed a prevention duty. Of these an average of 187 households (36%) were supported to move to secure accommodation with at least a six-month lease. (This was broken down into an average of 141 households into the PRS and Social Sector and an average of 46 households (9%) being supported to stay in their existing accommodation after negotiation with their landlord or lender for at least the following six months. An average of two households per year failed or refuse to cooperate with Housing Support Services. An average of two per year withdrew their request for support, an average of four per year were no longer eligible because their circumstances had changed. Average of 10 (2%) per year had no further action taken after 56 days had elapsed. Over the period, an average 107 (21%) households lost contact with Housing Support Services. Finally, an average of 196 (38%) households, despite support and interventions, still were made homeless and required their homelessness to be 'Relieved.'

Of the activities used by Housing Services to support the 187 families and prevent their homelessness occurring. These include payments to landlords and families, advice and support and negotiations with parties. An average of 187 households had their homelessness directly prevented by these interventions each year. An average of 118 households are directly supported by Herefordshire Council to secure accommodation, an average of eighteen households each year are supported financially by Herefordshire Council to fund the accommodation they have found (this can be by a direct payment, acting as a guarantor, paying a deposit etc.) A further seventeen households are on average supported by Herefordshire Council by other means to secure accommodation, they have found this can be with a letter of support or guarantee etc. A range of other options are utilised to support households to continue with existing accommodation through the provision of supported housing, advocacy to prevent eviction, maintain a tenancy, secure or return to work or in direct financial payments to a lender or landlord.

Relief Duty Outcomes

An average of 246 of all applicants whose Relief duty ended was because they were supported to secure or secured for themselves accommodation for at least six months. A further 143 on average did not have the threat to their housing removed at the end of 56 days and were moved to the main 'Prevention' duty – placed in Temporary Accommodation whilst efforts continued to find long-term permanent accommodation. Also, an average of 29% lost contact with Housing Solutions Services during this 56-day period and their application was closed by Herefordshire Council. This is a priority to reduce this average lost contact ratio.

59% of households that were supported to find accommodation did so in the social rented sector and 23% found accommodation in the private rented sector.

Table 2 sets out the main activity that secured the accommodation at the 'Relief' duty stages. In 57% of cases the accommodation was secured following support from Herefordshire Council Housing Solutions Team through 'Homepoint' which is Herefordshire's choice based letting service. 7% were assisted to secure the accommodation with financial support from Herefordshire Council (rent in advance, bond, guarantee), 9% assisted through negotiation with a landlord without financial assistance and 8% moved to supported housing to meet a support need. 14% were assisted to secure accommodation through another activity – this could be through family or friends or finding it themselves.

	Total number of households where relief duty ended with accommodation secured ^{1,2}	Accommodation secured by local authority or organisation delivering housing options service	Helped to secure accommodation found by applicant, with financial payment	Helped to secure accommodation found by applicant, without financial payment	Supported housing provided	Other activity through which accommodation secured ³	No activity
2023/24	190	116	8	18	12	22	14
2022/23	351	216	9	37	23	49	17
2021/22	295	183	20	18	23	49	2
2020/21	252	136	22	29	18	44	3
2019/20	253	114	27	33	27	29	23
2018/19	123	70	10	4	13	9	17
Total	1,464	835	96	139	116	202	76
Average	244	139	16	23	19	34	13
%		57	7	9	8	14	5

Table 2: 2018-2024 – data for Relief Duty Outcomes.

People that experience homelessness

People with a range of backgrounds and different circumstances can experience or be threatened with homelessness. Whilst each person receives a personal housing and support plan, specific to their needs, our research has identified the main groups of people that this strategy aims to help and support are:

- Single people
- Families in Temporary Accommodation
- Rough sleepers
- Those with specific support needs
- Priority groups at risk – Survivors of Domestic Abuse, Prison Leavers, people being discharged from Hospital, Veterans, Care Leavers and Individuals with no recourse to public funding

Identifying the main barriers that these groups of people face allows us to develop tailored approaches to ensure our services meets the needs of the people that need it most.

Single people

Our data informs us that many single people become homeless due to friends or family being no longer able to accommodate them or they are sofa surfing and are not in priority need.

