
Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021 – 2025

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Introduction

This Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy has been written in unprecedented times during the Covid – 19 global pandemic. The economic outlook is uncertain as the pandemic continues to cause huge disruption to normal life. Cheshire East Council has kept essential services open for our residents and customers as the pandemic continues.

Delivering a first-class service to those requiring assistance is Cheshire East Council's priority, and any person who is homeless or facing homelessness will receive all the advice and support they need, when they need it.

We have continued to fulfil our homelessness prevention and relief work 7 days a week but impacting on this work has been the impact of the pandemic, in putting already vulnerable groups at extra risk. They may be rough sleepers, young people who have fallen out with family members, couples facing relationship breakdown, and victims of domestic abuse.

Nationally since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic over 15,000 people have been housed in emergency accommodation, such as hotels, student accommodation and B&Bs under the **Everyone In** scheme. Cheshire East has seen 117 individuals moving into accommodation through Everyone In.

The **Next Steps Accommodation Programme** made available the resources needed to support local

authorities and their partners to ensure that the current provision that has been set up to safeguard people who were taken safely from the streets is able to continue for an appropriate length of time. Cheshire East received £56,000 from the Government to provide assistance to move those accommodated in emergency provision into the private rented sector, ensuring they have support, to help address immediate need, and £450,000 to deliver long-term accommodation in the form of supported move-on homes for people recovering from rough sleeping, which was procured in partnership with Plus Dane.

Until October 2018 there were no dedicated outreach services available in Cheshire East. However, Cheshire East was successful with two consecutive funding bids made to the MHCLG as part of the **Rough Sleepers Initiative (RSI)** in 2018 and 2019, and for 2020-21 to create a series of targeted interventions to tackle local issues.

Commissioned partners are providing No First Night Out, emergency, and 24/7 support. This has seen Cheshire East experience a reduction in the recorded rough sleepers between 2018 to 2020. 178 individuals have been provided with emergency accommodation as part of the RSI, and Cheshire East has continued to achieve and deliver longer - term outcomes for individuals into accommodation which is for 6 months or more.

Key Achievements and Strategy Review

Cheshire East's Homelessness Strategy 2018-2021 has been reviewed to:

- Identify the main reasons for homelessness, and present future levels of homelessness and housing need
- Look at services in place to prevent homelessness and to provide accommodation and support to those in need
- Identify resources available to provide support for homeless people through prevention activity, and to divert people away from becoming homeless
- Identify gaps in provision

Engagement with a range of partners has increased our understanding around local pressures, and how services could work better together to prevent and reduce homelessness.

Since 2018 the Council has made measurable progress in reducing homelessness in Cheshire East. Our key achievements are listed below:

Preventing Homelessness:

- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 has been embedded into services
- 83% successful preventions (national target 65%)
- No-one homeless as a result of welfare reform
- We have recruited a Welfare Advice Officer to support with prevention in addition to the Money Advice Officer
- Joint working with the Benefits Section with regards to Housing Benefit, Discretionary Housing Payments and Emergency Assistance

Access to secure, affordable accommodation:

- Reduced homelessness from hospital
- Health and housing link worker in place to see people on the wards and is working with health colleagues to ensure more successful discharges
- Reduced B&B use

Supporting people to maintain and sustain accommodation:

- Duty to refer is working well
- Duty to refer leaflet is in circulation
- Our staff attend multi-disciplinary meetings to raise the profile of the resident
- Reviewed our literature and ensured it was provided in appropriate formats

Our vision

Definition of Homelessness

Homelessness takes many forms. Rough Sleeping is the sharp end of homelessness, however within Cheshire East those sleeping on our streets make up a small proportion of the total number of those who are homelessness.

Homelessness can be:

- Statutory homeless households in priority need in temporary accommodation such as hostels or Bed and Breakfast
- Single homeless living in supported housing or in a hostel
- 'Hidden homeless', in insecure arrangements with friends or others, known as 'sofa surfing'
- Households in fear of losing their home, or on the verge of actually losing their home

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 came into force from 1st April 2018. The Act places new duties on Local Authorities to prevent and relieve homelessness. The services provided to residents will be determined by the individual's situation, if they are threatened with homelessness within 56 days, if they are homeless tonight or within 7 days, or if they are rough sleeping.

This new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy sets out what we intend to do over the lifespan of the strategy and what priorities we are focusing on between 2021 and 2025.

It is a strategy to enable us to:

- prevent homelessness
- secure sufficient accommodation (of a range of types) that is and will be available for people who are or may become homeless
- provide satisfactory support for people who are or may become homeless, or who need support to prevent them becoming homeless again.

Our Vision: To prevent homelessness, giving residents the ability to access and sustain affordable housing and an improved quality of life.

National and local context

National Context

There have been several Government interventions aimed at assisting those who are homeless and sleeping rough.

Everyone In

The Government aim is to ensure that the 37,000 vulnerable people and rough sleepers have somewhere to stay during the Pandemic. About 26,000 of those supported by the programme are now in long term accommodation.

