



Title of report: Herefordshire Homeless Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026 - 2031

Decision maker: Cabinet Member

Cabinet Decision date: MeetingDate (26th March 2026)

Report by:

Corporate Director - Community Wellbeing

Classification

Open

Decision type

Key

This is a key decision because it is likely to be significant having regard to: the strategic nature of the decision; and / or whether the outcome will have an impact, for better or worse, on the amenity of the community or quality of service provided by the authority to a significant number of people living or working in the locality (two or more wards) affected. Notice has been served in accordance with Part 3, Section 9 (Publicity in Connection with Key Decisions) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

To approve the council's strategy to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping 2026-2031.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- (a) the Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026 – 2031 at appendix 1 be approved.**

- (b) The homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026 – 2031 Delivery Action Plan at appendix 2 be approved.**
- (c) That approval of any operational amendments to the delivery plan are delegated to the Corporate Director Community Wellbeing.**

Alternative options

1. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) National Ending Homelessness Strategy, published December 2025, requires all local authorities to update their existing strategies to homelessness and rough sleeping strategies. From 31st December 2025 housing authorities are required to:
 - a. make available their strategies online and submit them to MHCLG and;
 - b. publish annual action plans.
2. Not to adopt a Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026 – 2031 and linked delivery action plan for Herefordshire. This is not recommended as these are statutory documents, which requires updating in accordance with the Homelessness Act 2002 and the MHCLG National Plan to End Homelessness Strategy 2025. Also not approving this strategy will have an impact upon the funding provided by Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government being drawn down in years two and three. (see finance section)

Key considerations

3. The priorities and actions set out in this strategy are in keeping with the increased emphasis on early intervention and prevention in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and are reflective of the three key themes of prevention, intervention and recovery identified in the National Plan to End Homelessness Strategy published in December 2025.
4. The review of homelessness in Herefordshire identified that we have been successful in preventing people from becoming homeless. It is recognised, however, that we need to do more, particularly in our responses to homeless families, rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping who have complex and challenging needs. Our Needs Assessment (Appendix 4) showed that participants' physical and mental health is extremely poor compared to that of the population as a whole.
5. The review also showed that the main reason why people were at risk of homelessness in Herefordshire was the termination of a private rented sector tenancy, usually via a section 21 eviction notice. The next most frequent reasons for being at risk of homelessness were; family or friends no longer being willing or able to accommodate the household, non-violent relationship breakdown and domestic violence/abuse. As well as addressing these issues, the strategy action plan also considers how which best to tackle risks for people living in overcrowded and unsuitable accommodation.
6. Significant numbers of households seeking help had one or more support needs. A history of mental health issues was the most frequently declared support need, with physical health or disability marginally lower than this. Rent arrears and debt are also considerations.

7. In some circumstances we have a duty to provide temporary accommodation for households that have become homeless or are at risk of homelessness. As of the 31st December 2025 there were seventy-eight families with children in temporary accommodation. Fifty-one families with children were in self-contained temporary housing. Twenty-seven families with children were in B&B / Hotel type Temporary accommodation.
8. In developing this strategy, we have undertaken a detailed needs analysis of homelessness in Herefordshire, including:
 - a. 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.
 - b. A review of relevant legislation and legal precedent.
 - c. A review of the national and international literature to help inform Herefordshire what 'the best' looks like.
 - d. 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.
 - e. Analysed homelessness data over the period of the 2020-25 Homeless Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy.
 - f. Assessed the strength of our partnerships and current resources, in order to effectively plan for the future.
9. From this needs assessment, five themes have been developed to deliver the strategy:
 - a. **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.
 - b. **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.
 - c. **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.
 - d. **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.
 - e. **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.

10. These priorities will be delivered through the interventions contained with the Homeless Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026 – 2031 Delivery Action Plan.

Community impact

11. The strategy will directly contribute to Herefordshire council's plan "People" priority enabling residents to realise their potential, to be healthy and to be part of great communities that support each other. It will also contribute to the "Place" priority supporting the delivery of the right housing in the right place.
12. Adoption of the strategy and delivery plan will also directly contribute to the priorities in Herefordshire's Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2023 – 2033, specifically, supporting people to live and age well, supporting people with complex needs and improve housing/ reduce homelessness.

