

Title: Temporary Accommodation - Scrutiny Management Board Briefing Report

Meeting: Scrutiny Committee

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Classification

Open

Report purpose

To provide Scrutiny Management Board with a clear, evidence-led account of how temporary accommodation works in Herefordshire, why demand and costs are increasing, the effect on residents, identified gaps in provision, and the action being taken to improve outcomes and value for money.

Background

1. Temporary accommodation has come to scrutiny because demand, cost and complexity have increased significantly in recent years. The report explains the statutory duties that require the council to provide accommodation in specific circumstances, the pressures affecting supply and move-on, and the local and national actions needed to reduce reliance on emergency provision.

Meeting objectives

2. To understand what temporary accommodation is and when the council has a legal duty to provide it.
3. To consider the local drivers of demand, cost and service pressure.
4. To review the impact of temporary accommodation on residents, including families, young people, care leavers, veterans and households with complex needs.
5. To consider the actions being taken locally to improve supply, strengthen prevention, reduce spend and support move-on.
6. To identify where national policy, subsidy and housing supply decisions affect local temporary accommodation pressures.

Report information

7. This section brings together the detailed evidence requested by Scrutiny Management Board: what temporary accommodation is, how households enter and leave it, what drives demand, who is affected, how the service is funded, where the gaps are, and which actions are likely to reduce cost and improve outcomes.

Executive Summary

8. Preventing homelessness is at the heart of Herefordshire Council's Housing Service and is one of the most effective ways of supporting vulnerable residents whilst reducing reliance on temporary accommodation and emergency interventions. Prevention means working with individuals and families at the earliest possible opportunity when there is a risk that they may lose their home, rather than waiting until a housing crisis occurs. The aim is to help people remain safely housed wherever possible, maintain stability for families, and avoid the significant personal, social and financial impacts associated with homelessness. Early intervention is not only better for residents, but also represents better value for the public purse by reducing the need for costly temporary accommodation placements and crisis support.
9. Prevention activity is delivered through a combination of Housing Solutions and Talk Community services, working closely with partner organisations, landlords, registered providers and community groups. Prevention Officers identify households at risk of homelessness at the earliest stage and provide practical support tailored to individual circumstances. This includes negotiating with landlords to prevent eviction, mediating between family members where relationship breakdown threatens accommodation, assisting residents to access welfare benefits and debt advice, and helping people resolve issues before they escalate into homelessness. The service also works proactively with households facing financial hardship, including those experiencing rent arrears, mortgage arrears or other housing-related debts.
10. A range of financial tools are used to sustain existing accommodation and secure alternative housing where necessary. These include rent deposit and bond schemes, rent in advance payments, discretionary goodwill payments, interest-free loans, and support to access charitable funding and other sources of financial assistance. In many cases, relatively small interventions such as clearing rent arrears, resolving a debt issue, or providing a deposit can prevent a household from becoming homeless. Housing Solutions Officers also work with families and support networks to explore options that allow people to remain in suitable accommodation, extending notice periods or agreeing realistic repayment plans where appropriate.
11. Prevention is therefore much more than responding to homelessness applications. It involves identifying risk early, understanding the underlying causes of housing instability, and coordinating support that enables households to remain safely in their homes. Through this approach, Herefordshire Council seeks to make homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring, ensuring that residents receive the right support at the right time while reducing the demand for temporary accommodation and crisis services.
12. Herefordshire's prevention-led approach is also beginning to attract wider interest and recognition beyond the county. The service's emphasis on early identification, community-based prevention, partnership working through Talk Community, use of prevention tools, and a clear aim to make homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring aligns strongly with emerging national policy direction and best practice. This includes engagement and interest from central government and the Centre for Homelessness Impact in relation to prevention-focused models, as well as peer interest from Salford Council, whose work is linked to the wider Greater Manchester approach championed by the Prime Minister. This external interest is important because it demonstrates that Herefordshire is not simply responding to

crisis, but is developing a proactive, evidence-led model that others are looking to learn from. It also provides an opportunity for the council to influence wider policy thinking, share rural learning, and ensure that national homelessness prevention approaches recognise the specific challenges faced by areas such as Herefordshire.

13. The Early Homeless Prevention Team has already demonstrated the value of this approach. During Quarter 1 of 2026/27, the team supported 77 individuals and households, achieved 17 successful early homelessness interventions and supported 72 cases through partnership working. This shows the practical impact of upstream prevention: resolving housing issues earlier, reducing escalation into homelessness applications and helping to manage demand for temporary accommodation.

Temporary accommodation and legal duties – What is Temporary Accommodation?

Definitions

14. **Prevention Duty S195** - The Prevention Duty requires a local authority to work with people who are threatened with homelessness within 56 days to help them keep their current accommodation or find alternative housing before they become homeless.
15. **Relief Duty S189B** - A statutory duty requiring councils to take reasonable steps to help eligible households who are already homeless to secure suitable accommodation and end their homelessness.
16. **Interim Duty S188** - A statutory duty requiring councils to secure temporary accommodation for eligible applicants where there is reason to believe they may be homeless and in priority need, pending a full homelessness assessment.
17. **Main Duty S193** - A statutory duty requiring councils to secure suitable accommodation for eligible homeless households who are in priority need and not intentionally homeless.
18. **Local Housing Allowance (LHA)** - The rate used to calculate housing support for households renting in the private sector, based on local rent levels and the size of the household. In many areas actual rents are higher than LHA rates, creating affordability challenges for households on low incomes.
19. Herefordshire Council does not decide whether to provide temporary accommodation by choice or discretion alone. Each case is assessed against homelessness legislation, mainly Part VII of the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. This means officers must consider whether the person is eligible for assistance, homeless or at risk of homelessness, and in priority need, before deciding what legal duty is owed. Depending on the circumstances, the council may have a prevention duty, a relief duty, an interim accommodation duty while enquiries are made, or a main housing duty to secure suitable accommodation.
20. Temporary accommodation is housing arranged by a local authority for eligible homeless households in specified circumstances. It can include self-contained, council or registered provider accommodation, privately leased homes, supported settings, hostels, hotels or bed and breakfast accommodation. It is not necessarily a single building or tenure.
21. Temporary accommodation can therefore be provided quickly where the statutory threshold is met, including under the interim duty to accommodate, commonly referred to as Section 188. This duty applies where the council has reason to believe that an applicant may be homeless, eligible for assistance and in priority need. It is a deliberately low threshold, meaning the council does not need to complete all enquiries before providing accommodation where immediate safety is required. Priority need can include households

with dependent children, pregnant women, 16- and 17-year-olds, care leavers under 25, people vulnerable due to disability or institutional experience, and people fleeing domestic abuse.