Next Steps

Funding has been allocated for 3,300 new homes for rough sleepers. Over £150 million is to be made available across England to provide a permanent place to live for some those who are the most vulnerable.

Protect Programme

A new scheme to help protect vulnerable people in our communities

from COVID-19. which provides extra support to areas that need it most. £15 million has been allocated to support the ongoing efforts to provide accommodation for rough sleepers during the pandemic. This scheme will help areas that need additional support most during the restrictions and throughout winter.

Housing First

Pilots in Greater Manchester, Liverpool and West Midlands are supporting around 800 vulnerable people off the streets and into secure homes. 600 are now in permanent accommodation. Over 2,000 other Housing First places have been created, many funded through the Rough Sleeping Initiative.

Rough Sleeper Initiative

Rough Sleeper Initiative fund is for short-term interventions to reduce rough sleeping. MHCLG have announced funding available from a £112m funding pot as part of the Government's rough sleeping programme.

Local Context

MHCLG statistics suggest that homelessness levels nationally are going up. Increasing numbers of people are unable to find a home and the loss of a private sector tenancy is now the most common cause of homelessness nationally.

However, the scale of homelessness is greater than that captured in the statistics. The scale of hidden homelessness is unknown, and people are homeless but have not approached local authorities for help,

and some who do seek help but are turned away before a formal application is made are still homeless and should be taken into account in national statistics. The MHCLG is

considering how these groups can be captured effectively in the data it collects.

The Cheshire East position

Homelessness prevention and relief cases during 2018–2020 have increased by 15.4%, with the main causes of homelessness including eviction by family and friends, domestic abuse, and the end of assured shorthold tenancy. This data¹ contains statistics on statutory homelessness and rough sleeping. The MHCLG has changed the way it collects data from local authorities on statutory homelessness. H-CLIC contains information on more people

who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, rather than only those who are considered to be in priority need. National statistics attempt to outline whether councils are taking action to stop someone becoming homeless (Prevention) or stepping in to offer assistance afterwards (Relief). This can be recorded in different ways.

Prevention – this refers to positive actions taken by Cheshire East (or partner organisations funded by us) to provide assistance to households who consider themselves to be at risk of homelessness. Prevention enables households to remain in their existing accommodation or obtain an alternative for at least the next 6 months.

Relief – this refers to positive actions to secure accommodation for households that have already become homeless.

This data is broken down by Prevention or Relief in the next table. Prevention cases account for 66.2%, with Relief recorded at 33.7%.

Table 9: Cheshire East total Homelessness Prevention and Relief April 2018 – March 2020

	April 2018 - March 2019	April 2019 - March 2020	Total
Prevention	808	1,044	1,838
Relief	488	452	938
Total	1,296	1,496	2,776

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness>

Appendix 2 details the reason for the loss of the home of those owed a Prevention or a Relief duty, the accommodation at the time of homeless application, household type, referral sources, and ethnicity.

Current activity

The Council has made measurable progress in reducing homelessness in Cheshire East. There are many examples of:

- Effective early interventions
- Management of complex needs and crisis situations
- Increased levels of support, and
- Provision of additional affordable accommodation

A study of the likely impact of Welfare Reform on eligible cohorts has been carried out. The new Tenancy Strategy

2021 has the aim of making the best use of affordable housing to meet local housing need.

Data does not capture those people helped by more informal methods by Cheshire East or by family members before they are classed as homeless.

Homelessness applications and acceptance figures may misrepresent the amount of demand Cheshire East is facing at a local level.

Rural homelessness

About 50% of Cheshire East residents live in rural locations. There are significant levels of inequality and deprivation to which rural communities are vulnerable. Often there are limited transport options. Circumstances in rural areas can make delivering services to prevent and relieve homelessness particularly difficult.

Research by the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) has said that central to addressing homelessness in rural areas is making sure rural housing markets work for their resident

populations by providing affordable accommodation across a range of tenures and types of home.

Cheshire East has no specific information about homelessness in local rural settlements. Cheshire East will address this issue in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, and if evidence suggests this is a significant problem, then a number of things could be pursued, such as a rural-specific homelessness strategy, new models of partnership working, and improved monitoring.

Future intentions

The Housing Service will explore new ways to help more households to remain in their own home. This will be done through an efficient process to pick up homelessness triggers from

contact via the new Homechoice and Single Point of Access, and an understanding of the triggers of homelessness through the new 56 days run in through the HRA.

More details about these and other issues, and what Cheshire East is doing and will do to prevent

homelessness is covered next under the 4 Strategic Priorities.

Welfare Reform

Cheshire East Council is proud to not have any homelessness presentations as a result of welfare reform. However, there are still ongoing issues which we need to be aware of.

Benefit issues can be complex. Financial issues can impact a range of areas including employment, family and social life and the ability to sustain a tenancy.

Cheshire East's ambition for economic growth continues to present employment opportunities in the borough, although impacts from Covid-19 have the potential to affect this.

We will work together with local partners to address employment and training needs, which will ensure that households have the opportunity to obtain higher value employment opportunities.