Environmental impact

13. No direct environmental impact
14. Herefordshire Council provides and purchases a wide range of services for the people of Herefordshire. Together with partner organisations in the private, public and voluntary sectors we share a strong commitment to improving our environmental sustainability, achieving carbon neutrality and to protect and enhance Herefordshire's outstanding natural environment.

Whilst this is a decision on back-office functions and will have minimal environmental impacts, consideration has been made to minimise waste and resource use in line with the Council's Environmental Policy.

The development of this project has sought to minimise any adverse environmental impact and will actively seek opportunities to improve and enhance environmental performance.

Equality duty

9. The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the Council to consider how it can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations and demonstrate that it is paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services.
10. The mandatory equality impact screening checklist has been completed for this decision, and it has been found to have a positive impact for equality.

11. Due to the scope of this decision and its potential impact on certain protected characteristics, an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is attached as an appendix to this report.
12. In summary, this decision impacts on protected characteristics as follows:
 - a. **Age** (include safeguarding, consent and child welfare)
 - i. Homelessness legislation identifies 'vulnerability' due to age as a priority need category
 - ii. Nationally, older people are less likely to become homeless or be at risk of homelessness than young people and this situation is reflected locally. In addition, as the county has a good supply of social housing for older people, there are sufficient opportunities to prevent older people from becoming homeless through an offer of a property through the Home Point Choice Based Letting Scheme.
 - iii. In addition, Strategic Housing continues to work with Children's Services to refurbish a number of properties, which will provide accommodation and support for vulnerable Care Leavers with challenging needs.
 - iv. The above initiatives are likely to have a positive impact on homelessness prevention.
 - b. **Disability** (consider attitudinal, physical, financial and social barriers, neuro-diversity, learning disability, physical and sensory impairment)
 - i. Homelessness legislation identifies 'vulnerability' due to disability as a priority need category. This includes people who are disabled physically and those who experience mental ill-health. Since 2018 an average of 20 households a year were owed a full homeless duty due to a physical disability. We will always take the specific needs of the household into account when delivering our services.
 - c. **Pregnancy & Maternity** (consider working arrangements, part-time working, infant caring responsibilities)
 - i. Homelessness legislation identifies 'vulnerability' due to pregnancy as a priority need category.
 - ii. We will always take the specific needs of the household into account when delivering our services.
 - iii. The new national plan to end homelessness includes strengthening work with partners to reduce the use of temporary accommodation for families.
 - iv. We are working to bring forward more accommodation to meet the needs of people with physical disabilities.

d. Health Inequalities (any preventable, unfair & unjust differences in health status between groups, populations or individuals that arise from unequal distribution of social, environmental & economic conditions)

- i. In 2018/19 We undertook Homeless Link’s Health Needs Audit. The Audit (see appendix 4 – Needs Assessment) showed that participants’ physical and mental health, on all dimensions, is extremely poor compared to that of the population as a whole. The results of the audit were presented to Herefordshire’s Health and Wellbeing Board and all the report recommendations agreed. The health need audit was completed again over the winter of 2024/25 with all users of the winter night shelter. The outcomes corresponded with our 2018/19 audit and the 2025 National Homeless Link Health Needs Audit.

Resource implications

- 13. There are no direct resource implications in the strategy document itself. The resource implications arise from the implementation of the Homeless Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026 – 2031 Delivery Action Plan, which is required to be developed and published in compliance with the MHCLG National Plan to End Homelessness Strategy 2025.
- 14. Homeless Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026 – 2031 Delivery Action Plan (set out in ‘key considerations’ section above) will be delivered within existing resources, specifically rough sleeping and homelessness prevention grant funding provided by HM Government until 2029. This funding is tied to local authorities having a Homeless Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy in place and a linked Delivery Action Plan, to that strategy, being published.
- 15. The delivery of these priorities will be delivered across the existing BRAVE multi-agency partnership.

