



## **Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Annual Report 2022/23**

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to provide information around the response and prevention of homelessness and rough sleeping by Worcester City Council's Housing and Homelessness services in the financial year 2022/23. In addition, the report sets out the planned activities and direction of resources by the service over the forthcoming year (2023/24).

### **Background**

The service provided its first annual report of its activities in July 2022 with a commitment to provide an annual review each year. This is a review primarily surrounding the services provided by the City Council and those that it commissions and is not a statutory requirement of the authority. It is recognised however that producing an annual report provides transparency around activity undertaken in respect of homelessness and rough sleeping and indicates where the authority intends to focus its resources moving forwards.

### **Service demand**

The 2022/23 financial year was the first full year post the Covid 19 pandemic and whilst there were some legacy implications from the pandemic, demand and the response can be considered as a return to 'business as usual' by way of comparison to the unusual preceding two years. That said, there have been different pressures including the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the Cost of Living Crisis which will have an impact on the wider homelessness system.

During the year, the service received 2002 homelessness approaches which resulted in 814 homeless applications being taken. The reason for the difference between the number of approaches and applications taken relates to customers failing to attend their first appointment / make contact and other households being provided with housing advice as they were not apparently threatened with homelessness.

### **Acceptance of a prevention or relief duty**

Following the introduction of the Homeless Reduction Act 2017, two new duties were added in legislation, and Authorities were legally obliged to carry out these duties in each case where a person was considered to be homeless, or threatened with homelessness (likely they may have to leave their home within 56 days of their approach).

Under this new way of working, if a threat of homelessness was established a prevention duty would be accepted. If the person was already homeless, a relief duty would be accepted.

Prevention and relief duties are accepted irrelevant of priority need, intentionality, or local connection.

An outline of the accepted prevention and relief duties with comparative years is detailed below;

|                   | <b>2019/20</b> | <b>2020/21</b> | <b>2021/22</b> | <b>2022/23</b> |
|-------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| <b>Prevention</b> | 373            | 291            | 337            | 377            |
| <b>Relief</b>     | 502            | 432            | 490            | 437            |

### **End of Prevention and Relief**

Of the Prevention cases that were closed, they were closed for the following reasons:-

|   | <b>2019/20</b> | <b>2020/21</b> | <b>2021/22</b> | <b>2022/23</b> |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| <b>Prevention end reasons</b>   |                |                |                |                |
| <b>Accepted an offer of accommodation that is likely to last for 6 months or more</b> | 201            | 201            | 143            | 128            |
| <b>Became homeless</b>  | 108            | 58             | 63             | 138            |
| <b>56 days elapsed and no further action / loss of contact</b>                        | 59             | 28             | 45             | 29             |
| <b>Refused a suitable offer of accommodation (family / friends / supported)</b>       | 2              | 2              | 2              | 0              |
| <b>Deliberately refused to co-operate</b>   | 1              | 1              | 1              | 1              |
| <b>Customer ceased to be eligible for assistance)</b>                                 | 2              | 1              | 0              | 0              |

Although a higher proportion of cases have had a prevention duty accepted, indicating that people are being reached earlier, this is not translating to a higher number of cases being prevented. The proportion of cases prevented has decreased and the number becoming homeless has increased. This identifies that although there is success in accessing permanent rehousing, there remains a significant number of individuals where homelessness is unable to be prevented which leads to them becoming homeless. One of the key prohibiting factors to being unable to prevent homelessness is the availability and accessibility of suitable, affordable housing solutions available in a timely manner. Opportunities to intervene and prevent homelessness remains a key priority for the service.

Of the relief cases that were closed, they were closed for the following reasons:-

| <b>Relief end reasons</b>   | <b>2019/20</b> | <b>2020/21</b> | <b>2021/22</b> | <b>2022/23</b> |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| <b>Accepted an offer of accommodation that is likely to last for 6 months or more</b> | 209            | 214            | 173            | 189            |
| <b>56 days elapsed and final decision made</b>  | 205            | 132            | 124            | 203            |
| <b>56 days elapsed and no further action / loss of contact</b>                        | 79             | 80             | 71             | 48             |
| <b>Refused a suitable offer of accommodation (family / friends / supported)</b>       | 6              | 6              | 4              | 2              |
| <b>Refused a final offer of accommodation (social / private tenancy)</b>              | 5              | 3              | 4              | 4              |
| <b>Customer ceased to be eligible for assistance</b>                                  | 0              | 1              | 2              | 0              |