Providing access to appropriate accommodation is crucial to break the cycle of homelessness that many experience. Many single homeless people have vulnerabilities including mental health issues, complex or specific needs, problematic substance use and/or chaotic behaviour. This can lead to them being at risk of cuckooing⁷ and at risk of additional harm. For some, shared accommodation is not suitable, and the chaotic nature of some people's lives can lead to loss of accommodation.

There is a shortage of longer-term accommodation for single people across the county, something that the Council continue to address through the planning system, requesting one bed social and affordable homes when new developments are built.

Whilst the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and Herefordshire Council funding has increased the options for people not in priority need, and allowed many single people to be accommodated, there are still many single people living in temporary accommodation or experiencing long-term homelessness and some are still rough sleeping. There are also some people who do not wish to be rehoused or find the transition very difficult to manage.

Table 3 depicts the number of 'singles' who have presented for housing support to Herefordshire Council over the past six years.

	Relief Duty		Prevention Duty		TOTALS
	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	
2018/19	129	116	142	63	460
2019/20	136	99	227	102	564
2020/21	169	127	305	112	713
2021/22	152	127	274	137	690
2022/23	154	144	347	170	815
2023/24	77	67	214	103	461
Average	136	113	252	229	617

Table 3: 2018-2024 – data for single male and female presentations – broken down to Prevention Duty and Relief Duty.

Families

Many families are threatened with homelessness due to affordability, change in circumstances or loss of secure accommodation, often through no fault of their own. Whilst this group fall into the priority need group, options for temporary accommodation are more limited in some areas. Due to demand for social housing, the use of private rental sector housing is an important option for this group of people. Living for extended periods of time in insecure housing and / or temporary accommodation impacts heavily upon the future development of a child, affecting health, educational attainment and attendance, as well as behaviour whilst at school. Being homeless as a child or young person is a key indicator to being homeless as an adult.

	Relief Duty					
	Single Parent		Couple + dependent children	Couple without children	Three Adults with Children	Three adults no children
	Male	Female				
2018/19	10	77	54	40	7	5
2019/20	9	169	41	58	7	15
2020/21	10	163	66	55	6	8
2021/22	13	178	75	58	1	6
2022/23	17	135	97	57	6	16
2023/24	17	169	43	28	13	10

Table 4 – Families – Relief Duty

	Prevention Duty					
	Single Parent		Couple + dependent children	Couple without children	Three Adults with Children	Three adults no children
	Male	Female				
2018/19	8	55	6	23	3	1
2019/20	9	57	11	26	3	2
2020/21	6	55	16	24	1	2
2021/22	12	90	17	20	2	3
2022/23	5	104	18	20	3	4
2023/24	10	63	23	15	3	5

Table 5 – Families – Prevention Duty

Rough Sleepers

For a number of single people and some couples, the loss of their accommodation results in them becoming a 'rough sleeper' and sleeping outside. Rough sleeping has significant negative health and wellbeing impacts. On the 16th October 2025, Herefordshire Council, working with a range of partners, undertook the national annual rough sleeper count in the county. This count recorded 16 people who were rough sleeping at the time, all of whom were known to the rough sleeping outreach team. This was a 59% reduction from the 27 people recorded as rough sleeping in the 2024 annual count, demonstrating that our BRAVE pathway, which seeks to maximise efforts to prevent rough sleeping, is having a positive impact.

Rough Sleeper Data

	Total owed a relief duty ¹	Total PRS	Total SRS	Total NFA	History Rough Sleeping
2023/24	314	142	43	0	0
2022/23	652	306	98	0	0
2021/22	599	263	83	0	0
2020/21	616	183	113	0	0
2019/20	508	179	53	1	0
2018/19	548	218	71	1	0

Table 6 – Rough Sleeper ‘Relief’ data

(Abbreviations - PRS – Private Rental Sector, SRS – Social rented Sector, NFA – No Fixed Abode)

Tables 6 and 7 set out the position for individuals with a housing support need. Table 7 clearly articulates that 12% of people owed a prevention duty had a history of rough sleeping.