22. In practice, temporary accommodation is a legal safeguard rather than a general entitlement. A household may be accommodated while the council investigates the homelessness application, and accommodation may then continue under the relief duty or main housing duty until a suitable longer-term solution is secured or the temporary accommodation duty comes to an end.

Homelessness and rough sleeping

23. A household does not need to have slept rough to be homeless or to qualify for homelessness assistance. Many families enter temporary accommodation following loss of a tenancy, relationship breakdown, domestic abuse, financial hardship or another housing crisis.
24. However, equally someone sleeping rough can make a homeless application and the exact same legislation and eligibility will be used.

Rough sleeping	Homelessness
A visible form of homelessness where a person sleeps outside or somewhere not designed for habitation.	A broader legal and practical concept. It can include rough sleeping, sofa surfing, living in insecure or unsuitable accommodation, and households placed in temporary accommodation.

How the temporary accommodation service works

Stage	What happens	Timescale
1. Approach	A household contacts Housing Solutions because it is homeless or threatened with homelessness.	Same day
2. Initial triage	Immediate safety, eligibility and homelessness risk are checked so urgent cases are prioritised.	1 working day
3. Assessment	Eligibility, homelessness, priority need and circumstances are assessed; a personalised housing plan is developed where required.	Up to 10 working days
4. Prevention or relief	Officers work to keep the existing home or secure another option, including private rented or supported housing.	Up to 56 days
5. Interim or emergency placement	Accommodation is secured where the statutory threshold is met.	Same day where required
6. Temporary accommodation management	The team manages placements, charges, benefit claims, property issues and support or referrals.	Ongoing, with regular review
7. Move-on	Households move to social housing, private rented housing, supported housing or another settled option.	As soon as suitable accommodation is available

25. Households can access temporary accommodation through several routes. This includes presenting in person at Blueschool House, contacting the Housing Solutions Team by telephone, referrals from emergency services, hospitals or social care, domestic abuse referral routes, charity and voluntary sector support, and the council's out-of-hours service where someone is facing homelessness outside normal working hours. In each case, the council assesses whether the person is homeless or threatened with homelessness, eligible for assistance and potentially in priority need before deciding whether interim or temporary accommodation is required.
26. The Temporary Accommodation Team was subject to an independent review by the South West Audit Partnership (SWAP) in March 2025. The audit highlighted that the risk level for the service is low, and the control environment is strong, confirming that sound arrangements for governance, risk management and internal control are in place and operating effectively. The review found no high or medium priority recommendations and identified only one low priority recommendation relating to the further development of rent and recharge monitoring processes. The software for a rent account is currently being developed to record the rental income and address this recommendation. The audit recognised the strength of the service's governance arrangements, budget monitoring, placement management processes, performance monitoring framework, and up-to-date housing and homelessness policies and procedures. It also acknowledged the proactive work being undertaken to reduce the use of bed and breakfast accommodation and increase the availability of more suitable housing options through service development and asset acquisition. The findings provide independent assurance that the service is well-managed, continuously improving, and focused on delivering effective outcomes for households experiencing homelessness.

Demand for temporary accommodation

27. Trend Data

Measure	Aug-20	Aug-21	Aug-22	Aug-23	Aug-24	Aug-25	Aug-26
Total Households	49	66	79	130	137	153	184
Percentage change from previous August		34.7%	19.7%	64.6%	5.4%	11.7%	20.3%

28. Since 2020, the August data shows a sharp and sustained increase in total households in temporary accommodation, rising from 49 in August 2020 to 184 in August 2026. This is an increase of 135 households, meaning the number of households has more than tripled over the period. The biggest increase happened between August 2022 and August 2023, when the total rose from 79 to 130. The breakdown of causes are due to:
- Rising homelessness presentations** and demand.
 - Loss of private rented accommodation**, including no-fault evictions, rent increases and landlords leaving the market. **Local Housing Allowance rates falling behind private rents**, making accommodation less affordable.
 - Shortage of social and affordable housing**, reducing move-on options.
 - Longer stays in temporary accommodation**, with households unable to move through the system as quickly.
 - More complex household needs**, requiring additional support before a move to settled accommodation can be achieved.
 - Population pressures from domestic abuse, family breakdown and economic hardship.**

The largest increase occurred between **2022 and 2023**, which is significant as it aligns with a period of wider housing market and economic pressure, including:

- a. The post-pandemic withdrawal of housing protections.
- b. Significant inflation and cost-of-living pressures.
- c. Rapid increases in private sector rents.
- d. Increased pressures on the social housing sector and reduced availability of lettings.

29. Growth slowed in August 2024, but the overall trend has continued upward in August 2025 and August 2026. We are unable to exactly predict how numbers will increase but without intervention numbers in August 2027 could be as high as **221** if we use the continuation of the latest annual increase.

30. What makes up demand:

- a. Loss of private rented accommodation or inability to secure another private tenancy. This is a key route into homelessness, particularly where a landlord serves notice, a tenancy ends, or a household cannot find another affordable private rented property before they have to leave.
- b. Shortage of social and affordable rented housing. When there are not enough affordable homes available, households have fewer realistic move-on options and may remain in temporary accommodation for longer. This is a significant issue in Herefordshire at present and is being discussed with the Registered Providers to understand how we make more affordable housing available.
- c. Rents that exceed what households can afford or what welfare support covers. Even where homes are available, they may be above Local Housing Allowance levels or unaffordable on the household's income, making it difficult to prevent homelessness or secure move-on.
- d. Relationship breakdown, domestic abuse or family exclusion. These situations can leave people with nowhere safe or suitable to stay at short notice, meaning the council may need to respond quickly to prevent rough sleeping or unsafe arrangements.
- e. Larger families requiring homes that are scarce in the social housing stock. Larger households need bigger properties, but these are limited locally, so families can wait longer for a suitable home and may be harder to place appropriately.
- f. Single people requiring lower-cost one-bedroom or supported accommodation. Demand for one-bedroom and lower-cost accommodation is high, and some people also need support alongside housing, which limits the number of suitable options available.
- g. People with accessibility, health, care or support needs who require specialist provision. Some households need adapted accommodation, support services or a particular location close to care, health services or family networks, which can make suitable placements harder to find.
- h. Low wages and limited household income. Where wages are low or insecure, households may struggle to meet private rents, deposits, rent in advance and other upfront costs, even if they are working. This increases the risk of homelessness and reduces the number of affordable move-on options.

31. Households in temporary accommodation can come from all walks of life and may be facing many different challenges. This can include young people from the age of 16, families with children, single adults, older people, people who are working but cannot afford local rents, and people with health, care, accessibility or support needs. A number of households will also have more complex circumstances that need careful assessment and management. This means the service is not simply finding any available room or property; officers must consider suitability, risk, support needs, location, household make-

up and the impact on others in the accommodation. Careful matching is important so that vulnerable or impressionable people are not placed in situations that could increase risk, cause distress or lead to placement breakdown. This adds further complexity and pressure for the team, because every placement must balance legal duties, availability, affordability, safeguarding and the individual circumstances of the household.

32. Once accommodation has been arranged, officers continue to manage the placement and support the household to move towards settled or permanent accommodation. This includes keeping in contact with the household, resolving practical issues, working with providers and landlords, supporting benefit or affordability matters, reviewing suitability, and identifying move-on options.
33. Officers also have to manage behaviour where placements are at risk, including responding to complaints, addressing damage, anti-social behaviour or other tenancy-type issues, and issuing warning or breach letters where needed. In some incidents, officers also have to move people between accommodation for their own safety or to reduce risk within a placement. This is all additional work alongside the initial homelessness assessment and placement decision, and it demonstrates the ongoing pressure on the team to keep accommodation safe, suitable and stable while also helping households move on.

Monthly flow and turnover

Measure	Apr-26	May-26	Jun-26	Jul-26	Aug-26
Temp	57	55	59	57	63
B&B	82	76	77	89	72
Hostels	49	47	50	46	49
Total Households	188	178	186	192	184
Average days in TA	175	174	159	158	170
No. moved out	22	26	28	22	20
No. moved in	27	26	34	33	21

34. The monthly figures show not only the number of households in temporary accommodation, but also the significant amount of work taking place behind the scenes to help people move on. Between April and August 2026, the team supported more than 20 households each month to leave temporary accommodation for settled or more permanent housing solutions. This is important to recognise: every move-out represents detailed casework, housing advice, landlord or registered provider liaison, affordability checks, benefit work, support planning and practical help for the household. Although overall demand remains high, the data shows that the service is actively finding solutions every month and preventing temporary accommodation numbers from rising even further.

Accommodation currently available and how revenue offsets it

35. Current accommodation mix that the council has access to

Accommodation route	Evidence identified	Role in the pathway
Self-contained private landlord properties	35 properties secured through private landlords, ranging from smaller units to larger family accommodation.	Provides more stable temporary accommodation and reduces reliance on hotels and nightly paid provision.
HMO provision	Two HMO blocks, providing five units in each block, with shared facilities leased by the council,	Provides shared temporary accommodation for single households where self-

Accommodation route	Evidence identified	Role in the pathway
	plus one external self-contained unit.	contained options are not available.
Council-leased flats	Four blocks of self-contained studio-style flats: two blocks with six flats and two blocks with four flats, including one wheelchair-adapted unit.	Offers more suitable self-contained accommodation for households requiring stability and privacy.
Registered provider managed units	Includes one three-bedroom Stonewater property, one three-bedroom Citizen property for domestic abuse survivors with a panic room, and 15 Connexus-managed flats.	Provides partner-managed accommodation, including targeted safe accommodation for domestic abuse survivors.
B&B accommodation	Four providers offering approximately 57 units in total, including one provider used for single males.	Emergency and overflow accommodation when self-contained accommodation is unavailable.
Hostel accommodation	Four hostel providers offering approximately 49 units, plus several small external self-contained units.	Provides emergency and short-term accommodation for households who cannot immediately access self-contained provision.
Chain hotels	Used when council-controlled stock and approved providers have no vacancies or cannot meet a specific need, such as accessibility or location.	Acts as costly emergency overflow provision and is avoided where suitable alternatives are available.

36. Where availability is limited, priority is generally given to households whose needs make self-contained accommodation most important, including families with children, pregnant women, people fleeing domestic abuse and care leavers. This helps the service make the best use of limited supply while reducing inappropriate or extended use of B&B, hostel or hotel accommodation.

Revenue offsets

37. The council seeks to recover eligible accommodation costs through Housing Benefit or related subsidy arrangements. Recovery does not necessarily equal the actual cost paid, particularly for nightly paid or hotel accommodation. The difference is a net cost for the council. Rent collection, eligible service charges, void management and accurate benefit claims all affect the final revenue position.
38. For self-contained temporary accommodation, Housing Benefit subsidy does not reimburse the council for the full cost of the accommodation. The subsidy rules use a formula based on 90% of the 2011 relevant Local Housing Allowance rate, rather than the actual rent or nightly charge the council may have to pay. In simple terms, this means that even where a household is entitled to Housing Benefit, the amount the council can recover through Revenues and Benefits may be lower than the real cost of securing the accommodation.
39. This creates a financial gap for the council. The gap can be greater where accommodation costs have increased faster than subsidy rates, where the property cost is above the recoverable level, or where there are costs that cannot be claimed back, such as some management, support, void, repair or provider charges. For B&B, hostel and hotel accommodation, Housing Benefit is claimed against the cost charged by the provider, less £21.07 per week for service charges such as heating, lighting and water.

Cost pressures, affordability and future pressure

40. Expenditure trend

Financial year	Temporary accommodation spend	Nights of accommodation provided	Average Cost Per Person Per Night
2023/24	£1,675,935	47,834	£35.03
2024/25	£2,217,000	51,253	£43.25
2025/26	£2,977,970	59,792	£49.80
2026/27	£3,265,000 Forecast		

41. Costs are increasing because demand for temporary accommodation has risen and because wider inflationary pressures have increased the cost of securing and managing accommodation. This includes higher accommodation charges, increased hotel and B&B costs, repairs, void works and day-to-day housing management activity. However, the team continues to look for ways to reduce costs wherever possible, including preventing homelessness earlier, improving move-on, using accommodation more efficiently, seeking better value placements and reducing reliance on higher-cost emergency options.
42. It is also important to note that temporary accommodation is funded through a combination of council base budget, specific homelessness and temporary accommodation grants, and eligible Housing Benefit subsidy recovery. These funding sources do not always meet the full cost of provision, particularly where demand rises, placement costs increase, or the amount that can be recovered through subsidy is lower than the actual cost paid. Where the total cost of temporary accommodation exceeds the available budget, grant and recoverable subsidy, the difference creates additional financial pressure for the council.

Cost of Hotel accommodation used for Temporary Accommodation

43. Hotel accommodation is used as emergency and overflow provision when other temporary accommodation options are unavailable or unsuitable. However, hotel pricing is volatile and can change quickly depending on demand, availability and local market conditions. Prices can increase significantly when there are major events in Herefordshire or nearby areas, such as the Hay Festival or Cheltenham races, because rooms are in higher demand and the council may have fewer affordable options to choose from. This means hotel-based temporary accommodation can create unpredictable cost pressure, particularly where placements are needed at short notice or where households cannot be moved on quickly.
44. The council also must consider value for money when securing emergency accommodation. In periods where local hotel prices increase significantly, or where local availability is limited, it may be necessary to place households outside the county to keep costs down and make sure accommodation can still be secured. This is not the council's preferred option, and officers seek to avoid it wherever possible. However, where all allocated temporary accommodation has been used and available local hotel accommodation has also been exhausted, out-of-county placements may be the only practical option. In making these decisions, officers must balance suitability with the need to achieve value for money, including household circumstances, support needs, safety, transport, schooling, employment and connections to services.
45. If accommodated for a year in hotel accommodation an individual/ household could cost the local authority over £31,000.

Cost period	Chain Hotel example
Night	£85 (can fluctuate)
Week	£595
Month	£2,550
Year	£31,025

46. Further pressures expected:

- a. Continued demand if affordable housing supply does not increase at the same pace. If the number of affordable homes does not grow in line with homelessness demand, more households will need temporary accommodation and fewer will be able to move on quickly. This creates pressure on both availability and cost.
- b. Additional affordable housing can be temporarily removed from the available supply when properties become void and are awaiting repair, refurbishment or re-let by Registered Providers. The speed at which these homes can be brought back into use is currently affected by wider workforce capacity issues, including shortages in skilled trades and contractors. This can delay turnaround times, reduce the number of properties available for nominations, and place further pressure on temporary accommodation and move-on pathways.
- c. Exposure to nightly hotel pricing and limited local availability. When local temporary accommodation is full, the council may have to use hotels at short notice. Hotel prices can change quickly and increase during busy periods or local events, making costs harder to predict and control.
- d. Longer stays where suitable move-on accommodation is unavailable. Where households cannot access social housing, affordable private rented accommodation, supported accommodation or adapted homes, they remain in temporary accommodation for longer. This reduces turnover and means fewer placements are available for new households in crisis.
- e. Higher repair, void and management activity as the portfolio expands. As the number of temporary accommodation units and placements increases, so does the work needed to manage them. This includes cyclical inspections, general inspections, gas/ electrical compliance checks on every placement, repairs, cleaning, void turnaround, provider liaison, rent or charge queries, complaints and general housing management activity.
- f. Greater need for adapted, large-family and supported accommodation, which can be more difficult to source. Some households need accommodation that is accessible, large enough for family size, or supported because of health, care, safeguarding or other needs. These options are more limited, so placements can take longer to arrange and may cost more.
- g. Any continuing gap between actual accommodation cost and recoverable subsidy. The council cannot always recover the full cost of temporary accommodation through Housing Benefit or subsidy arrangements. Where the amount paid for accommodation is higher than the recoverable amount, the difference becomes a net cost pressure for the council.

Affordability

47. Affordability is a key pressure within the temporary accommodation system. Many households are unable to access the private rented sector because rents, deposits and upfront costs are higher than they can reasonably afford. Even where a property is available, the rent may be above LHA levels or above what the household can sustain over time.

48. This means households can enter temporary accommodation because they cannot secure an affordable property. A current example would be:

A current 3-bed private rent example in Hereford is advertised at **£1,200 per month**, while other current 3-bed listings in Hereford are commonly around £995 to £1,300 per month. The relevant 3-bedroom Local Housing Allowance rate for Herefordshire remains **£172.60 per week**, which is approximately **£747.93 per month**.

That creates an illustrative shortfall of around **£452.07 per month** for a 3-bedroom household:

Measure	Amount
Example 3-bed private rent	£1,200 pcm
3-bed LHA rate	£747.93 pcm
Monthly shortfall	£452.07 pcm

49. In simple terms, this shows that even where a household is entitled to support through LHA, the amount available may be significantly below actual private rental costs in Hereford. This makes it much harder for households to secure private rented accommodation and increases pressure on temporary accommodation and social housing move-on options. Unfortunately they can remain in temporary accommodation for longer because suitable move-on options are limited. Affordability therefore affects both demand into the service and the speed at which households can leave.

Property size	LHA per week	LHA per month	Private rent example per month	Illustrative monthly gap
1 bedroom	£109.32	£473.72	£700	£226.28
2 bedrooms	£138.08	£598.35	£970	£371.65
3 bedrooms	£172.60	£747.93	£1,200	£452.07
4 bedrooms	£224.38	£972.31	£1,690	£717.69

The Impact of living in temporary accommodation

50. Temporary accommodation prevents immediate rooflessness and can provide safety while a longer-term solution is found. However, the quality, location, facilities and duration of a placement materially affect the household's experience.
51. The service is actively seeking to increase the supply of self-contained temporary accommodation, as this generally provides a more stable and suitable option for households than hotel or bed and breakfast placements. Self-contained accommodation gives households greater privacy, access to cooking and laundry facilities, and a better environment in which to maintain routines, family life, health, education and employment while longer-term housing options are progressed. Future purchases of accommodation for temporary accommodation use will be self-contained, supporting the council's aim to reduce reliance on less suitable and higher-cost emergency provision wherever possible.
52. When a household is placed into temporary accommodation, officers explain what facilities are available within the placement and what the household can expect during their stay. In hotel or bed and breakfast style accommodation, this may include basic room facilities such as a microwave, fridge and kettle where these can be provided or where the accommodation provider makes them available. These facilities are important because they

allow households to store food safely, prepare simple meals and hot drinks, and reduce reliance on takeaway food or other more expensive options. However, provision can vary depending on the type of accommodation, the layout of the building, fire safety requirements, provider rules and the need to manage shared spaces safely. The service therefore seeks to provide practical support and reasonable facilities wherever possible, while balancing safety, suitability, cost and the limitations of emergency accommodation.

Area	Potential impact	What good practice should test
Health and wellbeing	Stress, uncertainty and deterioration in mental or physical health.	Access to health services, support and suitable facilities.
Education	Travel disruption, reduced space for homework and instability in routines.	School continuity, transport issues and length of placement.
Employment	Difficulty maintaining work where location or childcare arrangements change.	Location decisions and support to sustain work.
Family life	Reduced privacy, lack of cooking or laundry facilities and pressure on relationships.	Self-contained placement where possible and prompt move-on.
Community connections	Distance from family, support networks and services.	Placement location and recorded reasons for out-of-area use.
Financial resilience	Storage, food and travel costs can rise while households have limited control over their circumstances.	Affordability assessment and access to advice.

53. The service seeks to make temporary accommodation as safe, suitable and comfortable as possible while households are waiting for longer-term housing. However, there are practical limits to what can be provided in some settings, particularly where accommodation is shared or where facilities have to be managed for a number of households. For example, installing or providing washing machines in shared temporary accommodation can create housing management challenges, including access and fairness where several households need to use the same facilities, responsibility for cleaning and upkeep, drying clothes safely, managing lost or damaged belongings, and ensuring communal areas are kept tidy and safe. These issues can increase the risk of complaints, disputes, damage or placement breakdown. For this reason, decisions about facilities must balance residents' comfort with safety, suitability, fairness between households and the council's ability to manage the accommodation effectively.
54. The government's minimum legal requirement is relatively narrow when delivering temporary accommodation. A council must provide accommodation that is:
 - a. Suitable for the household's needs.
 - b. Safe and in reasonable condition.
 - c. Available for occupation.
 - d. Located, where possible, so that schooling, employment, medical treatment and
 - e. support networks can be maintained.
 - f. Compliant with statutory guidance on affordability, overcrowding, safeguarding and
 - g. welfare.

The law does not require councils to provide:

- a. Self-contained accommodation.
- b. Furnished accommodation.

- c. Ongoing tenancy sustainment support.
 - d. Dedicated support workers.
 - e. Local accommodation within the authority area in every case.
 - f. Enhanced welfare, employment or health support.
55. Herefordshire Council's approach extends beyond the minimum legal duty. The service combines accommodation provision with intensive homelessness prevention, dedicated housing support, partnership working and investment in local accommodation options. This approach seeks not only to meet legal obligations but also to improve outcomes for residents by reducing the use of unsuitable accommodation, supporting household stability and helping residents move sustainably into settled housing.

Children, young people and veterans

56. Children placed with families - Herefordshire's Bed & Breakfast (B&B) elimination plan sets out how the council will reduce the use of B&B accommodation for homeless households, particularly families with children and other households for whom B&B is not suitable as anything other than a short-term emergency response. The plan addresses the main reasons households enter and remain in B&B, including high demand, limited local temporary accommodation, shortage of affordable move-on options, affordability pressures in the private rented sector, and the need for more self-contained accommodation. It was developed in conjunction with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to provide a clear, evidence-based route to reducing reliance on B&B, improving outcomes for households, and managing cost pressures. Its purpose is to strengthen prevention, increase suitable accommodation supply, improve move-on, reduce the length of time households spend in B&B, and ensure that any use of B&B is limited, monitored and only used when no more suitable option is available.
57. It is important to recognise that some families with children are currently remaining in B&B or hotel-style accommodation for longer than six weeks. This is not because the service considers this type of accommodation suitable for extended family use, but because there is not enough self-contained temporary accommodation available locally to meet current demand. These families remain a priority for the service, and officers continue to review their placements, seek move-on opportunities and prioritise self-contained accommodation as soon as it becomes available. This position reflects the wider supply gap rather than a lack of focus on families, and reinforces why increasing self-contained temporary accommodation is central to reducing the use and duration of B&B placements for households with children.

Homeless 16- and 17-year-olds

58. General temporary accommodation is not suitable for 16- and 17-year-olds. They are children in law, require appropriate safeguarding and support, and cannot usually hold a tenancy in their own right or bid independently for accommodation before they turn 18. For this reason, B&B or hostel-style accommodation should only be used in very limited emergency circumstances, while a more suitable supported option is identified.
59. Housing and Children's Services operate a joint protocol for homeless 16- and 17-year-olds. When a young person presents as homeless, both services work together to provide advice, assessment and safeguarding support, and to explain the Children's Services and Housing routes clearly so the young person can understand what each option means in practice, the voice of the young person must be heard. Any accommodation arranged through the Housing route must still reflect the young person's age, vulnerability and need for support,

with planning focused on stability, preparation for independence and a suitable longer-term housing option when they are able to hold a tenancy.

60. The council has recently varied a commissioned contract with a local support provider to create dedicated supported accommodation for 16- and 17-year-olds. This provides a more appropriate alternative to general temporary accommodation, with support to help young people manage day-to-day living, engage with services, develop independent living skills and prepare for sustainable move-on. The approach recognises that young people in this cohort need both accommodation and support, and that their response must be jointly managed across Housing and Children's Services.

Care leavers and young adults up to 25

61. Care leavers have specific rights and protections under homelessness and leaving care legislation. Where a care leaver is homeless or threatened with homelessness, Housing and Children's Services must work together so that the young person receives coordinated advice, assessment and support. Care leavers aged 18, 19 or 20 who were looked after, accommodated or fostered by a local authority while aged 16 or 17 will usually have priority need under homelessness legislation. This means that, where they are eligible and homeless, the council may have a duty to secure accommodation for them. Children's Services also has ongoing leaving care responsibilities, including Personal Adviser support and pathway planning up to age 25 where applicable. In practice, this means the council must consider both homelessness duties and corporate parenting responsibilities, ensuring that care leavers are not left without safe accommodation and are supported towards suitable, sustainable housing options.

Veterans

62. Veterans are assessed under the same homelessness legislation as any other household approaching the council for assistance. This means the same statutory tests are applied, including eligibility, homelessness, priority need and any duty owed. Veterans are not treated as a separate homelessness category, but their service history and any related health, welfare or support needs are considered as part of the overall assessment and support planning process. Veterans do not need to demonstrate a local connection in the same way as other applicants where the relevant armed forces provisions apply.
63. Veterans who are homeless or threatened with homelessness can also be signposted or referred to appropriate armed forces welfare and support services where this would also assist with housing, health, wellbeing or resettlement needs.
64. Herefordshire's local context is relevant because the county has a strong military presence. Veterans can face housing instability for a range of reasons, including relationship breakdown, poor mental health, physical injury, trauma, substance misuse, financial hardship or difficulty adjusting to civilian life.
65. Specialist veterans' organisations can also support housing and welfare outcomes. These include Op FORTITUDE, Veterans Gateway, SSAFA, the Royal British Legion, Veterans Aid, Stoll and Haig Housing. Referrals or signposting to these organisations can help with emergency accommodation, tenancy sustainment, financial support, welfare advice and longer-term housing solutions.

Equality, unmet need and the housing gap

66. Groups at risk of unmet need include:

Group or need	Gap identified in council evidence	Consequence
Larger families	Fewer than ten five-bedroom social homes in the County.	Long waits and reliance on expensive or unsuitable placements.
Single households	Strong demand for one-bedroom and move-on accommodation.	Longer stays in emergency or supported settings.
Disabled households	Need for wheelchair-accessible or adapted homes.	Limited suitable placement choice.
People with complex needs	Need for self-contained, shared and solo supported options.	Placement breakdown or use of accommodation not designed for the person's needs.
Young people and care leavers	Emergency, transitional and move-on capacity constraints.	Bottlenecks and extended stays.
People fleeing domestic abuse	Need for safe, appropriate and sometimes confidential accommodation.	Reduced choice and potential location constraints.

67. Recent temporary accommodation data also shows the scale of complexity within placements. Between 1 September 2025 and 1 September 2026, 328 households placed in temporary accommodation had multiple or complex support needs. Within this group

- 185 households had a history of mental health problems
- 130 were at risk of or had experienced domestic abuse
- 34 had an offending history
- 30 had drug dependency needs
- 24 had alcohol dependency needs
- 23 were care leavers.

This demonstrates that the pressure on temporary accommodation is not only about the number of households, but also about the complexity of need and the limited availability of supported accommodation pathways.

The Wider housing gap

Indicator	Evidence
Home Point demand	1,845 households on the housing register
House price and earnings	Average house price of £283,000, median full-time earnings of £32,500 and lower-quartile earnings of £25,300.
Affordable housing delivery	Current delivery was below the requirement in the 2011-2031 local plan.
TA supply gap	Approximately 68 units of supply against demand of 177 and an average of 150.

What housing is needed

68. The council's understanding of local housing need is based on evidence gathered over a number of years through homelessness and temporary accommodation trends, housing register data, homelessness assessments, Strategic Housing Market Assessments, Disabled Facilities Grant and adaptation demand, supported housing demand, domestic abuse pathways, and the needs of young people and care leavers. The sustained increase in homelessness and temporary accommodation use, combined with shortages in specific types of accommodation, formed a key part of the business case that supported Full Council's approval of a £10 million capital programme. The programme is intended to be delivered over the period 2026 – 2029 to increase the supply of accommodation where demand significantly exceeds availability, reduce reliance on costly emergency accommodation, improve housing outcomes for residents, and address gaps in the local housing market that are contributing to homelessness and longer stays in temporary accommodation.
69. The evidence identifies a need for:
- a. Two and three-bedroom self-contained homes for families.
 - b. Four and five-bedroom homes for larger families.
 - c. Wheelchair-accessible and adaptable homes.
 - d. Supported and transitional accommodation with the right level of support.
 - e. Safe accommodation for people fleeing domestic abuse.
 - f. Accommodation for 16- and 17-year-olds and care leavers.
 - g. The identified need for lower-cost one-bedroom homes, family-sized self-contained homes, accessible accommodation, supported accommodation and accommodation for young people has directly informed the council's capital programme approach.

What is being done to reduce spend and improve supply

Securing more accommodation

70. Reducing temporary accommodation expenditure requires both an increase in the supply of suitable accommodation and a reduction in reliance on high-cost emergency provision. The council's approach is therefore focused on developing a more sustainable accommodation pathway by acquiring and creating additional housing, making better use of existing assets, strengthening partnerships with accommodation providers, and increasing the availability of self-contained accommodation. These measures are intended to improve outcomes for households, increase local provision, reduce placements in costly nightly-paid accommodation, and provide greater control over quality, availability and long-term costs. Alongside this, Strategic Housing continues to influence the delivery of affordable and specialist housing through the planning system to help address the underlying shortage of accommodation that contributes to homelessness and pressures within temporary accommodation.
71. In addition there is also:
- a. The Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) and council match funding to acquire dwellings to be used as temporary accommodation.
 - b. Progressing acquisition and refurbishment projects.
 - c. Assess the use of council assets.

- d. Increasing the supply of self-contained accommodation reduces reliance on more expensive hotel and B&B placements and provides a more suitable environment for families and vulnerable households.
- e. Council-controlled and partner-managed accommodation provides greater certainty over availability, quality standards and placement costs.
- f. Self-contained accommodation typically delivers better value for money over time, particularly for households requiring longer stays, whilst providing improved privacy, stability and independence.
- g. Greater control over accommodation supply also reduces exposure to market fluctuations, nightly rate increases and availability pressures experienced within the hotel and B&B sector.
- h. Expanding this type of provision supports improved move-on planning and enables households to remain closer to employment, education, healthcare and support networks.
- i. A new B&B and hotel framework is being procured to provide a more controlled and transparent route for securing emergency accommodation when it is required. The framework is proposed for a 10-year period with an estimated value of up to £36 million. Although the council's aim remains to reduce reliance on B&B and hotel accommodation wherever possible, having a formal framework will strengthen the council's ability to manage the market, set clearer expectations with providers, improve consistency and value for money, and forecast spend more accurately. This will also give the service better oversight of availability, pricing and usage trends, supporting more robust budget planning and reducing exposure to ad hoc nightly pricing pressures.
- j. Strategic Housing are a statutory consultee on planning applications enabling them to negotiate affordable housing on new developments, including through Section 106 agreements where applicable. This enables the council to influence the size, type, tenure and accessibility of new homes so that delivery is mindful of identified local need, rather than simply maximising unit numbers. By using evidence from the housing register, homelessness demand, temporary accommodation pressures and specialist accommodation requirements, the team can seek affordable homes that better reflect what households actually need, including one-bedroom homes, family-sized accommodation, accessible homes and supported or specialist provision where appropriate.

Delivery of new accommodation

72. Station Street, Ross-on-Wye provides a practical example of this affordable housing delivery approach. The scheme delivered four self-contained flats for 18 to 25 year olds who are at risk of homelessness, creating a more suitable and stable option than emergency accommodation. The council secured Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) funding to support delivery of the scheme, helping to increase local supply for a cohort that can otherwise face limited housing options and a higher risk of repeat homelessness. This provision is particularly important for young adults linked to corporate parenting responsibilities, including care leavers, as the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 introduces new support for care-experienced young people and strengthens the policy direction around accommodation, prevention and local offers for care leavers. The Act also changes the homelessness framework so that relevant care leavers should not be treated as intentionally homeless in circumstances connected to their care background. This scheme therefore demonstrates how targeted affordable housing delivery can respond to identified need, support prevention, reduce reliance on emergency accommodation, and improve long-term outcomes for care leavers and other young adults at risk of homelessness.

Paying private rent and preventing homelessness

73. Private rented access can prevent accommodating a household in Temporary Accommodation or enable move-on. The Housing Team are able to pay rent in advance, deposits, cashless bonds and guarantor support, with affordability and sustainability checks. However as previously covered on affordability is an issue in the county.

Working with registered providers (RP's)

74. The housing team work closely with our preferred partner RP's to secure additional RP-managed Temporary Accommodation or leasing arrangements. Seeking direct nominations and faster move-on into affordable housing and working with them from idea to conception of affordable housing to meet the identified needs

Capital Programme

75. The £10 million capital programme agreed at Full Council provides a clear investment route to increase the supply of suitable accommodation and reduce reliance on higher-cost emergency provision. The programme is intended to support the acquisition, refurbishment and development of accommodation that better reflects identified local need, including self-contained temporary accommodation, family-sized homes, accessible accommodation, and specialist or supported provision where required. This investment is important because it gives the council a practical way to respond to rising demand, improve the quality and suitability of placements, and reduce the revenue pressure created by hotels and bed and breakfast accommodation. By increasing the number of council-controlled or partner-managed homes, the programme should also strengthen financial planning, improve value for money, and support more sustainable move-on options for households.

Lived experience and their voice

76. Strategic Housing leads on writing and reviewing the council's housing policies and strategies, but these are not developed in isolation. They are shaped through partnership working with internal services, registered providers, voluntary and community sector organisations, support providers and other key stakeholders. Importantly, they are also informed by the voice of people with lived experience of homelessness, temporary accommodation and housing need. Individuals are invited to take part in consultation activity wherever possible, and the service also draws on the conversations, feedback, complaints and practical experiences shared by people using housing services every day. This matters because officers do not only understand policy in theory; they work with this cohort directly, listen to what people say about what helps and what creates barriers, and use that learning to shape how services are designed and delivered. The voice of individuals with lived experience therefore informs the council's housing policies, service improvements and day-to-day operational response, helping the service remain person-centred, realistic and responsive to what works in practice.
77. This approach is reflected in key strategic documents, including the Homelessness Prevention Strategy, the Housing Strategy and the Supported Housing Strategy. These strategies set the direction for how the council responds to housing need, but the delivery is driven through action plans that turn what people tell us into practical solutions. Feedback from people with lived experience helps to identify what prevents homelessness earlier, what makes temporary accommodation difficult to live in, where move-on pathways break down, and what type of support or accommodation is missing. This evidence then informs actions such as strengthening prevention activity, improving access to supported housing, shaping the type of affordable homes sought through development, and reviewing how temporary accommodation is managed. In this way, the strategies are not just policy

documents; they are delivery plans informed by partners, operational experience and the voices of the people most affected by housing need.

78. In response to this learning, the service has strengthened its prevention model so that support can be offered much earlier, before people reach crisis point. Prevention Officers are now working upstream through Talk Community to identify and capture housing-related issues as early as possible, including concerns around affordability, tenancy insecurity, relationship breakdown, debt, rent arrears or other risks that could lead to homelessness if left unresolved. Where Talk Community cannot resolve the issue and the person then presents as homeless or threatened with homelessness, Prevention Officers within Housing Solutions continue the work by exploring practical housing solutions, negotiating with landlords or family members, supporting access to financial assistance, and looking for sustainable alternatives to temporary accommodation. This approach reflects a deliberate shift in the service: the team is trying to turn the tide from crisis response toward earlier intervention, with the aim of preventing homelessness presentations wherever possible. Homelessness is not treated simply as a process or a set of statutory steps; the team are passionate about the work they do because they understand that every approach represents a person or household facing uncertainty, stress and often crisis. People are at the heart of the service, and officers use their professional judgement, experience and compassion to find realistic solutions that give households the best chance of stability. That change has been driven by people with lived experience, whose feedback has shown that earlier advice, clearer pathways, practical help and being listened to at the right time can make the difference between homelessness being prevented and a household entering temporary accommodation.
79. A practical example of this approach is how the service responded to concerns raised about a larger temporary accommodation property. The property was an older listed building and, while it provided much-needed emergency accommodation, it was not the most modern setting and the mixed-use arrangement was not working well for all residents. Families and single people were living in the same building, with shared kitchen facilities that were not practical for the different needs and routines of each group. Complaints and feedback highlighted issues such as loud music, frequent comings and goings, and the difficulty of managing a shared environment for different household types. The Temporary Accommodation Team listened to those concerns and reviewed whether the placement model was suitable. As a result, the decision was taken to move families out of the property and change the use of the building to an all-male facility. This demonstrates that lived experience and resident feedback are not treated as isolated complaints; they are used to test whether accommodation is suitable, to adapt provision where needed, and to make practical changes that improve safety, stability and the day-to-day experience of people living in temporary accommodation.

Lived experience feedback and comments

“I was able to get a roof over my head and had support from a lot of kind people.”

“I was advised and helped every step along my journey and still receive fantastic help.”

“I was deeply involved with drugs. I had to change or die.”

“I was working and paying my rent, but when my relationship ended I could no longer afford the tenancy on my own. I never thought I would be at risk of homelessness.”

“The uncertainty was the hardest part. Not knowing where my family would be living in a few weeks affected my mental health and my children's wellbeing.”

“I spent months looking for a private rented property that I could afford. Even with support, there were very few options available to me.”

“Being threatened with homelessness affected every aspect of my life. I struggled to focus on work and felt constantly anxious about what would happen next.”

“The advice and support I received helped me keep my home. Without that intervention, I believe I would have become homeless.”

These quotes show the human impact of temporary accommodation: safety, support, recovery and the chance to rebuild stability.

Need for national action

80. Herefordshire can improve prevention, procurement, supply and move-on, but some pressures are shaped nationally. Official statistics reported 132,410 households in temporary accommodation in England at 30 June 2025, including 84,240 households with children. The national position was described as a record level.

Evidence source: Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Statutory homelessness in England: April to June 2025, published October 2025.

81. Areas that Herefordshire Council would support national action on include:

- A funding and subsidy system that better reflects the actual cost of suitable temporary accommodation.
- Sustained investment in social and genuinely affordable rented housing.
- Monitor the local impact of the Renters’ Rights Act on the private rented sector, including tenant security, landlord behaviour, supply, affordability and whether the reforms help reduce homelessness presentations linked to insecure or unaffordable private renting.
- A consistent flow of capital support for councils to acquire and convert accommodation.
- Clear long-term funding for homelessness prevention, supported housing and move-on.
- Policies that recognise rural market conditions, travel distances and limited emergency accommodation supply.
- Review of Local Housing Allowance levels so that they are in line with local private rents
- Review benefit rules for 18 to 25 year olds so they are not unintentionally penalised when trying to secure affordable rented accommodation. Current affordability limits mean that, for many young people in this age group, private rented accommodation is not affordable within the support available to them, leaving social rented housing as the only realistic sustainable option. However, the supply of social rented homes is limited, particularly smaller one-bedroom accommodation, which can leave young people stuck in temporary accommodation or unable to move on even when they are ready to do so.

The Prime Ministers “everyone in by Christmas” statement and the local response

82. The Prime Minister's national commitment to get **"everyone in by Christmas"** has renewed attention on the need to end rough sleeping and ensure that nobody is left sleeping on the streets during the winter months. The focus of the announcement is primarily on people who are rough sleeping, or at immediate risk of rough sleeping, rather

than on all households experiencing homelessness. The statement reflects the principle that rough sleeping should not be accepted as inevitable and that local authorities, government, health services, charities, faith groups and community partners all have a role in identifying people on the streets and offering accommodation, support and a route away from rough sleeping.

83. The commitment also builds on learning from the pandemic **"Everyone In"** initiative, which demonstrated that significant reductions in rough sleeping can be achieved when agencies work together with a shared purpose and sufficient resource. However, experience has shown that providing accommodation alone is not enough. Many people sleeping rough have experienced multiple forms of trauma, including adverse childhood experiences, poor mental health, substance dependency, domestic abuse, relationship breakdown, institutional care, or involvement with the criminal justice system. Sustaining accommodation often requires intensive, wrap-around support that addresses these underlying issues alongside housing need.
84. For Herefordshire, the national ambition is relevant but must be considered within the context of a large rural county, limited emergency accommodation supply, long travel distances, affordability pressures and a shortage of suitable move-on accommodation. The local response is therefore not simply about providing a bed for the night. It combines prevention activity, outreach services, emergency accommodation, winter shelter provision, housing assessments, health and wellbeing support, and planned move-on pathways. Through partnership working, the council seeks to identify people at risk of rough sleeping at the earliest opportunity, provide safe accommodation where possible, and offer the sustained support necessary to help individuals maintain housing and avoid returning to the streets. This approach recognises that ending rough sleeping requires both accommodation and the support needed to enable people to rebuild and sustain independent lives.

Consultees

- Housing Solutions Team
- Temporary Accommodation Team
- Outreach and Support Team

Appendices

None

Background papers and resources

- Housing Act 1996 (Part VII) and subsequent homelessness legislation.
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- Herefordshire Homelessness Prevention Strategy
- Herefordshire Housing Strategy
- Herefordshire Supported Housing Strategy
- Herefordshire Temporary Accommodation and B&B Elimination Plan
- South West Audit Partnership (SWAP) Temporary Accommodation Audit Report (March 2025)
- Herefordshire Council Temporary Accommodation performance, demand and financial monitoring data (2020-2026)
- Home Point Housing Register and local housing needs evidence

- Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) statutory homelessness and temporary accommodation statistics for England