



Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024



**BOROUGH OF
BROXBOURNE**

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EM190356

OVERVIEW

All local authorities have a statutory duty, under the Homelessness Act (2002) to publish a Homelessness Review that outlines the main causes of homelessness in their local area. Local authorities are also required to have a Strategic Action Plan in place to tackle and reduce the causes.

The Homelessness Reduction Act came into force in April 2018 and represents the most significant change to the homelessness legislation for many years. In response, the Council's Housing Service was reviewed and strengthened to reflect the requirements of the new legislation. This included the formation of a triage team to carry out all initial assessments and provide a casework service to single homeless people.

The Welfare Reform Act introduced a £20,000 benefit cap which has added to the challenges and complexity of successfully resettling some households into private sector accommodation. This particularly affects families with three or more children, as many can no longer afford to pay market, or in some cases, affordable rent, meaning that the range of move-on options is extremely limited.

The introduction of Universal Credit, which was fully rolled out in Broxbourne in November 2017, has also presented a range of challenges. In response, the Council has set up a specialist Financial Inclusion Service that provides support to households affected by the welfare reform.

The evidence gathered by the Council and its partners continues to indicate that levels of rough sleeping in Broxbourne remain very low. The Council continues to monitor the broader position and to liaise with key local organisations involved in the issue.

2019 saw the opening of the Broxbourne Winter Shelter operated by local faith groups, for a period of eight weeks. In addition to providing an additional option for single homeless people, it is hoped that the project will provide additional intelligence on patterns of single homelessness and rough sleeping.

The Broxbourne Local Plan 2018-2033 was submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination on 15 March 2018. A total of 7,718 new homes are proposed as part of the plan, of which 40% are earmarked to be affordable. This will have a significant positive impact on local families.

THE 2014-2019 STRATEGY

The Council's previous Homelessness Strategy was published in 2014 and the priorities set out to:

1. Minimise homelessness

To ensure that the number of homelessness applications is minimised and that, where it occurs, the number of homeless preventions is maximised.

2. Maximise the supply of temporary and permanent accommodation

The Council aims to enable the development of 100 additional homes per year. The Council will seek to not use bed and breakfast accommodation.

3. Value for money

Minimising the costs to the council tax payer for homelessness support whilst maintaining a level of service that meets the statutory requirements, effectively tackles rough sleeping and enables vulnerable homeless households to successfully resettle in a sustainable way.

4. Providing support to the homeless

To ensure that everyone who accesses the homelessness service is able to make the transition to a more permanent home successfully. The Council will ensure that a range of supported accommodation is available so that everyone who requires support is able to access it. The Council will ensure that anyone residing in temporary accommodation is able to access support if they need it.

5. Advice and options

To ensure that timely, comprehensive and appropriate housing advice is available to anyone who needs it.

6. Single homelessness

To reduce rough sleeping to zero or as close to zero as can be achieved. To ensure that rough sleepers and other single homeless people are able to access emergency overnight accommodation, and that a range of suitable housing solutions are available to meet longer term needs.

Each of these priorities show how the Council measures performance of the successful achievement of each objective. The performance is shown in the table below:

Key performance indicators from the 2014-2019 Homelessness Strategy:

	Target per Annum	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
% of homeless preventions	70	63	15.9	14.5	22
Number of households accepted as eligible, homeless and in priority need	40	55	219	265	246
Number of new affordable homes completed	100	64	76	21	55
Number of nights booked in nightly-paid accommodation	40	944	5,923	25,329	39,339
Number of placements in the private sector via Simple Lets programme	100	108	104	65	96
% hostel rent-roll collected	92%	97.2%	96.9%	88.4%	97.4%
Repair cost per hostel room, per year	£375	£1,179	£1,829	£1,865	£1,402
Net cost of provision of all temporary accommodation per year	£93,500	£160,285	£192,683	£522,372	£868,984
Cost of bed and breakfast per year	£20,000	£25,421	£75,300	£331,945	£596,279
Number of households supported by the homeless floating support workers	70	47	64	46	33
Rough sleeper count or estimate	3	1	0	3	2
Number of single homeless people enabled to access emergency accommodation per year	10	N/A	N/A	37	38

The data above shows that the number of households the Council accepted as homeless has risen over the life of the Strategy. This has increased the costs to the Council, particularly in terms of costs for the provision of temporary accommodation and the more costly option of nightly-paid accommodation.