Herefordshire Homeless Health Needs Audit (HHHNA)

The 2018 HHHNA review confirmed the complex needs of this client group, and the interlinked dependencies of Mental Health, addiction needs and homelessness. In detail: -

- 102 health needs audits were completed by the county’s wider homelessness community.
- Seventy-six percent of respondents reported a mental health problem / behaviour condition
- Dual diagnosis (severe mental health issue and problematic substance use) was reported by 18% of participants.
- Between January 2018 and January 2019, ninety-two rough sleepers were supported by the Rough Sleeping Outreach Team (RSOT).
- There is a need for an enhanced focus upon rough sleepers who have multiple and complex needs / challenging behaviours.
- Some successes in supporting clients with harmful substance use issues into rehab.
- Fifty clients (54%) reported that they were undiagnosed but used drugs and Forty-seven (51%) used alcohol.
- Forty-two people (42% of respondents) used Class A, prescription or other non-cannabis drugs.

Of the ninety-two clients supported, sixty-five people (71%) said that they had poor mental health.

Over the winter of 2024 - 2025, Herefordshire Council commissioned the delivery of a Winter Night Shelter. Health data was collected from the seventy-one individuals who used the shelter over the 157 nights it was in operation. The health needs of this group of people broadly reflects that of the 2018 Herefordshire Homeless Health Needs Audit.

Specific Support Needs

Many individuals need specific housing or support which is identified through an initial assessment, and this helps to tailor an individual housing and support plan. There is a shortage of accessible supported accommodation across the County, so the utilisation of Disabled Facilities Grant funded adaptations, and floating support is key to meeting the needs of this group. Finding suitable accommodation with appropriate support for those with very complex and / or specific needs can be challenging. We frequently work in partnership with Adult Social Care as some people that are homeless or at risk of being homeless, also have care and support needs under the Care Act 2014.

	Total owed a prevention duty ^{1,2}	Total PRS	Total SRS	Total NFA	History Rough Sleeping
2023/24	444	40	29	82	54
2022/23	678	41	48	171	127
2021/22	559	20	29	202	76
2020/21	514	10	10	185	39
2019/20	431	13	12	180	39
2018/19	293	21	19	119	13

Table 7 – Rough Sleeper ‘Prevention’ Data

	Total Homeless Application / Assessments	Total households with support needs	Households with one or more support needs owed duty			Total number of support needs
			1	2	3+	
2023/24	864	495	227	122	146	1,053
2022/23	1,337	817	363	206	248	1,759
2021/22	1,161	738	341	183	214	1,531
2020/21	1,138	762	331	199	232	1,603
2019/20	1,015	551	258	134	159	1,180
2018/19	956	399	302	54	43	573

Table 8 – Support needs by applicant household

Table 8 shows that over half of all applicants for accommodation support made to Herefordshire Council, who were assessed as being owed a housing duty, have a support need. In more recent years 25% of these households have a person in them with three or more support needs, indicating the increasingly complex nature of the lives of people that become homeless or are at risk of homelessness.

Table 9a and 9b set out the types of support needs that people are experiencing or have historically experienced adding additional context to the data above.

	Young person aged 16-17 years	Young person aged 18-25 years requiring support to manage independently	Young parent requiring support to manage independently	Care leaver aged 18-20 years	Care leaver aged 21-24 ³	Care leaver aged 25+ ⁴	Care leaver - retired option ⁵	Physical ill health and disability	History of mental health problems
2023/24	6	16	2	12	0	0	17	186	275
2022/23	15	27	5	22	0	0	32	275	445
2021/22	2	39	5	14	21	260	391	62	12
2020/21	3	36	7	12	29	262	395	78	20
2019/20	1	49	9	9	27	196	287	64	13
2018/19	1	47	4	8	8	115	144	18	3

Table 9a: Types of Support Needs

Table 10 shows the ages of people presenting for housing support. Nearly a quarter of all presentations for housing support are from individuals under 25 years of age.