Of the cases that were not successfully prevented or relieved and went onto a main decision to be made, the decisions are outlined below

| <b>Decision</b>        | <b>2019/20</b> | <b>2020/21</b> | <b>2021/22</b> | <b>2022/23</b> |
|------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Full Duty              | 140            | 90             | 90             | 211            |
| Not in priority need   | 49             | 34             | 35             | 52             |
| Not homeless           | 14             | 13             | 11             | 8              |
| Ineligible             | 4              | 8              | 8              | 6              |
| Intentional            | 16             | 8              | 5              | 2              |
| No local connection    | 8              | 5              | 5              | 2              |
| <b>Total decisions</b> | <b>231</b>     | <b>158</b>     | <b>154</b>     | <b>281</b>     |

The number of cases reaching a main duty decision has increased and the number of those who have had a main housing duty accepted increased by a significant margin. This is again due to the difficulties in the availability of affordable housing and the demand which impacts the ability to accommodate households in a timely manner within the prevention and relief stages.

Of those accepted a main housing duty, duty was discharged for the following reasons

| <b>Main duty discharged</b>                         | <b>2019/20</b> | <b>2020/21</b> | <b>2021/22</b> | <b>2022/23</b> |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Accepted an offer of accommodation                  | 114            | 77             | 55             | 67             |
| Refused an offer of accommodation                   | 1              | 2              | 1              | 7              |
| Homeless intentionally from temporary accommodation | 7              | 5              | 0              | 1              |
| Became ineligible                                   | 1              | 2              | 0              | 0              |
| Application withdrawn / loss of contact             | 17             | 4              | 7              | 7              |
| <b>Total decisions</b>                              | <b>140</b>     | <b>90</b>      | <b>63</b>      | <b>82</b>      |

### **Demographics of approaches**

Approaches by age

|              | <b>2019/20</b> | <b>2020/21</b> | <b>2021/22</b> | <b>2022/23</b> |
|--------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| <b>16-17</b> | 58             | 53             | 58             | 13             |
| <b>18-20</b> | 193            | 179            | 201            | 179            |
| <b>21-24</b> | 220            | 258            | 251            | 268            |
| <b>25-29</b> | 266            | 233            | 309            | 302            |
| <b>30-44</b> | 530            | 569            | 689            | 797            |
| <b>45-59</b> | 281            | 244            | 268            | 317            |
| <b>60-64</b> | 30             | 34             | 41             | 63             |
| <b>65-74</b> | 31             | 30             | 38             | 48             |
| <b>74+</b>   | 17             | 13             | 16             | 15             |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>1626</b>    | <b>1613</b>    | <b>1871</b>    | <b>2002</b>    |

### Approaches by gender

|         | Male | Female | Transgender | Of which<br>Couples | Of<br>which<br>other<br>(multiple<br>adults) | Not<br>known | <b>Total</b> |
|---------|------|--------|-------------|---------------------|--|--------------|--------------|
| 2019/20 | 772  | 646    | 1           | 178                 | 26   | 3            | <b>1626</b>  |
| 2020/21 | 771  | 651    | 4           | 161                 | 24   | 2            | <b>1613</b>  |
| 2021/22 | 834  | 804    | 8           | 188                 | 31   | 6            | <b>1871</b>  |
| 2022/23 | 949  | 1037   | 7           | 190                 | 36   | 9            | <b>2002</b>  |

### Approaches by household type

|         | Households with dependent<br>children / pregnant household<br>member | Households without<br>dependent children | <b>Total</b> |
|---------|--|--|--------------|
| 2019/20 | 384  | 1242                                     | <b>1626</b>  |
| 2020/21 | 357  | 1256                                     | <b>1613</b>  |
| 2021/22 | 467  | 1404                                     | <b>1871</b>  |
| 2022/23 | 570  | 1432                                     | <b>2002</b>  |

### Social Housing Supply and Demand

The demand for social and affordable housing options remains high within the City and far exceeds the availability and supply of accommodation. The provision and delivery of new social and affordable housing within the City has fallen beneath the required levels for a number of years and is a key priority for the Council to enable increased provision.