The Council's Simple Lets programme is becoming increasingly popular and has assisted almost 400 households in finding permanent homes, thereby preventing homelessness.

The Council continues to have a very low rough sleeper count which is monitored regularly.

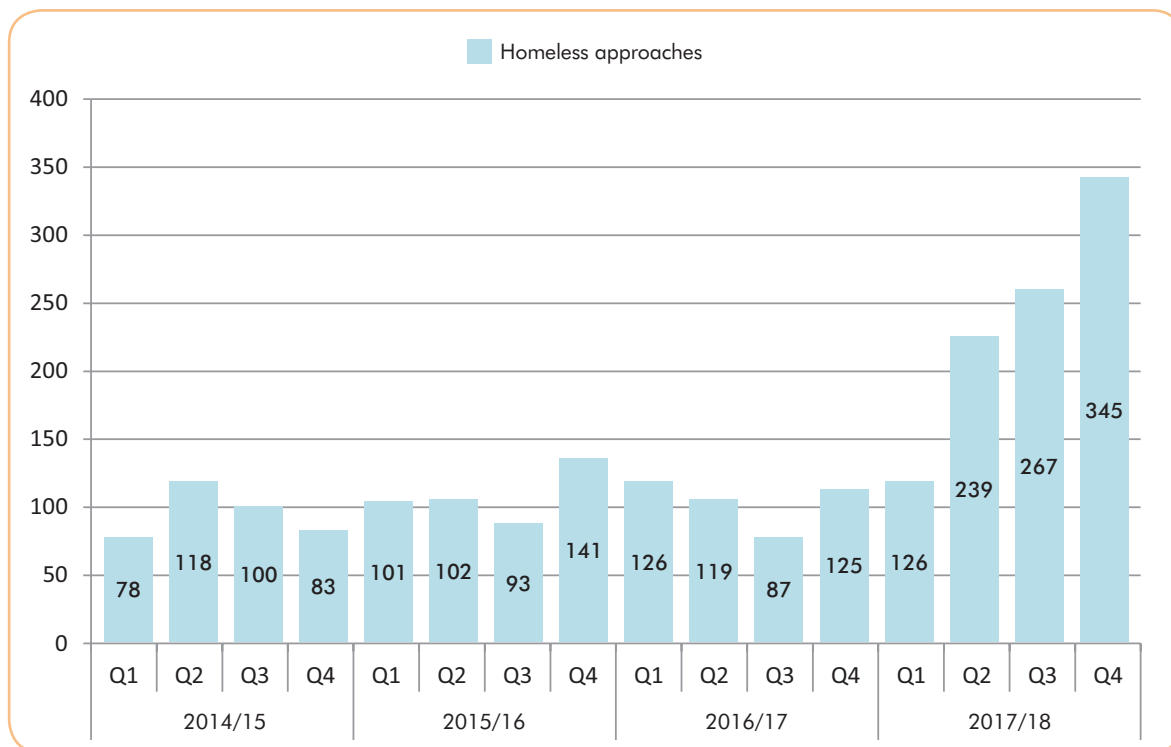
Many of the themes above will continue into the new Strategy.

2014-2019 HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY REVIEW

Applications, acceptances and preventions

The graph below shows the level of statutory homelessness, and applications and acceptances over the past four financial years.

