

PGC: Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy

Meeting Notes & Main Discussion Points

1. Strategy Overview and Development

- Cllr Gandy introduced the third Herefordshire Homeless Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy, emphasizing its vision, legal requirements, and the county's progress in reducing rough sleeping and improving prevention and relief efforts.
- Bob Barnett, Housing Strategy Officer, outlined the strategy's five-year scope (2026–2031), its legal basis under the Housing Act and national plans, and the multi-stage development process: reviewing the previous strategy, consulting partners and the public, analysing seven years of housing data, and identifying gaps and opportunities. Hannah McSherry, Strategic Housing Manager was also present, supporting Bob.



2. Successes and Innovations

- Strong multi-agency and cross-sector collaboration, especially through the Brave pathway, has been central to success. The Brave model, initially a COVID response, is now standard practice and has been recognized by central government.
- Nearly £15 million in external funding secured since 2020, supporting housing, homelessness, and rough sleeping prevention.
- Expansion of pre-release panels with prison and probation services to prevent homelessness among ex-offenders.
- Introduction of a primary care pathway for rough sleepers, enabling same-day GP appointments, and development of a palliative care pathway in partnership with the Marie Curie Foundation and Queen's Nursing Institute.
- Dedicated mental health support through the Team Around Me model, placing individuals with complex needs at the centre of a multi-agency support plan.
- Early intervention officers in the Talk Community Team work upstream of statutory duties, providing support and small grants to prevent homelessness before crisis.

3. Challenges and Ambitions



- Working to reduce the number of families in temporary accommodation.
- Limited affordable housing stock and concerns about the impact of new government policies on the private rental market.
- Issues with migrants lacking recourse to public funds or pre-settled status, addressed through outreach and support with documentation.
- Rental and utility debts hinder access to new accommodation; new funding is being used to help reduce these debts.
- Lack of a unified data management system across agencies hampers multi-agency work; solutions are being explored.
- Staffing shortages have been resolved with new three-year funding, ensuring full staffing until 2029.
- Integrated funding models are being considered to leverage cost savings across health, education, and emergency services.

4. Strategic Priorities



- Five local priorities: improving systems, strengthening partnerships, improving accommodation, being data-led, and maximizing funding.
- The strategy aligns with the Government's national plan's five pillars: universal prevention, targeted prevention, crisis prevention, emergency response, and recovery/prevention of repeat homelessness.



5. Questions and Answers

- **Rough Sleeping Locations:** All current accommodation for rough sleepers is in Hereford city centre; emergency pods are being relocated to Leominster, with plans for Ross if a location can be sourced.
- **Delivery Plan:** The 40 point delivery plan will be shared with councillors and overseen by the Brave Operations Board and Hereford Homelessness Forum.
- **Military Garrison Homelessness:** Cllr Simmons asked about links with the Garrison and the prevention of homelessness. Close collaboration with the garrison, Veterans Support Centre, SSAFA, and the Legion. Systems have been developed to ensure that people are supported from the time that they are given notice.
- **Veterans as Rough Sleepers:** No current rough sleepers are military veterans; robust charity support is available, and no known cases at present.
- **Engagement Challenges:** Cllr Woodall raised issues about bureaucracy and trust among rough sleepers; Bob described the Brave and Team Around Me models for building trust and supporting complex needs, noting high levels of childhood trauma among rough sleepers.
- **Unemployment & Youth Homelessness:** Cllr Stark questioned the role of unemployment; Robert and Hannah clarified it is rarely a standalone cause, with family breakdown and low income being more significant. Many presenting as homeless are in employment but cannot afford housing.
- **Private Rental Market Concerns:** Cllr Taylor raised the impacts of Section 21 abolition, EPC requirements, and landlords leaving the market; Hannah and Bob both acknowledged these challenges, ongoing efforts to retain landlords, and the potential for government assistance with property upgrades.
- **Debt & Housing Associations:** Cllr Davies asked about debt prevention; Bob explained early intervention and payment plans can help prevent homelessness and facilitate re-entry into housing association properties. Registered providers may accept tenants with debt if payment plans are in place and there is evidence of commitment to lower their level of debt.
- **Forecasting Numbers:** Cllr Davies inquired about future numbers; Bob expects numbers to peak due to the issues highlighted above (private sector landlords using S21 notices whilst they are still able and a reduction in private rented sector accommodation), then decrease with improved early intervention.

6. Additional Observations

- Early intervention toolkit being developed for Talk Community hubs to standardise and publicise available interventions.
- Efforts to secure funding for charitable groups and expand cooking facilities in temporary housing; exploring direct leasing from landlords leaving the market.
- Ukrainian and other migrant cases discussed, with tailored support provided; current shelter users are mainly Romanian, Polish, and one Moroccan individual.
- Recognition of the team's passion and commitment to the strategy and ongoing work.