|  | <b>2019/20</b> | <b>2020/21</b> | <b>2021/22</b> | <b>2022/23</b> |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Total number of<br>applicants on housing<br>waiting list at year end | N/A            | N/A            | 2574           | 3293           |

|   |     |   |      |      |
|---|-----|---|------|------|
| Number of housing applications received       | N/A | 1622 (From September from September 2020) | 1596 | 1261 |
| Number of nominations/ lets to social housing | N/A | 50 (from September 2020)                  | 439  | 363  |

Please note Worcester City switched its housing register from Home Choice Plus to Housing for you in September 2020. As such figures for 2020/21 are incomplete and figures for 2019/20 are not available. The number of applicants on the housing register as at 5<sup>th</sup> May 2023 stood at 3293.

### Supply 2022/23

| Property type      | Bedrooms  |            |            |           |          | Grand Total |
|--------------------|-----------|------------|------------|-----------|----------|-------------|
|                    | 0         | 1          | 2          | 3         | 4        |             |
| Bungalow           | -         | 4          | 8          | 1         | -        | 13          |
| Flat               | -         | 133        | 89         | -         | -        | 222         |
| Hostel             | -         | -          | -          | -         | -        | -           |
| House              | -         | -          | 55         | 44        | 3        | 102         |
| Maisonette         | -         | 1          | 5          | 4         | -        | 10          |
| Semi-detached      | -         | -          | -          | -         | -        | -           |
| Studio flat        | 16        | -          | -          | -         | -        | 16          |
| <b>Grand Total</b> | <b>16</b> | <b>138</b> | <b>157</b> | <b>49</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>363</b>  |

### Demand 2022/23

| Bedroom need       | Pregnant    |            | Grand Total |
|--------------------|-------------|------------|-------------|
|                    | No          | Yes        |             |
| 1                  | 1609        | 15         | 1624        |
| 2                  | 903         | 97         | 1000        |
| 3                  | 457         | 47         | 504         |
| 4                  | 137         | 8          | 145         |
| 5                  | 12          | 2          | 14          |
| 6                  | 4           | 0          | 4           |
| 7                  | 1           | 0          | 1           |
| <b>Grand Total</b> | <b>3123</b> | <b>169</b> | <b>3293</b> |

The tables above highlights the makeup of housing need and the size property that is required by applicants on the housing register. Although the greatest demand for housing is those with a 1 bedroom need, there are significantly fewer larger properties allocated with a

current demand for 4 bed+ properties being 164 with only 3 four bedroom houses being let in 2022/23.

The main provider of social housing in Worcester is Platform Housing Group who have a stock of approximately 5,500 properties in the City. A breakdown of the providers and the number of properties that they have in the City is outlined in the table below.

| <b>Registered Provider Total % Stock</b> | <b>Total Number</b> | <b>%</b>   |
|--|---------------------|------------|
| Platform                                 | 5472                | 66.84      |
| Citizen                                  | 1551                | 18.94      |
| Sanctuary                                | 405                 | 4.95       |
| Bromford                                 | 252                 | 3.08       |
| Rooftop                                  | 167                 | 2.04       |
| Stonewater                               | 62                  | 0.76       |
| Muir                                     | 43                  | 0.53       |
| Worcester Municipal Charities            | 43                  | 0.53       |
| Orbit                                    | 41                  | 0.5        |
| Housing 21                               | 37                  | 0.45       |
| Anchor Hanover                           | 32                  | 0.39       |
| Walsall Housing Group                    | 24                  | 0.29       |
| Worcestershire YMCA                      | 14                  | 0.17       |
| Worcester City Council                   | 13                  | 0.29       |
| Haig Homes                               | 12                  | 0.15       |
| Worcestershire County Council            | 10                  | 0.12       |
| Heylo                                    | 6                   | 0.07       |
| Clarion House                            | 2                   | 0.02       |
| Tolladine Mission (CIO)                  | 1                   | 0.01       |
| <b>Total</b>                             | <b>8187</b>         | <b>100</b> |