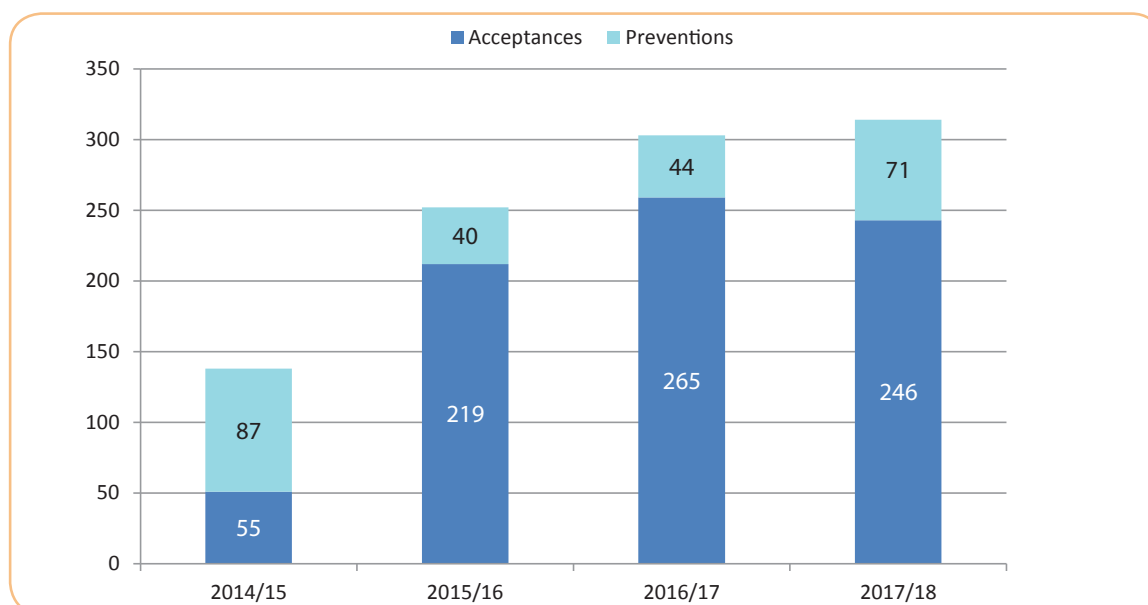
Number of homeless approaches 2014-2018



The graph below shows the number of homeless approaches the Council received between 2014 and 2018. The significant increase for 2017/18 is a result of the Council adopting the principles of the Homelessness Reduction Act in advance of the enactment of the legislation in April 2018, whereby every contact with the homelessness team is recorded.

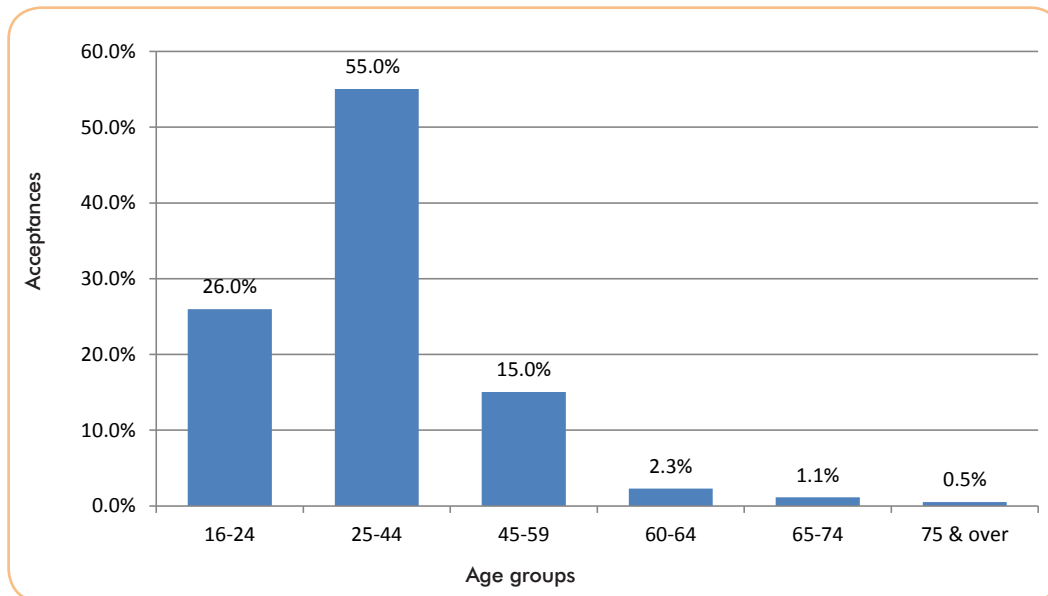
The data now includes large numbers of initial approaches that were resolved quickly, through the provision of advice and guidance to enable the applicants to resolve their own housing issues. These approaches were not recorded in previous years.