	Learning disability	At risk of / has experienced sexual abuse / explored abuse / do me stic ab use	At risk of / has experienced do me stic ab use / explored abuse / do me stic ab use	At risk of / has experienced abus e (non - domestic abuse)	Drug dependency needs	Alcohol dependency needs	Offending history	History of repeat homelessness	History of rough sleeping	Former asylum seeker	Old age	Served in HM Forces	Access to education, employment or training	Victim of modern slavery	Difficulties budgeting
2023/24	48	18	125	16	30	28	65	65	50	1	11	9	70	0	3
2022/23	99	35	235	30	45	59	90	115	69	1	16	19	125	0	0
2021/22	195	22	57	55	120	122	84	4	37	27	2	*	*	*	*
2020/21	204	30	63	49	119	129	111	1	29	25	1	*	*	*	*
2019/20	111	22	61	43	86	80	86	0	19	13	4	*	*	*	*
2018/19	68	14	24	31	32	13	26	0	4	5	8	*	*	*	*

Table 9b: Types of Support Needs (* = not measured that year)

Care Leavers and young people.

Young people are threatened with or become homeless for a variety of reasons and are likely to be more vulnerable. Ensuring their welfare through the provision of appropriate support that is centred on the needs of each young person is essential to resolving their housing issues. Research indicates that being in care in the UK significantly impacts young people, leading to higher risks in education, mental health, and the justice system due to early trauma, instability, and challenges transitioning to independence, with care leavers facing increased homelessness, unemployment, and poorer long-term health outcomes compared to peers, though many show resilience. Herefordshire Council offers a number of accommodation and support solutions for young people in care and care leavers. Young people aged 16 and 17 years old that become homeless are supported to remain with their families, but where this is not possible, they can choose to become formally looked after by the Council or be accommodated as a homeless young person. There are pros and cons to both options, these are discussed with the young person in advance of them deciding. Young people are also offered an advocate to support them to make this decision. There is currently a shortage of suitable accommodation for young people choosing to be accommodated as homeless, rather than looked after. The housing and commissioning teams in the Council are exploring the options available to develop solutions to this challenge, including the development of self-contained accommodation specifically for young people.

	Total owed a prevention or relief duty ¹	16-17	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	Not known ²
2023/24	758	5	146	209	184	95	81	27	11	0
2022/23	1,330	13	268	372	326	162	127	44	18	0
2021/22	1,158	1	255	351	236	159	86	45	25	0
2020/21	1,130	0	284	365	231	127	72	36	15	0
2019/20	939	1	230	256	204	139	68	35	6	0
2018/19	841	0	224	244	163	135	47	20	8	0
Total	6156	20	1407	1797	1344	817	481	207	83	0
Average	1026	3	235	300	224	136	80	35	14	0
%	100	0	23	29	22	13	8	3	1	0

Table 10: Age of main applicants as owed a Prevention OR Relief Duty at time of Application.

Nearly all young people give the reason that they need accommodation support directly because 'family or friends' are no longer willing to accommodate them. (See Appendix 'E' for more detail)

Prison Leavers

In order to reduce the risks of reoffending, prison leavers should have access to appropriate and settled accommodation upon release. HM Probation and Prison Service (HMPPS) does not currently operate a pre-release review panel system for Herefordshire, nor does it have access to bespoke accommodation under the Community Accommodation Scheme (CAS) in the county. It is a priority for this strategy that both of these are developed to remove the impacts that being released from prison directly on to the streets, has on people. HMPPS is a legal partner to the 'Duty to Refer' scheme and there is an established process for making referrals to the Council Housing Solution Team in place. An average of 10 referrals were made, by HMPPS, per annum over the last six years. An average of two people per year have directly attended the Housing Solution Team directly from prison as homeless, requiring support with accommodation.

Domestic Abuse

Government funding is available for councils to support those experiencing domestic abuse to have a safe place to stay with specialist support to rebuild their lives. Herefordshire Council commissioned domestic abuse support services, including floating support and safe accommodation with support. Survivors of domestic abuse no longer need a local connection to apply for social housing, enabling them to settle away from the perpetrator(s) of abuse. Three categories of relationship breakdown are captured when a household presents for accommodation support: Non-violent relationship breakdown with parent; domestic abuse and other violence or harassment. Between 2018 and 2024 an average of 99 households (20%) required accommodation support due to a non-violent relationship breakdown. 116 households (23%) required accommodation support due to fleeing Domestic Abuse and 27 households (5%) required accommodation support due to other violence or harassment. Tables 11a and 11b set out the full reasons for a household's presentation for housing support by prevention and relief duty.