Revenue or Capital cost of project (indicate R or C)	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Future Years	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
<i>Nil</i>					
TOTAL					

Funding streams (indicate whether base budget / external / grant / capital borrowing)	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Future Years	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
<i>External MHCLG – Homeless Prevention and Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse Grant 2026-2029</i>	1,885	1,833	1,692	-	5,410
TOTAL					

Revenue budget implications	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Future Years	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
<i>note any impact on revenue budget, good or bad</i>					
<i>No Impact – but see mitigation options</i>					
TOTAL					

Legal implications

16. The Homelessness Act 2002 requires local (housing) authorities to adopt a homelessness strategy and this must be updated and reviewed at least every 5 years. This must include the Council's plans to reduce and prevent homelessness and ensuring suitable accommodation and support is available for the homeless or those at risk of homelessness.
17. The relevant legal provisions for this decision can be found in the council's constitution, www.herefordshire.gov.uk/constitution.

Risk management

18. The council has a statutory duty to conduct a review of homelessness every five years and to publish a homelessness strategy based on the findings of the review, as required by the Homelessness Act 2002. To fail to do so could result in considerable reputational damage to the council.
19. Any risks to the implementation of the delivery plan actions will be identified and mitigated against as part of the operational process. They will be managed at a service level.

Risk / opportunity

1. Funding – if strategy and Delivery Action Plan are not published and being delivered MHCLG can hold back funding in years 2027/28 and 2028/29
2. Homeless Reduction Model – this strategy enables Herefordshire to draw down external grant funding to deliver the following –
 - a. A comprehensive homeless Prevention and Rough Sleeping reduction Strategy.
 - b. The delivery of an early homeless prevention intervention model across Talk Community.
 - c. The provision of an emergency winter night shelter in partnership with Caring for Communities and People (CCP).
 - d. A staffing model that delivers housing support through the Rough Sleeper Outreach Team, White Cross Road Hub Staff and Hope Scott House staff, as well as early intervention staff posts within housing solutions pathways.
 - e. It delivers a support budget to enable people with the most far reaching support needs to access suitable housing.
3. Community resource – This funding directly funds CCP to deliver a staff post at Hope Scot House a critical part of the BRAVE homeless prevention pathway. It also indirectly support the support provision offered by the rough Sleeper outreach team through Lees Place, The Living Room and The Salvation Army. The loss of these posts will impact upon the ability of the charitable groups to make meaningful impacts and offer support to homeless individuals.

Mitigation

If the strategy is not supported , then the funding will be withdrawn by MHCLG and all posts and work stream will be discontinued.

This will lead to an increase in rough sleeping and homelessness levels seen before the pandemic.

The only mitigation is to approve the strategy and secure the funding OR fund directly from Herefordshire Council core funding.

4. MHCLG funding beyond 2029 is not guaranteed, and should no funding be forthcoming from MHCLG then the services this strategy delivered would need to be reviewed at that time.

Consultees

20. During July to September 2025, we undertook a range of separate interest group consultations, as follows:

- service provider consultation.
- accommodation provider consultation.
- public consultation.
- service user consultation.

In total 34 responses were received. In addition, substantial engagement has been carried out through our close working relationship with the Herefordshire Homelessness Forum.

20. The results of the consultations have been analysed and are contained in the Needs assessment. This can be found at Appendix 4.
21. Political groups have been consulted on 18th February 2026. A presentation was given to councillors, followed by a question-and-answer session. (Appendix 6) Strategy was well received and endorsed at the meetings.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Draft Full Version HP&RS Sleeping Strategy 2026-2031.

Appendix 2: Equality Impact Assessment HP&RS Strategy 2026-2031.

Appendix 3: Homeless Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026 – 2031 Delivery Action Plan

Appendix 4: Homeless Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026 – 2031 Needs assessment.

Appendix 5: Glossary of abbreviations and terms used in report and appendices.

Appendix 6: PGC Homeless Prevention Strategy 18.02.26

Background papers

None identified.

Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.