Preventions and acceptances 2014-2018



The age profile of homeless applicants who are accepted is set out below. This indicates that the largest group is the 25-44 age group, which further illustrates the long term trend away from younger applicants e.g. teenage pregnancies leading to parental evictions, to more established households, such as those losing accommodation in the private sector.

**Percentage breakdown of acceptances
by age of head of household (April 2014-March 2018)**



Priority need categories

The table below shows the accepted homeless households by priority need category.

The presence of dependent children in the household is the primary reason for priority need over the last four years, representing 59.2% of all applicants. Single persons with mental health issues (20%) is the next largest group with physical disability third. Reflecting the steep drop in teenage pregnancy, the number of applicants who were in priority need due to pregnancy represents less than one in 20 of the total.

Compared with the rest of England, it is notable that the proportion of cases that are priority need due to mental health issues is significantly higher.

Accepted homeless households by priority need category

Number and percentage of total acceptances 2014-2018				
Priority Need category	England	% of total acceptances	Broxbourne	% of total acceptances
Dependent children	152,980	67.14	468	59.62
Pregnant with no other child	15,390	6.75	37	4.71
Vulnerable due to old age	3,430	1.51	6	0.76
Vulnerable due to mental illness	20,720	9.09	155	19.75
Vulnerable due to physical disability	16,400	7.20	51	6.50
Young person (covers 16-17 year olds and 18-20 year old care leavers)	4,320	1.90	43	5.48
Domestic violence cases	5,590	2.45	2	0.25
Emergency	1,080	0.47	1	0.13
Other	7,960	3.49	22	2.80
Total	227,850		785	

Figures subject to DCLG rounding.

Causes of homelessness

The chart below breaks down the causes of homelessness in Broxbourne over the last four years, compared with the national picture.

The most common cause of homelessness, where a duty is accepted, is the termination of an assured shorthold tenancy, representing one third of all cases, compared with 30% in the country as a whole.

Loss of accommodation due to parental eviction is the second most common cause of homelessness.

Harassment, domestic abuse and evictions by relatives or friends are third and fourth most common causes.

These four causes account for 80% of all Priority Need cases in Broxbourne.

Homelessness as a result of violence or domestic abuse in Broxbourne is slightly lower than the national average.

Causes of homelessness in Broxbourne

Number and percentage of total acceptances 2014-2018				
Reason for loss of last settled home	England	% of total acceptances	Broxbourne	% of total acceptances
Parents no longer willing or able to accommodate	33,330	15	182	23
Other relatives or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate	27,600	12	95	12
Violent breakdown of relationship, involving partner	26,680	12	64	8
Non-violent breakdown of relationship involving partner	11,530	5	37	6
Mortgage arrears (repossession or other loss of home)	1,910	1	2	0
Rent arrears	6,930	3	29	4
Loss of rented or tied accommodation due to termination of assured shorthold tenancy	67,700	3	261	33
Loss of rented or tied accommodation due to reasons other than termination of tenancy	14,040	6	25	3
Other	38,170	17	90	11
Total	227,850	100%	785	100%

Figures subject to DCLG rounding

Average weekly rent for a 2-bed flat (private sector)

	Apr-15	Apr-16	Apr-17	Apr-18
Local Housing Allowance (LHA)	£186.46	£186.46	£186.46	£192.05
Cheshunt	£228.00	£244.00	£238.00	£241.00
Hoddesdon	£207.00	£217.00	£245.00	£227.00
Waltham Cross	£276.00	£276.00	£263.00	£259.00