	Total owed a prevention in duty ¹	Total end of AST	End of non-AST private rented tenancy	Family or friend s no longer willing or able to accommodate	Non-violent relationship breakdown with partner	Total Domestic abuse	Other violence or harassment	Total end of social rented tenancy	Total evicted from supported housing	Total Departure from institution	Required to leave accommodation provided by Home Office as asylum support	Home no longer suitable - disability / ill health ⁶	Other reasons / not known ⁵ - inc home not suitable due to ill health
2023/24	314	122	17	77	19	30	10	15	5	2	0	3	14
2022/23	652	227	30	122	42	85	23	33	10	3	0	0	77
2021/22	599	217	18	133	54	79	19	17	7	1	0	0	54
2020/21	616	136	25	164	52	110	24	28	12	1	0	0	64
2019/20	508	132	21	125	51	60	12	25	4	2	0	0	76
2018/19	548	166	24	131	70	45	11	42	4	1	0	0	54
TOTAL	3,237	1,000	135	752	288	409	99	160	42	10	0	3	339
Average	540	167	23	125	48	68	17	27	7	2	0	1	57
%	31	4	23	9	13	3	5	1	0	0	0	10	

Table 11a: Prevention duty and reason for presentation

	Total owed a relief duty	Total end of AST	End of non-AST private rented tenancy	Family or friend s no longer willing or able to accommodate	Non-violent relationship breakdown with partner	Total Domestic abuse	Other violence or harassment	Total end of social rented tenancy	Total evicted from supported housing	Total Departure from institution	Required to leave accommodation provided by Home Office as asylum support	Home no longer suitable - disability / ill health ⁶	Other reasons / not known ⁵
2023/24	444	50	19	125	50	103	12	11	16	18	1	12	27
2022/23	678	85	24	205	83	157	23	18	27	19	0	0	37
2021/22	559	55	22	168	60	8	11	25	11	*	*	*	*
2020/21	514	49	19	171	85	6	12	11	20	*	*	*	*
2019/20	431	35	*	27	16	9	1	10	*	*	*	*	*
2018/19	293	28	*	23	14	7	1	6	*	*	*	*	*

Table 11b: Relief duty and reason for presentation. (* = not measured that year)

Armed forces Community

Members of the Armed Forces community that are homeless can fall into more than one category of housing need due to relationship breakdowns, domestic abuse, complex needs due to mental health issues etc. The Armed Forces Act 2011 mandates that service members and their families face no disadvantage in public services, including social housing. Key legislation like the [Allocation of Housing Regulations 2012](#) then implemented this, ensuring housing authorities prioritise serving and ex-serving personnel, their families, and bereaved spouses. As with survivors of domestic abuse and care leavers, no local connection is required for serving members of the armed forces, veterans and their immediate families to apply for social housing. Data has only been required to be collected on Armed Forces

personnel since 2022, but since then an average of 10 households per year have approached Herefordshire Council for accommodation support and who have a background in the Armed Forces. The UK military and linked charities can also refer to Herefordshire Council under the duty to refer scheme. An average of 1 referral per year has been received through this route since 2017. The Council are members of the armed forces covenant in Herefordshire and directly support the work of the [Herefordshire Veterans Support Centre](#).

Those with no recourse to public funds (NRPF)

Herefordshire has approximately ten thousand people of non-UK nationality living and working in the county. Many have families here, contribute to the local economy and have children that attend local schools. These households have a legal right to remain in the UK and are able to access benefits and state provided resources, as any UK national would if they lived in a European country.

There are also a small number of individuals in Herefordshire with restricted legal eligibility to access public funding and resources. This means they are unable to access housing support and can end up rough sleeping. Most people in Herefordshire who fit this category do so because they are from a European Union member country and they do not have 'Pre-Settled Status' to remain in the UK.

Whilst most of the households that we are aware of have lived and worked in Herefordshire for many years, due to a change in domestic circumstances or the loss of employment, they have become homeless and unable to claim any benefits or support.

A very small number of individuals, who are in the UK legally on an 'UK Immigration Work Visa' live and work in the county. All of these individuals have employment that either support them with accommodation being provided or enables them to rent accommodation on the private rental market. Despite their immigration status, individuals of this type have 'No Recourse to Public Funds' (NRPF). This means they should not have access to benefits, accommodation or health support.