## Breakdown of adverts by provider

|                                     | 2021/22    | 2022/23    |
|-------------------------------------|------------|------------|
| Worcester: Platform                 | 302        | 247        |
| Worcester: Citizen                  | 65         | 16         |
| Other                               | 60         | 0          |
| Worcester: Sanctuary Housing Group  | 44         | 12         |
| Worcester: Bromford                 | 8          | 15         |
| Worcester: Stonewater Housing Group | 8          | 26         |
| Worcester: Rooftop                  | 2          | 3          |
| Worcester: Walsall Housing Group    | 1          | 0          |
| Worcester: Bromford                 | 0          | 15         |
| <b>Grand Total</b>                  | <b>490</b> | <b>363</b> |

In addition to the existing provision, the housing enabling service seeks to maximise the number of new affordable properties built within the City. This remains a challenge with limited land availability, a lack of Council owned land and financial viability of developing known sites a challenge for Registered Providers.

### **Temporary accommodation**

Keeping the numbers of households in temporary accommodation low is a key priority for the service recognising the instability and impact that this can have on individuals and families. Where we are unable to prevent homelessness and have to result in accessing temporary accommodation, we seek to minimise the length of stay and only use Bed & Breakfast accommodation as a last resort.

The Council directly manages 12 units of temporary accommodation including 4 self contained houses at Oldbury Road and 8 rooms at Bromyard Road. In addition, the Council is able to nominate to Phoenix Court which offers 22 self contained flats managed by Platform Housing Group.

Since the last update the Council has procured the use of a further 14 units of temporary accommodation in a former care home. This has one unit of self contained accommodation and the rest have shared facilities. Beyond this, the Council is reliant on bed and breakfast/ guest house accommodation.

The following table highlights the number of households in temporary accommodation on the last day of each quarter (the counting night).

| Households in Temporary accommodation | 2019/20 | 2020/21 | 2021/22 | 2022/23 |
|---------------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Q1                                    | 56      | 64      | 56      | 64      |
| Q2                                    | 58      | 59      | 55      | 78      |
| Q3                                    | 54      | 53      | 65*     | 77      |



|    |    |    |     |    |
|----|----|----|-----|----|
| Q4 | 63 | 62 | 68* | 77 |
|----|----|----|-----|----|

\*H-CLik information for these periods have not yet been submitted

The following table highlights the number of nights spent in B & B accommodation by households with children. Wherever possible, we seek to avoid the use of B & B accommodation for households with children but sometimes is necessary where alternative provision is not available or in an emergency and until alternative accommodation can be accessed. We are seeking to increase to the number of temporary accommodation units to further reduce the necessity to use B & B accommodation.

|   | 2019/20 | 2020/21 | 2021/22 | 2022/23 |
|---|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Number of nights spent in B & B accommodation by households with children | 58      | 20      | 44      | 39      |

The use of temporary accommodation by Worcester City Council remains broadly comparable to similar Cities of a similar makeup to Worcester. It remains a key priority for the Council to ensure the most efficient use of temporary accommodation, to minimise the use of B & B/ Guest House provision and it is an intention to consider how we can reduce its use and explore opportunities to increase the direct access and minimise the use of B & B/ Guest House provision.

### **Causes of homelessness**

In order for us to tailor and target resources effectively, it is important for us to understand the reasons leading to people's homelessness. The table below highlights the main reasons for homeless amongst a selection of other causes

| Cause  | 2021/22    | 2022/23    |
|--|------------|------------|
| <b>Family no longer willing or able to accommodate</b>           | <b>300</b> | <b>328</b> |
| <b>End of private rented tenancy – assured shorthold tenancy</b> | <b>194</b> | <b>267</b> |
| <b>Domestic abuse – victim</b>                                   | <b>167</b> | <b>171</b> |
| <b>Relationship with partner ended (non-violent breakdown)</b>   | <b>140</b> | <b>123</b> |
| <b>Other</b>   | <b>132</b> | <b>0</b>   |
| <b>Friends no longer willing or able to accommodate</b>          | <b>78</b>  | <b>92</b>  |
| <b>Departure from institution: Custody</b>                       | <b>72</b>  | <b>47</b>  |
| <b>Eviction from supported housing</b>                           | <b>65</b>  | <b>77</b>  |

|  |           |           |
|--|-----------|-----------|
| <b>Non-racially motivated / other motivated violence or harassment</b>           | <b>44</b> | <b>63</b> |
| <b>End of social rented tenancy</b>  | <b>41</b> | <b>23</b> |
| <b>End of private rented tenancy – not assured shorthold tenancy</b>             | <b>20</b> | <b>41</b> |
| <b>Home no longer suitable due to disability / ill health</b>                    | <b>12</b> | <b>20</b> |
| <b>Racially motivated violence or harassment</b>                                 | <b>6</b>  | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>Domestic abuse – alleged perpetrator excluded from property</b>               | <b>5</b>  | <b>11</b> |
| <b>Property disrepair</b>  | <b>5</b>  | <b>11</b> |
| <b>Fire or flood / other emergency</b>   | <b>4</b>  | <b>10</b> |
| <b>Departure from institution: Hospital (general)</b>                            | <b>3</b>  | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>Departure from institution: Hospital (psychiatric)</b>                        | <b>0</b>  | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>Required to leave accommodation provided by Home Office as asylum support</b> | <b>2</b>  | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>Mortgage repossession</b>   | <b>1</b>  | <b>14</b> |

The largest cause of homelessness is breakdown of relationships between friends and family. This will reflect young people who have never had their own place to live, and it will also represent those who have become homeless or left their accommodation to stay with friends or family and then approached ourselves.

End of privately rented tenancies is the next highest reason for homelessness. This has increased since last year more than other causes and this may be caused by cost of living pressures making properties less affordable. Landlords may be becoming more reluctant to let properties out and the private rental market becoming smaller due to heightened mortgage rates and a perception amongst landlords that with additional regulations incoming renting out properties is becoming more difficult. Another contributory factor maybe an older generation of landlords disposing of their properties and younger generations not being in a financial position to become buy to let landlords.

Domestic abuse is the third highest reason for homelessness. This is in line with previous years. To address this Worcester City has employed specialist domestic abuse workers to work on addressing the additional needs of individuals fleeing domestic abuse.

Non violent breakdowns of relationships is also a high cause of homelessness, particularly affecting single males whom are older. Such individuals are resistance to consider accommodation options such as HMO's and hostels due to difficulties in child access and wanting to avoid other individuals with complex needs.

Prison discharges also reflects a high amount of approaches. Such individuals have multiple complex needs and are difficult to engage with. Although we receive referrals from prison and probation our ability to undertake work with those in custody prior to release is difficult as there are insufficient access pathways to liaise with households in custody before release.

### **Housing First**

Housing First is operated by St Pauls Hostel with the service being in place since 2020. They work with households who are homeless, rough sleeping or threatened with rough sleeping and are multiply excluded with a high level of needs.

3 additional households have been secured long term accommodation by housing first and support is continuing to take place to help them sustain. This means a total of 13 individuals have been housed through Housing First. Two households accommodated by Housing First have had failed tenancies due to substance misuse, anti social behaviour and drug dealing. These tenancies have been ended. Other tenancies are still progressing despite households with a high complexity of need with a history of evictions. This has been due to continual involvement and support provided by the Housing First Team to enable households to sustain their accommodation and offer assurances to landlords that any issues are being addressed. Additional capacity is being brought in to Housing First so that more people can be assisted through this scheme. The nomination and referral process has also been reviewed to prevent the issues leading to eviction of the two customers occurring in future.

Worcester City Council has also been utilising a new programme called RSAP (Rough sleepers accommodation project) With Citizen. This has accommodated 3 individuals, though one has lost their accommodation and work is ongoing with them to source an alternative.

Although the programme was originally due to deliver 8 properties, the provider was unable to secure sufficient properties to deliver the full capacity within the grant conditions.

This programme had a number of difficulties relating to restrictive criteria for the capital funding from DLUHC. DLUHC have reviewed this and are looking to deliver a new programme called Single Homeless Accommodation Programme (SHAP). This will be more flexible addressing the shortcomings of the RSAP funding. Worcester City Council is liaising with partners to submit a bid for this funding to further expand accommodation for those with multiple complex needs.

### **No Second Night Out (NSNO)**

NSNO is operated by Caring for Communities and People (CCP). It offers emergency accommodation to households that would not otherwise be owed an accommodation duty by the council.

It aims to prevent individuals becoming intense rough sleepers. This is done with accommodation for 28 days with intensive work to secure more long term accommodation.

In 2022/23, 29 households were prevented from rough sleeping and 17 secured accommodation through NSNO.

Worcester City Council operates a longer period of emergency accommodation compared to surrounding Districts, 28 days compared to less than a week. This has been valuable as it has allowed more time to secure housing options and ensure people new to the street do not continue to rough sleep.

The current provision at Clare Street will no longer be able to continue as the owner has issued notice. Options are being explored to relocate to an alternative venue and ensure there is minimal interference with the service provision.

## **Rough sleeping**

Rough sleeping is the most visible side of homelessness and forms a significant part of public perception of homelessness and can present the most risk to individuals. Worcester City are committed to reducing rough sleeping and where possible eliminating it from occurring however recognise the challenges of achieving this and the importance of working with other agencies and providers within the City.

Each year, all Local Authorities are required to provide the number of individuals sleeping rough on a single night each year between 1<sup>st</sup> October and 30<sup>th</sup> November either through a physical count or estimate. There are a range of factors that may affect the number of people who sleep rough on any given night such as the availability of night shelters, the weather, where people choose to sleep and the date and time chosen for the snapshot estimate.

In Worcester, the snapshot related to an evidence based estimate of the number of people rough sleeping in Worcester on 13<sup>th</sup> October 2022. The estimate was undertaken with partners from across the City which identified 21 individuals as sleeping rough, up from 20 in 2021, 12 in 2020 and 19 in 2019.

The current number of individuals rough sleeping on a night at the end of March 2023 was 9. In 2022/23 we had a list of target priority rough sleepers. Individuals who are well known to rough sleepers and have been rough sleeping for a significant period of time. This included individuals who have been rough sleeping for many years. This included 24 individuals. Currently 1 of this target priority group is still homeless.

A new target priority group has been identified this year. The target priority group of rough sleepers this year (those who have rough slept for 2 out of the past 12 months) is 23.

Individuals from outside of the area are attracted into the City Centre as a safe environment with a number of established services and provisions in place which neighbouring authorities do not have. Individuals from out of area typically do not remain in the City for any length of time and are not the same people repeatedly returning to Worcester making engagement and prevention a challenge.

The homelessness service balances its approach to rough sleeping between prevention and intervention coordinating the City's response through fortnightly rough sleeper meetings and has dedicated rough sleeper housing solutions officers as well as outreach officers supporting individuals in temporary accommodation.

Access into the service comes from agency referrals, street link and self referral. Pathways into accommodation are considered on individual need and include private rented, registered providers, supported housing with immediate provision for anybody new to rough sleeping through No Second Night Out (NSNO).

There are a range of services including the CCP project which provides floating support and facilitates the Sever Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) & NSNO provision, Night Stop and Mediation Service, debt advice through the CAB, Housing First, an intervention and transition service, rough sleeper coordinator and dedicated rough sleeper housing solutions officers.

In addition, there is an established approach to joint working between agencies with regular meetings held to collaborate on rough sleepers as well as a strong volunteer response through Worcester Cares.

The intervention and transition service (ITT) has assisted 40 households in finding medium or long term accommodation. These positive housing outcomes would not have been achieved otherwise through traditional housing options. This is due to a history of individuals having cases closed due to lack of contact or the length of time needed to secure a housing option or the length of time needed to have other services such as mental health and social services involved, or assisting those who would otherwise be non priority or intentionally homeless.

Another different approach is a focus on recovery, or ongoing work to help households sustain tenancies. Many complex rough sleepers are found accommodation but lose it and fall into a spiral of becoming homeless, finding accommodation, losing it and repeating. Housing officers will typically stop working with a customer once they have been housed whilst ITT workers will continue to provide support. So if a household has been found accommodation but would have otherwise lost it if it weren't for ongoing intervention by the ITT this will be a positive outcome.

For the households accommodated in the first 6 months, 6 households are identified as reaching points where they would have been evicted. This is either due to a notice being served or threatened and required intervention from the ITT team to prevent. Due to other households not being housed for as long an assessment of the recovery for individuals in the second half has not been undertaken.

Through working with other agencies in weekly meetings, a number of cases have been identified before being evicted from providers such as St Pauls and WHABAC, and support provided to prevent these placements breaking down.

The rough sleeping service in Worcester has expanded in collaboration with St Pauls, Public Health and Cranston through the introduction of the Rough Sleeper Drug and Alcohol Service. This includes outreach from Emerging Futures and Cranston to engage individuals who have a poor history of attending appointments. These new services have been co-ordinated with existing outreach services to ensure they compliment and support each other.