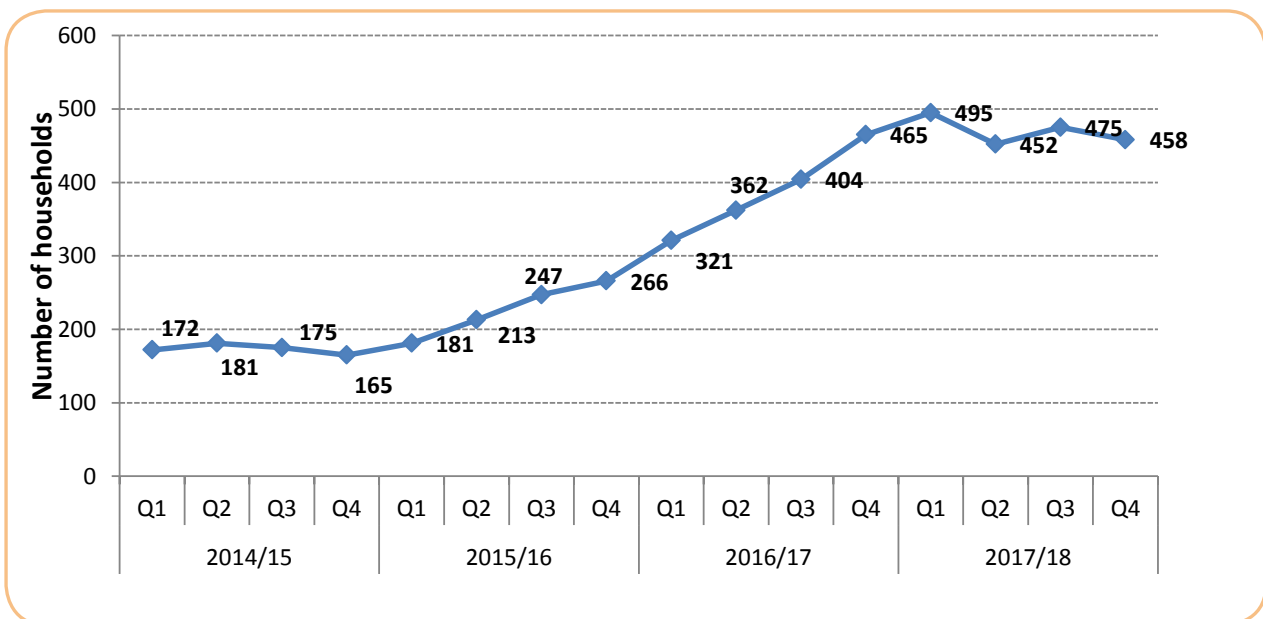
Source: Rightmove

This table shows the average weekly market rent for a 2-bed flat in each of the three main towns in the Borough. The data indicates that rent has remained broadly stable for the period in question.

Temporary accommodation

The graph below shows the total number of people in temporary accommodation (TA) by quarter, for the last four years. From April 2014 to March 2018 the numbers have increased by 286.

**Number of households in temporary accommodation
April 2014-March 2018**



The table below breaks down the March 2018 total by type of temporary accommodation (TA) occupied.

Type	% breakdown of number of households in TA	Number of households in TA
Accommodation within Registered Social Landlord (RSL) stock	29.7	136
Any other types of accommodation	6.3	29
Nightly-paid accommodation (self-contained, and bed and breakfast)	24.7	113
Private sector landlord	10.9	50
Hostels (including reception centres and emergency units)	17.9	82
Private sector leased accommodation	10.5	48
Grand total	100%	458

Of the 458 units above, 234 households either hold an assured shorthold tenancy with a social landlord or a private sector landlord.

Year	In the Borough	Out of the Borough	Total number in TA	% out of the Borough
2014/15	140	25	165	15
2015/16	210	56	266	21
2016/17	345	120	465	26
2017/18	357	101	458	22

The increase in nightly-paid accommodation has created a significant impact on the budget as set out below.

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
	£	£	£	£
Net cost of TA	160,285	192,683	522,372	868,984

Rough sleeping

Local authority/ Region	2014	2015	2016	2017	Number of households 2017 ('000)	2017 rough sleeping rate (per 1,000 households)
England	2,744	3,569	4,134	4,751	23,464	0.20
% change from previous year	14	30	16	15		
London	742	940	964	1,137	3,652	0.31
% change from previous year	37	27	3	18		
% of England total	27	26	23	24		
Rest of England	2,002	2,629	3,170	3,614	19,812	0.18
% change from previous year	7	31	21	14		
% of England total	73	74	77	76		
Broxbourne	1	0	3	2	40	0.05

The Council receives reports of rough sleepers from time to time from agencies such as Transport for London, Park Guard, Police and members of the general public. However, these are generally sporadic and there is little evidence of entrenched rough sleeping such as the formation of 'hotspots' of people regularly bedding down in specific locations or the same people being referred repeatedly. Moreover, a series of formal overnight rough sleeper counts conducted annually under government conditions found very little evidence of the practice locally.