There are some exceptions to the 'NRPF' criteria for refugees from Syria and Afghanistan and for people with special visas, such as those offered to people through the Homes for Ukraine scheme. All have been granted specific permission to be in the UK and therefore access to the same resources as UK citizens.

An average of one person a year over the past six years has accessed accommodation support. Herefordshire Council still offers support to individuals who have no recourse to public funds. We have been able to support people to be repatriated, secure identification documents, link them to their embassy or support them directly with access to the emergency winter night shelter that is free for anyone to access and use.

Challenges and Opportunities – Looking Ahead.

Herefordshire faces a number of challenges in addressing homelessness. These are summarised in points below and broadly reflect what is occurring nationally and internationally in the homelessness arena.

- Too many families in Temporary Accommodation, including some very large families.
- The length of time families are in Temporary Accommodation.
- The challenge of single people moving on from Temporary Accommodation.
- The low number of one-bedroom units of accommodation on the Private Rental Market.
- Not enough social and affordable housing in Herefordshire.
- Individuals being released from HMP estate with little or no notice to housing services.
- Individuals with NRPF or No Permanent Status to remain in the UK needing support.
- Individuals with outstanding rental debts and / or composite debts and / or a history of failed tenancies and anti-social behaviour.
- There is no single data management system for all agencies to access and record notes.
- No single shared data set to drive continuous improvement.
- Access to better early information and resources to help mitigate the risk of crisis or complex difficulties developing into homelessness.
- Recruitment and Retention of staff.
- Training of staff across our multi-agency / sector partnerships.
- Need to reinforce and expand the Duty to Refer scheme.
- No single integrated model that targets resources early in a household's descent into homelessness across health, education, employment and the criminal justice system.
- Lack of integrated funding models across our multi-agency / sector partnership.
- Number of households who lose contact with Housing Solutions Service.
- Individuals with high levels of and / or complex support needs that require access to bespoke supported accommodation and Adult Social Care support, linked to the high thresholds for support from health and social care services.

Some of these challenges present real opportunities for service improvements, these are highlighted in the priorities set out below.

1. **Improving our Systems** – identify those that are at risk of becoming homeless as early as possible and through the Duty to Refer to prevent homelessness or rough sleeping and identifying the most vulnerable and ensuring individuals are safe from harm, and have access to the support and services to maintain their health and wellbeing
2. **Strengthening our Partnerships** – strengthen and maintain relationships to bring together resources and knowledge to prevent and relieve homelessness across the whole multi-agency and cross sector workforce.
3. **Improving our Accommodation Offer** – ensure the volume of temporary accommodation is increased and quality of temporary accommodation maintained and improved. Ensure that accommodation is both available and suitable for those that need it and explore opportunities to increase the supply of all types of accommodation for move on accommodation within the BRAVE pathway as well as increase the volume of affordable housing in the county.
4. **Being Data Led** – Develop our systems and processes to ensure we capture the relevant data, have agreements in place to share where necessary and use the data to take a proactive and joined up approach to tackling rough sleeping and homelessness. Use the evidence to explore funding opportunities to ensure we meet the needs of all client groups.
5. **Make best use of funding** Ensure all partners meet their primary legal obligations and deliver services that ensure we collectively are able to mitigate and reduce complex multiple experiences for the communities and people of Herefordshire. Where appropriate use shared funding models to develop and build resilience in staffing models, and services. Identify and secure new funding sources.

These priorities have been chosen to reflect the issues highlighted through the consultation process with our stakeholders, the literature review and building on our current structures to ensure Herefordshire continues to work in partnership to reduce the risk of homelessness. (See appendix 'D' for full strategic context)

Appendix J contains a full list of the actions we will undertake to deliver each of these priorities:

Review and Oversight

Progress to achieve these priorities will be reported to and overseen by Herefordshire Homeless Forum.

Operational management of each priority will sit with the BRAVE Operations Group. A named agency and individual will be responsible for the delivery of each action point to deliver that priority.

The Delivery Action Plan, found at appendix 'J' will be used to track and record progress to deliver each priority.

The BRAVE Operations Group will undertake an annual review that will be published on Herefordshire Council's website.

Priorities and Action Plan

Building on the successes of the previous strategy and taking account of the challenges above, the key priorities for the next 5 years will be: