

Title: Impact of Homelessness within Warwick District  
Lead Officer: Kevin Tebbett Housing Needs Manager  
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Helen Adkins  
Wards of the District directly affected: All\*

## **Summary**

To provide an overview of the extent and impact of homelessness within Warwick District.

## **Recommendation(s)**

**(1)** That Members consider the content of the report and put forward any comments.

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### **1 Background /information & Reasons for the Recommendation**

- 1.1 Members have requested information on the nature of homelessness in the Warwick district including:
  - 1.1.1 The Council's homeless statutory duties.
  - 1.1.2 The Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.
  - 1.1.3 Distinguishing between homelessness and rough sleeping.
  - 1.1.4 The causes of homelessness, the responses provided, and agencies involved.
  - 1.1.5 The impact of Temporary Accommodation.
  - 1.1.6 Key challenges facing the service.
  - 1.1.7 The cost involved in providing a homelessness and advice service.
- 1.2 **Homeless Statutory duties**
  - 1.2.1 Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 sets out the powers and duties of housing authorities where people apply to them for accommodation or assistance in obtaining accommodation in cases of homelessness or threatened homelessness.
  - 1.2.2 The Homelessness Act 2002 places a requirement on housing authorities in England to formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on the results of a review of homelessness in their district.
  - 1.2.3 The Homeless Reduction Act 2017 was introduced on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2018 which introduced new duties on local authorities in England, which included: -
    - A requirement on local authorities to conduct assessments and develop personalised housing plans (PHPs) with all eligible applicants.
    - An extended prevention duty requiring local authorities to take reasonable steps to prevent homelessness for applicants threatened with homelessness

within 56 days regardless of intentionality, priority need and local connection.

- A relief duty requiring local authorities to take reasonable steps to help homeless applicants secure suitable accommodation over a period of 56 days regardless of intentionality and priority need.

- A requirement for local authorities to provide homelessness information and advice to anyone in their area (including those not owed a prevention or relief duty).

- A requirement for local authorities to report more detailed case-level data, using a new HCLIC (Homelessness Case Level Information Classification) system.

- The Act also introduced a new duty to refer, from October 2018, requiring public authorities to refer people at risk of homelessness to their local authority.

1.2.4 Furthermore, Local authorities are required to have regard to the Homelessness Code of Guidance. In accordance with the 1996 Act, local authorities are required to have regard to this statutory guidance in exercising their functions relating to homelessness and prevention of homelessness, including their functions under Part 7 of the 1996 Act and under the Homelessness Act 2002.

1.2.5 The Code provides guidance on how housing authorities should exercise their functions relating to homelessness and threatened homelessness and apply the statutory duties in practice.

### 1.3 **Warwick District Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy**

1.3.1 Warwick District Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021/2026 sets out the context of homelessness, resources and action plan within the district.

1.3.2 The strategy has four objectives which defines the work on homelessness: -

- **Objective one – Universal prevention**

To provide a wide range of low-level, early intervention services to support people at any time, not just when homelessness is a possibility.

- **Objective 2 – Directed prevention**

To assist those who are threatened with homelessness to remain in their existing home if at all possible or, where this is not possible, to help them avoid homelessness by all other practical means.

- **Objective three – Crisis resolution**

To support those who become homeless, by providing suitable temporary housing and a broad palette of assistance to secure long term, suitable accommodation.

- **Objective four – Rough Sleeping**

To continue to innovate and expand the range of services available to maintain downward pressure on the number of people sleeping rough in the district.

1.3.3 This is complemented by a Warwickshire County wide strategy to tackle homelessness and is supported through the establishment of strategic homelessness groups comprising of officers from both statutory and voluntary and community organisations. This recognises that housing alone is not the answer. Homelessness cuts across numerous services such as mental health,

substance misuse, domestic abuse, and offending behaviour. As a result, several strategic homeless groups have been identified to develop responses to such issues as domestic abuse, young people and health etc.

1.3.4 The Housing Needs Service includes the Housing Advice and Allocations Teams as well as the Private Sector Housing Team. The Housing Advice and Allocations service consists of four key areas: -

- Housing Advice & homelessness - the provision of housing advice, undertaking prevention and relief casework and the investigation and making decisions under the homelessness legislation.
- Allocations – the registration of housing applications on Home Choice, maintaining existing applications as well as making offers of accommodation, accompany views and sign ups within the framework of the Allocation Policy.
- Temporary accommodation team – the procurement and management of TA units within WDC stock, placements in emergency accommodation such as B&Bs as well as the provision of support and advice to applicants within TA.
- Rough Sleepers – dedicated officer to work with agencies to provide support and assistance to secure settled accommodation through the co-ordination of services, and oversee the approach to the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP).

#### 1.4 **Distinguishing between Homelessness and Rough Sleeping**

1.4.1 Housing authorities must consider all applications for housing assistance, and if they have reason to believe that an applicant may be homeless or threatened with homelessness.

1.4.2 An applicant is to be considered homeless if they do not have accommodation that they have a legal right to occupy, which is accessible and physically available to them (and their household) and which it would be reasonable for them to continue to live in.

1.4.3 Broadly speaking, a person is threatened with homelessness if they are likely to become homeless within 56 days.

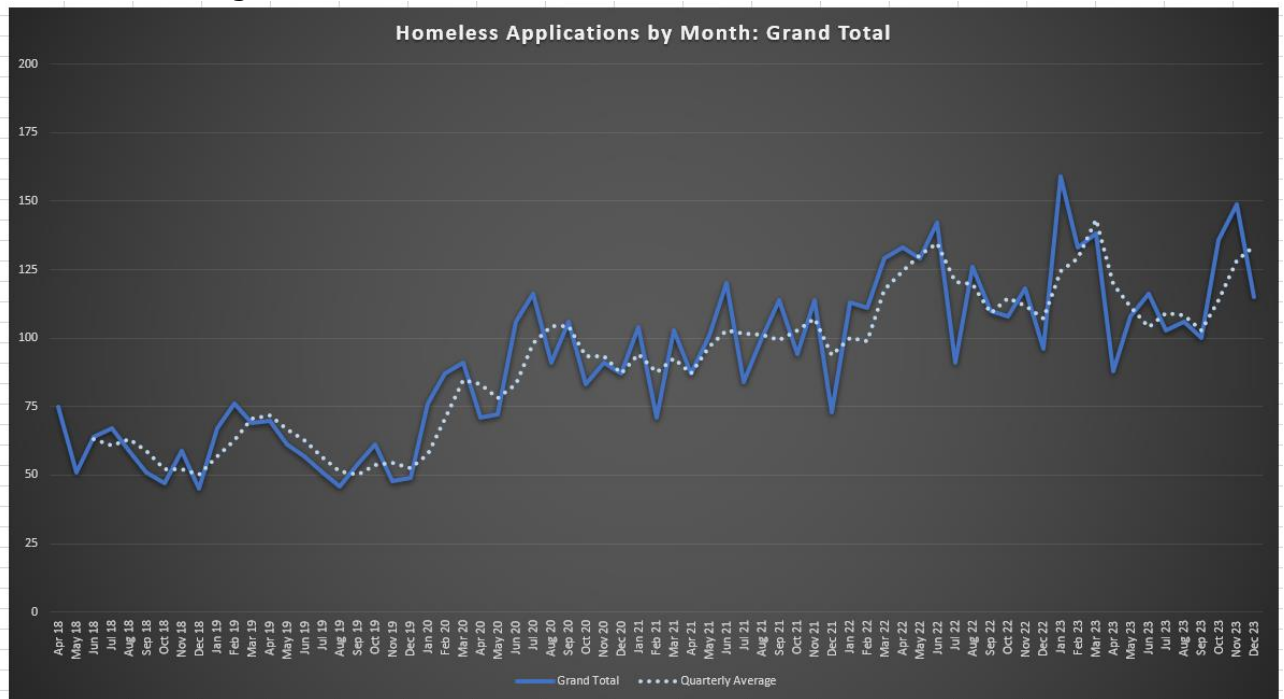
1.4.4 There are also those who experience hidden homelessness and are hidden from statistics and services as they are dealing with their situation informally. This means staying with family and friends, sofa surfing, living in unsuitable housing such as squats or in 'beds in shed' situations. Furthermore, those who are homeless may be accommodated in a number of different types of temporary accommodation such as night shelters, hostels, B&Bs and refuges.

1.4.5 Rough Sleepers can be defined as - People sleeping, about to bed down (sitting on / in or standing next to the bedding) or bedded down in the open air (such as the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelter or encampment). People in buildings or other spaces not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats stations or "bashes").

#### 1.5 **Extent of Homelessness within Warwick District**

1.5.1 There has been a stark increase in homelessness since 2018. This has been due to a variety of reasons; the lack of affordable accommodation, the increase in the cost of living, rising interest rates, increasing difficulty in accessing the private rented sector coupled with the dramatic increasing rents and relatively

low local housing allowance rates.



1.5.2 Turning to the detail relating to recent experience for the previous 3 years.

<b>No of homeless applications received</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>2023/24</b>
	1240	1482	1441

1.5.3 The number of applications has increased by 201 between 2021/22 & 2023/24, an increase of 16%. Not only have the number of cases increased but also the complexity of the cases as many applicants approaching with multiple complex needs such as drug & alcohol abuse, mental health issues and domestic abuse.

1.5.4 The top four reasons for approach are detailed in the table below: -

<b>Reason for Approach</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>2023/24</b>
Families / Friends no longer willing to accommodate	209	267	349
Loss of private rented tenancy	195	219	212
Domestic abuse	168	202	178
Relation breakdown	140	142	130

1.5.5 All reasons for approach have increased apart from relationship breakdowns. However, the main reason for approach is families or friends no longer willing to accommodate, which has risen by 65% over the three-year period. Many are single person households which exacerbates the need for 1 bed

accommodation.

1.5.6 In response to this increasing rise in homelessness the following actions have been taken: -

- A review of the housing advice and allocations service is currently being undertaken by a specialist housing consultant.
- The introduction of a dedicated Domestic Abuse post.
- The provision of a homeless prevention budget to fund deposits to access accommodation in the private rented sector.
- The provision of advice on income maximisation as well as debt advice – the more complex cases are referred to Citizens Advice.
- The successful use of the allocations policy to rehouse homeless applicants into affordable housing.

1.5.7 As a result, performance outcomes have been positive. For quarter 3 2023/24 (latest HCLIC stats) – the outcome for prevention duties ended positively was 64.1% against a national average of 52.2%. The outcome for relief duties ended positively was 58.4 % against a national average of 33.2%.

The table below shows performance outcomes for the key indicators.

	England	West Midlands Region	Warwick
Prevention duty ended positively	52.2%	53.4%	64.1%
Prevention duty ended through retaining current accommodation	34.7%	28%	12.2%
Relief duty ended positively	33.2%	37.5%	58.4%
Average no of households in TA per 1000 households	2.43 (154)	2.96 (183)	0.65 (41)

1.5.8 Whilst prevention and relief outcomes are excellent for Warwick, keeping households in their own home is low at 12%. This indicates that the proactive casework to keep clients in their own home is not as effective as it should be and is reflective of the current high turnover of staff.

1.5.9 The Warwick’s temporary accommodation figure is significantly lower than the figure estimated on the West Midlands region and all England (excluding London) average TA rate per thousand households. Warwick should be recording between 154 and 183 households compared to the actual number of 41. However, despite this relatively low figure there is still a significant cost to the provision of TA which is highlighted later in the report.

1.5.10 All local authorities are required to undertake an annual count during November. Warwick DC staff along with P3 staff visit all known locations of rough sleepers to establish the numbers. Once a date is agreed the count commences at 5.00am and provides a snapshot of the level rough sleeping in the area.

1.5.11 During 2023 there were 3898 people were sleeping rough in England as recorded on the national count. This represents an increase of 27% on the previous year. Causes of rough sleeping ` can include mental health issues, relation breakdowns, alcohol or drug addiction as well as release from prison. In

many cases rough sleepers have very complex needs, which can be a combination of the causes highlighted and can lead to difficulties in maintaining accommodation. The table below shows the extent of rough sleepers identified during previous years within the Warwick District.

2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
18	21	12	21	4	6	11	7

- 1.5.12 Within the Warwick district there are supported housing units provided by St Basils, Coventry Cyrenians and P3, which provide support to some of the more vulnerable clients to assist them to move to independent living. In addition, there is a strong voluntary sector operating within the district, which includes the night shelter which operates from Radford Road Church on Friday and Saturday nights as well as Helping Hands who provide a range of support services from their location in Leamington Spa.
- 1.5.13 A multi-agency forum meeting is held on a weekly basis to review all known rough sleepers within the district to agree /update a support plan to assist with health issues, substance abuse as well seek to rehouse into secure and sustainable accommodation when they wish to engage. To assist with this approach the Housing First project has recently been established which sources accommodation for rough sleepers and provides wrap round support via P3 support workers.
- 1.5.14 The Council also operates a Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) providing overnight accommodation for those sleeping rough when the temperature is predicted to fall to zero or below during the night.
- 1.5.15 A Successful Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) 5 bid provides funding for the outreach service provided by P3, the provision of a dedicated Rough Sleeper co-ordinator as well as an outreach nursing service. This is a 3-year funding stream which ends this financial year 2024/25. An announcement on further funding by DLUHC is expected later this year.
- 1.5.16 The street outreach workers as well as Physical nursing service make safeguarding referrals whilst on the streets where required and these are then monitored and discussed at the weekly multi agency rough sleeper meetings.

## 1.6 Impact of Temporary Accommodation

The increase in use and cost of temporary accommodation is having a significant impact on Local authority budgets nationally. Warwick DC are feeling the same financial pressures, during 2021 / 2022 the spend on Housing Benefit above subsidy levels was £194,000, this increased to £499,000 during 2022/23. During the previous financial year 2023/24 the amount reduced to £476,000.

- 1.6.1 On average the cost of B&B accommodation is £60 per night - £420 per week. The Council can claim under the subsidy rules a maximum of £117. 69 per week which is the Local Housing Allowance rate as at January 2011, leaving a shortfall of approximately £300 per week per placement.
- 1.6.2 The table below shows a breakdown of the numbers in temporary accommodation by type of accommodation and household size as at the end of each financial year.

<b>No of households in TA as at financial year end</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>2023/24</b>
	79	73	52

1.6.3 The above table shows a snapshot at year end and shows a continued reduction. However, households who are placed in temporary accommodation are staying for longer periods in B&B accommodation.

1.6.4 The table below shows the breakdown of temporary accommodation as of 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2024

<b>Household Composition</b>	<b>WDC own stock</b>	<b>B&amp;B /hotels</b>	<b>Apartments</b>	<b>Total</b>
Single person	8	26	2	36
Couples	0	0	0	0
Families	13	3	0	16
Total	21	29	2	52

1.6.5 Approximately 70% of Households within TA are single person households and due to the lack of one bed accommodation within the district, means that they remain in expensive nightly paid accommodation much longer. Furthermore 56% of all households in temporary accommodation are in B&B accommodation.

1.6.6 In response to the above increasing costs, several initiatives are being considered which include: -

- Proposals for the internal reconfiguration of William Wallsgrove House to provide 9 self-contained units and 1 bedsit for single people / couples.
- A review of temporary accommodation policies and procedures will be undertaken considering the outcome of the review of the service.
- The introduction of a Private Sector Leasing scheme to increase access to the Private Rented Sector.
- Establishing a housing company to provide temporary accommodation on behalf of the Council.

## 1.7 **Challenges facing the service**

1.7.1 In addition to the increasing cost of providing temporary accommodation as highlighted above, there are several other key challenges facing the service.

1.7.2 Staffing resources

The recruitment and retention of Housing Options Officers is a challenge for almost every council but has been particularly acute within Warwick. It has had the large impact on service delivery. There has been a large reliance on agency

staff covering the role of Housing Options Officers and this has led to a high turnover of staff. The current redesign has recognised this and will part of the recommendations to recruit to a larger structure once agreed.

### 1.7.3 Availability of one bedroom accommodation

The cost of TA is predominately due to the number and length of time placements have spent in hotel and B&B accommodation due to the lack of suitable move on accommodation. The following tables illustrate the limited availability of 1 bedroom accommodation within the Council stock. Last year only 48 one-bedroom undesignated properties became available for letting, whilst there are more than 800 applicants who are eligible for undesignated accommodation registered on Home Choice with one bed need.

	Council 1 bed stock	1 bed properties advertised during 2023/24
Undesignated	566	48
Designated excluding sheltered housing	809	75
Total	1375	123

Housing Register priority	Applicants eligible for undesignated stock	Applicants eligible for age designated
Band 1	11	3
Band 2	109	57
Band 3	436	58
Band 4	251	221
Total	807	339

### 1.7.4 Increase in Migration and Resettlement

Following the withdrawal from Afghanistan the British Government gave an undertaking to support those Afghans who assisted British Forces during the war in Afghanistan as well as provide support to Ukrainians looking to resettle in the country whilst the war continues in Ukraine.

The Government has been seeking to reduce the cost of housing asylum seekers and have been focused on closing the use of hotels as accommodation and moving asylum seekers into the private sector.

Warwick District Council has been successful in purchasing additional properties through the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) in both rounds 1 and 2. This has provided accommodation to both Afghans and Ukrainians.

In Warwickshire, there are a total of 677 asylum seekers throughout the initial contingency and dispersal accommodation estate. This comprised of 107 service users in initial and dispersal accommodation, and 570 service users in contingency accommodation (hotels).



There are currently 52 people at the Episode Hotel (number fluctuating). All the children are in schools. People are settled and there is a good network of volunteer support.

#### 1.7.5 The Availability of affordable accommodation within the Private Rented Sector (PRS)

The cost of rents within the PRS has increased dramatically due to the interest rate rises, the lack of available properties, and landlords leaving the market. This has effectively excluded many households on low incomes to secure a property in the PRS. The population within Warwick district has increased to 148,500 (2021) which represents an increase of 7.9% since 2011. The average monthly private rent is currently £1,136 an increase of 8.6% from May 2023. The table below shows the significant increase in private rents during the previous two years.

The significant cost of rents within the area is a considerable barrier to those on low incomes as these rents significantly exceed the Local Housing Allowances available.



However, Warwick DC has a well-established landlord steering group consisting of landlords, letting agents and officers. A Private Landlords Forum is held twice a year and attracts an average of 70 – 80 landlords.

A Landlord Offer is currently being developed to encourage landlords to come forward with properties and to increase access to affordable accommodation. This will include: -

- rent deposit scheme,
- rent in advance,
- assistance with establishing the tenancy,
- ongoing support to ensure the tenancy remains sustainable,
- a single point of contact for landlords as well as
- highlighting potential savings by sourcing tenants free of charge.

## 1.8 **The cost of providing a Housing Advice and homelessness service**

- 1.8.1 In addition to the temporary accommodation subsidy costs to the Council highlighted above, the overall budgeted costs for the homeless and advice service for 2024/25 is £1,751,500. This figure includes salaries, agency costs, general expenditure, prevention activities, temporary accommodation and supported housing costs.

During 2024/25 Warwick District Council have been allocated the following grants: -

Homeless Prevention Grant £623,201

Rough Sleeper Grant £351,652

New Burdens Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Grant £37,089

Asylum Dispersal Grant £97,250