### **Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP)**

During the winter of 2022/23 the emergency accommodation was opened 37 times by comparison to 2021/22 where it was opened 30 times. During this time the Worcester accommodation was accessed by 46 individuals, of which 29 people had a connection to Worcester. The average number of times the accommodation was accessed by an individual was 7 nights. SWEP is also triggered in severe hot weather 'hot SWEP' whereby outreach officers and partners will engage with anybody who is sleeping rough to offer water, hats, sun cream and accommodation where required.

This year Worcester city elected to do a communal SWEP rather than in self contained accommodation. This was run at Hopes Church. The central location and community that Hopes Church had established was positive towards the running of SWEP. Of those who attended SWEP 6 are still rough sleeping. Others who attended have been assisted through accommodation found with supported providers, social landlords and reconnections to their own local authorities. 3 of the individuals who are now rough sleeping were found accommodation in the private sector but were subsequently evicted. Work is ongoing with them.

## **Domestic Abuse**

Domestic abuse features as a high cause of homelessness and an important part of the homeless teams work. Through the Domestic Abuse New Burdens funding, the team have two Domestic Abuse Housing Solutions Officers who are specifically trained and focussed towards responding to and supporting individuals presenting as homelessness where the primary cause is domestic abuse.

All Housing Solutions Officers have training around Domestic Abuse and we work closely with providers including West Mercia Women’s Aid and Worcester Community Trust who run the ‘DAWN’ project. We attend the Worcestershire Forum Against Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence, Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) as well as working closely with partners in relation to perpetrators of Domestic Abuse.

There is an established Sanctuary scheme which provides grants to provide additional safety and security to support survivors of domestic abuse to remain in their home and prevent their homelessness. We recognise that this is not always appropriate and that moving sometimes is the only safe option. The Domestic Abuse Act provided additional responsibilities on Local Authorities including the provision of safe accommodation.

A needs assessment was undertaken across Worcestershire which identified the need for 10 units of safe accommodation within the City. During 2022/23, the existing 2 safe houses ceased to operate as the addresses had been compromised and the provider unable to allocate alternative provision. We are using existing delegated authority to progress the procurement of accommodation to meet this important need. This will be facilitated through a lease arrangement with a Registered Provider on a cost neutral business model.

## **Funding**

The following table highlights the grant funding that the Council was awarded during the year 2022/23 which related to homelessness. The funding arrangements around homelessness have been challenging due to their short term nature, restrictive grant conditions as well as short timescales for expenditure.

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| Homelessness Prevention Grant                  | 489,617.00 |
| Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme          | 82,684.00  |
| County Business Rates Retention- Housing First | 178,666.00 |
| Rough Sleeper Initiative 4 extension           | 124,712.00 |

|                                 |                     |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| DV -County                      | 33,666.66           |
| DV -MHCLG (New Burdens)         | 32,943.00           |
| Household funding-DWAS          | 100,000.00          |
| Household funding-Spend to save | 56,059.00           |
| RSI5                            | 213,695.00          |
| COMF-Spend to Save              | 20,000.00           |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                    | <b>1,332,042.66</b> |

Grant funding reduced significantly in 2022/23 from the preceding year with total grants received being £2,308,434 in 2021/22 which primarily surrounded additional government funding during Covid. The core source of homeless funding is the Homelessness Prevention Grant which for 2022/23 is £489,617 and is proposed to be allocated as outlined in the table below:

|  |                |
|--|----------------|
| <b>B/fwd</b>   | <b>935,705</b> |
| Homeless Prevention Grant 2023/24                              | - 489,617      |
| Outreach Officers x 4.5 FTE                                    | 162,000        |
| DV Coordinator-County wide post                                | 4,550          |
| County Intelligence Officer Post-County wide post              | 4,550          |
| Customer/Business Support Officer                              | 31,200         |
| TA Placement Officer (0.5 FTE)                                 | 15,600         |
| Additional Housing Solutions Officer post                      | 31,200         |
| Contribution to Worcester City Lettings post                   | 13,368         |
| Contribution to Private Sector Housing Technical Officer post  | 20,000         |
| Additional Property Standards Officer (Private Sector Housing) | 44,000         |
| System Support Costs   | 6,340          |
| Housing First  | 56,048         |
| Contribution to General Fund (Staffing costs)                  | 489,000        |
| Single Person HOPEs contract                                   | 70,000         |
| Worcestershire Nightstop Mediation                             | 15,000         |
| Intervention and Transition Team post                          | 35,000         |
| Park Street Management costs                                   | 35,562         |
| Severe Emergency Weather Protocol (SWEP)                       | 40,000         |
| <b>C/fwd</b>   | <b>351,904</b> |