The fact that the overall rates are at levels well below the national average is encouraging.

Rehousing

Year	Number of lettings through the Housing Register	Number of Simple Lets placements	Acceptances	Preventions
2014/15	239	108	55	87
2015/16	287	104	219	40
2016/17	120	65	265	44
2017/18	193	96	246	71
Total	839	373	785	242

This table shows the total number of households rehoused by the Council, either into a social tenancy from the housing waiting list or into the private sector via the Council's Simple Lets scheme. By way of comparison, the table also shows the number of homelessness cases accepted and prevented during the same period in question.

Although homelessness cases are, as the statute requires, afforded reasonable preference on the Housing Register, the Council also has to consider the needs of other households such as existing social tenants requiring a transfer, overcrowded families or people who need to move due to medical reasons.

The proportion of social housing tenancies being offered to homeless cases has risen from around 15% in 2014/15 to in excess of 50% in 2017/18.

The consultation on the Council's 2019-2024 strategy focused on the following key streams:

- The causes of homelessness and how the Council can be more effective in its prevention
- Identifying themes in the demographic of households facing homelessness and providing more support and assistance to these groups
- Providing effective temporary and long-term housing solutions.

These principles were consulted on with the following groups during November 2018:

- Health and Community Services, Hertfordshire County Council
- B3Living
- Broxbourne Foodbank
- Genesis Housing Association
- Hertfordshire Adult and Family Learning Service (HAFLS)
- Herts Minds Network
- Herts Young Homeless/Turning Point
- Jobcentre Plus (Department for Work and Pensions)
- Metropolitan Housing Association
- Paradigm Housing Group
- Safer Places
- Street Pastors
- Turning Point
- Watford Council
- Welwyn Hatfield District Council
- Hertfordshire Police
- Hertfordshire County Council, Children and Families.

The feedback from this consultation can be summarised as follows:

Prevention of homelessness can be better achieved through early intervention and engagement. This could include programmes for education in schools to highlight the realities of housing availability and effective mediation in the event of family breakdown.

Consultation on the 2019-2024 Strategy continued

The groups most likely to be at risk of homelessness were identified as:

- Those on low income and subject to welfare reforms such as the benefit cap and Universal Credit
- Those suffering illness or disability, especially mental health problems
- Relationship breakdown and domestic abuse
- Young people, especially 16-24 year olds.

The groups agreed that effective partnership working, including data sharing was key to providing help and support to those most at risk of homelessness. It was recognised that education, upskilling and training would provide improved financial capacity. The Council provides financial inclusion services to customers, to ensure that households are better able to manage their budgets and have access to the financial support they are entitled to. This service is proving invaluable to customers.

The groups identified a number of solutions to housing provision in the Borough including seeking the development of more affordable homes through the Local Plan, increasing the provision of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs), providing alternative forms of housing such as modular homes, and making more efficient use of existing housing stock and empty homes, such as assistance with downsizing.

The results of the consultation have been incorporated into this strategy document.

Homelessness is a complex issue and there are many factors that can have an impact on the overall picture, as well as the nature and pattern of demand. This includes macro factors such as movements in the property market, economic factors, national housing policy and demographic trends. Much of this is outside the direct control of the Council.

The five strategic priorities set out below have been developed to provide the most effective response to local homelessness trends, having regard to the following:

- The findings of the Homelessness Review
- Outturn against key performance indicators in the 2014-2019 Homelessness Strategy
- Consultation with key partners, stakeholders and staff
- National housing policy including the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act and the government's pledge to end rough sleeping by 2023
- Local policy, financial priorities and aims, including the Medium Term Financial Strategy and Local Development Plan
- The welfare reform legislation.

Predicting future trends is only of limited value and the priorities are therefore designed to be flexible. They will also be subject to annual review and the Council will ensure that targets remain challenging and deliverable.

Performance and outcomes against the priorities will be published in the quarterly Housing Monitor.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR THE 2019-2024 HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY

The Council has a statutory duty to accommodate households with or expecting children and those deemed vulnerable (such as the elderly, disabled or people with physical or mental illness) who are unintentionally homeless. It also has a statutory duty to provide advice and assistance to homeless households falling outside these definitions. Under the Homelessness Reduction Act the Council is also obliged to take all reasonable steps to prevent homelessness occurring where possible, and to ensure everyone who approaches the Council has a Personal Housing Plan tailored to their individual needs and circumstances.

In order to fulfil these obligations, the Council has identified five key objectives, as follows:

1. Preventing homelessness

The Council aims to prevent homelessness by ensuring that households at risk are identified as early as possible so that appropriate help and advice can be deployed to maximum effect.

Where an application under the Homelessness Reduction Act (2017) arises, the Council aims to prevent homelessness and will provide TA wherever possible.

The Council will achieve this by:

- Working with key partners to develop a more effective, early intervention service and referral pathways for households at risk of homelessness
- Operating a homelessness prevention model and preventing homelessness wherever possible
- Refining and improving the approach to Personal Housing Plans and developing effective multi-agency interventions with the full participation of key partners
- Adequately resourcing the Simple Lets team to ensure an ongoing supply of private sector accommodation is available for customers
- Developing a programme of information and education to inform local people around housing and homelessness issues
- Supporting customers who have been impacted by welfare reforms.

This will be measured by monitoring the:

- Number of homeless applications per year
- % of cases closed during the prevention stage of a homeless application
- % of cases closed at the relief stage of a homeless application
- % of cases where the full housing duty is accepted.

2. Minimise the use of TA and ensure value for money

The level of TA will be reduced, and where it is used, the Council will ensure it will be of an acceptable standard and, wherever possible, is located in the Borough or as near to it as possible. The costs of procuring TA will be reduced to provide maximum value for money to local taxpayers.

The Council will achieve this by:

- Minimising the use of spot purchased nightly-paid accommodation
- Ensuring maximum value for money in the procurement of TA
- Increasing the level of hostel and other in-house provision, developing a range of solutions including hostels, modular homes, self-contained units and leased properties to meet demand
- Maximising the collection of rents, and maintaining adequate controls in arrears cases
- Maximising the throughput into permanent accommodation
- Keeping the use of bed and breakfast, as well as board and lodging provision to an absolute minimum
- Maximising and optimising the use of specialist accommodation such as refuge and other supported housing.

This will be measured by recording the:

- Number of nightly-paid units per annum (by nights booked)
- Outturn cost of TA procurement
- Total number of households in TA
- % of licence charge collected
- Average cost of repairs to hostel rooms.

3. Ensure appropriate support is available to prevent homelessness

The Council will seek to ensure that:

- No one becomes homeless because they did not receive the support they needed
- Everyone who accesses the Housing Needs service is able to make the transition to a more permanent sustainable home
- Where a household is not ready to move on, they receive support in TA to transition to a more sustainable lifestyle that will enable them to do so.

The Council will achieve this by:

- Assisting customers with personal budgeting support, internal navigation and liaison to ensure applicants maximise their income and opportunities for paid employment
- Optimising the usage of specialist supported housing for vulnerable households
- Provide tailored personal support to the most vulnerable applicants subject to funding being available.

This will be measured by recording the:

- Number of households supported in the year
- Number of households receiving support who exit the service in a positive way.

4. Maximise rehousing opportunities

The Council will maximise the delivery of affordable homes for local people by ensuring that homeless households receive adequate priority for the affordable homes that are available. In addition, it will maximise access to the private sector via its Simple Lets scheme.

The Council will achieve this by:

- Having in place an up to date Affordable Housing Strategy to ensure homes are delivered within the planning framework
- Working with housing associations to deliver homes that meet local housing needs
- Considering options and opportunities for an in-house development programme of affordable housing
- Maximising placements in the private sector via the Simple Lets scheme
- Ensuring that the Housing Allocation Scheme affords appropriate priority to qualifying homeless households
- Developing options for households wishing to relocate to other areas.

This will be measured by recording the:

- % of permanent lettings going to homeless households
- Number of new affordable homes coming on stream per annum
- Number of Simple Lets placements per annum
- Total number of social lettings per annum.

5. Keep rough sleeping to a minimum

Where rough sleeping does occur the Council will develop and maintain effective rehousing pathways for rough sleepers. Single homeless people, or people threatened with homelessness will be able to access the advice and support they need.

The Council will achieve this by:

- Signposting the Winter Night Shelter which operates during the winter months
- Ensuring that all partner agencies and other stakeholders understand and comply with the 'duty to refer' homeless cases
- Continuing to provide bespoke services to single homeless cases
- Lobbying for the implementation of a countywide approach to rough sleeping
- Maintaining relationships with external providers such as YMCA to ensure single homeless cases can access the resource.

This will be measured by recording:

- The number of rough sleepers in the Borough of Broxbourne (annually)
- The number of rough sleepers successfully rehoused.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR

Strategic aim	Action	Performance Measure	Target
Maximise homelessness prevention and relief	Develop integrated 'early help' approach	Number of homeless applications per year	10% reduction year on year
	Maximise homelessness prevention wherever possible	% of cases determined at the prevention stage	25% (to be reviewed each year)
		% of cases determined at the relief stage	25%
		% of cases where full housing duty is accepted	50%
	Develop a programme of education and training around homelessness issues	Programme in place	N/A
Minimise the impact of welfare reform	Financial Inclusion Service operative	N/A	
Minimise the use of TA and ensure value for money	Minimise the use of spot purchased nightly-paid accommodation	Total number of spot purchased nightly-paid nights per annum	10% reduction year on year
		Annual outturn cost of all TA	10% reduction year on year
		Total number of households in TA	10% reduction year on year
	Increase the level of in-house TA provision	Total number of Hostel units and Leased units utilised	50% increase in provision over the life of the strategy or private sector referrals
		Average cost of repair per hostel room per annum	TBA
	Maximise income within TA provision	% of licence charge collected	95%
	Maximise throughput into permanent accommodation	Number of Simple Lets placements	100 per annum
		Number of social tenancies accepted by applicants	No less than 100 per annum
Minimise the use of bed and breakfast	Number of bed and breakfast nights booked	Less than 100 nights booked per annum	
Ensure appropriate support is available to prevent homelessness or ensure TA is provided to those in need	Retain and optimise the existing provision of externally funded supported housing	Supply of supported accommodation unit numbers	28 units in place
	Continue to provide support for managing finances	Number of households assisted	TBA

Strategic Aim	Action	Performance Measure	Target
Maximise rehousing opportunities for households in housing need	Develop an Affordable Housing Strategy (AHS)	Extant AHS in place and operative	N/A
	Maintain a range of preferred housing association partners committed to delivering homes locally	Preferred Partner List operating	N/A
	Consider developing affordable homes in-house	Number of homes delivered in-house	TBA
	Maximise placement in the private sector via the Simple Lets scheme	Number of Simple Lets placements	100 per annum
	Ensure the Housing Allocation Policy affords suitable priority to qualifying applicants	% of lettings going to homeless cases	75% of lettings to homeless applicants in Year 1 (to be reviewed year on year)
		Total number of social lettings per annum	TBA
	Maximise the delivery of new affordable homes per annum	Number of new affordable homes delivered	Minimum of 100 per annum
	Ensure all households have a credible rehousing plan	% of cases on either Simple Lets or CBL list	90% of cases
Continue to support the Winter Shelter initiative	Number of days per annum Winter Shelter operative	Winter Shelter operating no less than eight weeks per annum	
Keep rough sleeping to a minimum	Ensure all rough sleepers are seen on the day	% of rough sleepers seen on the day	100%
	Continue to ensure all single homeless applicants have access to a specialist case worker	Number of Housing Needs Assistants	All applicants have a dedicated case worker
	Work with partners to implement a Hertfordshire wide approach to rough sleeping	Hertfordshire wide approach developed and activated	N/A
	Maintain and expand the options provided by external partners both in and out of Borough	Range of options available Hertfordshire wide. Approach developed and activated	Access to night shelter beds available at all times



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