### Health, Wellbeing & Housing

We recognise that housing plays an integral and fundamental contribution to the health and wellbeing of the residents of Worcester. The homeless service takes a prevention focussed approach and recognises the physical and mental health impacts that unstable, poor quality housing can play as well as the risk of homelessness.

The private rented sector is an important housing option for many people and there is an established private rented market in Worcester. The Private Sector Housing team are integral in having oversight of the condition of the private sector housing stock within the city both proactively identifying poor quality housing i.e. identifying housing which does not meet the minimum levels of energy performance as well as investigating reports of complaints. The team will always seek to find a resolution and has a range of tools and powers to do so and enforce non compliance.

One of the current and emerging challenges facing many across society are the rising costs of living placing increasing numbers of households into financial hardship. This poses a risk to their health and wellbeing as well as an increased risk in the rise of homelessness as individuals and families face challenging decisions around their finances.

The household support fund has been utilised to support households through a range of measures including financial support to access housing and through the Discretionary Welfare Assistance Scheme.

We recognise that the cost of living crisis plays a significant risk to increasing levels of homelessness and therefore will be seeking to coordinate a City wide partnership collaboration to consider the impact, map service provision in order to intervene, signpost and direct people to support, to remove barriers to accessing services, particularly where risk to health, wellbeing and homelessness exist and also to identify gaps in service provision.

A District Collaborative has been developed and will be a key partnership in working together to tackle health inequalities across the City.

## **Looking ahead**

Prevention remains a key priority for the homelessness service and we recognise the value in preventing people from being put at risk and facing homelessness therefore continued focus will be given to a prevention. Unfortunately, despite efforts to prevent homelessness, it is not always possible and our approach will focus on swift and supportive intervention to support people back into stable, safe and secure accommodation as quickly as possible.

We recognise that some individuals face homelessness on multiple occasions and that some individuals are more at risk of tenancy failure. Therefore will be exploring opportunities to provide greater support, advice and intervention at pre tenancy stage, particularly for those who have had tenancy failure or have not had a tenancy previously to increase the likelihood of successful and sustainable tenancies.

Funding services around homelessness and rough sleeping remains a challenge which is short term and often with prescriptive grant conditions and short timescales for expenditure.

Worcester does have higher numbers of individuals sleeping rough than other Worcestershire Districts including a small number of entrenched rough sleepers. The current round of the Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI5) funding was awarded in 2022 for 3 years, the first time this funding has been available beyond a 1 year basis. This has given greater opportunity to plan and focus resources over a longer term.



As we enter the second of the 3 years in 2023/24, we have established services focussed towards addressing rough sleeping in the City.

We need to balance a strategic approach to the prevention and response of homelessness but ensure that we maintain the focus of individuals throughout service delivery. In January 2023, a new Worcestershire Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy was adopted with a Worcester City action plan. This has been developed based on a needs assessment and is focussed on the strategic priorities surrounding homelessness and rough sleeping in the City.

Maximisation of housing options remains a key priority including both affordable housing as well as good quality private rented accommodation. We recognise the importance of working in partnership and collaboration with others in order to prevent and respond to homelessness strategically and that Registered Providers play a key role in doing so. We have established a Worcester Housing Partnership to engage with Registered Providers with stock in the City to discuss housing allocations, homelessness and development opportunities. In addition, we will be seeking to engage with Registered Providers individually to discuss opportunities for maximising affordable housing options in the City and offering the support of the Council to assist in an enabling role. The newly adopted Housing Enabling Strategy will be key to delivering this and a new, dedicated post of Affordable Housing Delivery Manager due to start in 2023 will be focussed on this area of work.

Temporary accommodation will also feature as a priority ensuring that we maximise value for money, quality and suitability of provision. Processes surrounding the use and management of temporary accommodation will also be reviewed during the forthcoming year.