The provision of employment, financial and housing advice will:

- (1) Increase the number of adults moving off 'out of work' benefits and into continuous employment, and
- (2) Increase the number of individuals not claiming unemployment benefit over 6 months and who are on a pathway to work.

Cheshire East will positively support partnerships with voluntary sector stakeholders and other local partners to address the support, education, employment, and training needs (including bespoke training around partnerships and operational working).

Cheshire East has explored options with the DWP for working on joint local initiatives aimed at reducing homelessness and unemployment, such as improved communication and direct dialling between services to fast track cases to prevent homelessness.

Repossession

Repossession can affect all housing tenures and households. In 2019/20. 411 households were subject to repossession and have therefore lost their home.

Homelessness presentations to Cheshire East show there were 41 households (3.9% of all presentations) recorded as owner-occupiers or shared owners who required a Prevention duty in 2019/20.

The table below outlines the repossession data across a number of housing tenures in Cheshire East.

Table 11: Repossession data

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	Total
Mortgage claims	117	121	146	384
Mortgage possessions	24	26	21	71
Private landlord claims	72	86	92	250
Private landlord possessions	15	25	22	62
Social landlord claims	357	375	353	1,085
Social landlord possessions	97	92	89	278

Locally, up to 20% of new tenancies are failing within the first 12 months. The CAB provides debt advice to households facing financial hardships. Money advice is a key homelessness prevention tool.

Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse accounts for over 20% of all homeless cases over the last 3 years. The majority of referrals are made to local specialist domestic abuse services, and also referrals to the commissioned sexual violence support provider.

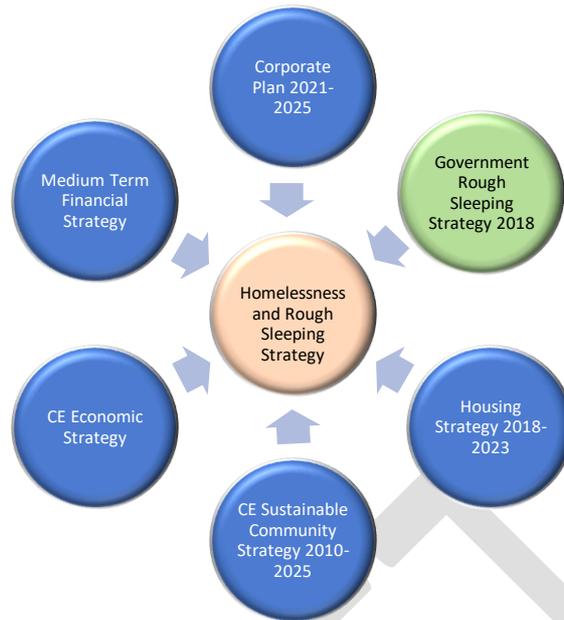
Responses to domestic abuse, including housing need, are specifically co-ordinated through the work of the Cheshire East Domestic and Sexual Abuse Partnership (CEDSAP). CEDSAP has the prevention of homelessness as a key priority, working to keep people safe in their homes where possible, and only sending people out of the area as a last resort. This is done by, amongst other things:

- Support for victims to remain in their accommodation where it is safe to do so
- Target hardening of properties
- Support for victims to use Council services to get help with accommodation problems

The CEDSAP hub service receives people seeking support including accommodation, and provides quality services to respond to need, including housing.

The CEDSAP Strategy aims at strengthening joint working with recently commissioned providers of 14 units of local accommodation for those with additional needs across Cheshire East.

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy links into other key documents and is shaped by them. This can be illustrated as follows:



The Corporate Plan 2021-2025 vision is to be an open, fair, and greener Council and this strategy will help to deliver the priority to be a Council which empowers and cares about people.

One of the priorities of the Cheshire East Sustainable Community Strategy 2010 – 2025 is to ‘articulate the aspirations, needs and priorities of the people of Cheshire East and the places they live in’ through:

- Planning for a range of housing to meet the needs of older people, families, and young people, and developing suitable types of housing and tenures to ensure that residents have a choice of accommodation to meet their current and future needs, and
- Working in partnership to provide specialist accommodation and housing support for those residents who have complex needs and requirements

The Cheshire East Housing Strategy’s aim is “that all residents in Cheshire East are able to access affordable, appropriate and decent accommodation.” The key priorities are:

- Growth and Quality of Place and Health, and
- Wellbeing and Quality of Life

The Housing Strategy contains identified actions aimed at stimulating the housing market and preventing homelessness.

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy section called ‘Strategic Priorities’ details the strategic context of each Priority then sets out:

- The issue
- The Cheshire East position
- Current activity, and

- Future intentions

The aim is to set out a broad rationale for the Priorities, and to enable discussion and development of new ideas as the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy is implemented. The ambition is to prevent homelessness, and deliver homelessness prevention services which are more efficient, and provide better value for money.

During the lifespan of the last Homelessness Strategy, the Council reviewed strategic outputs through consultations with service providers, commissioners of services, and with service users.

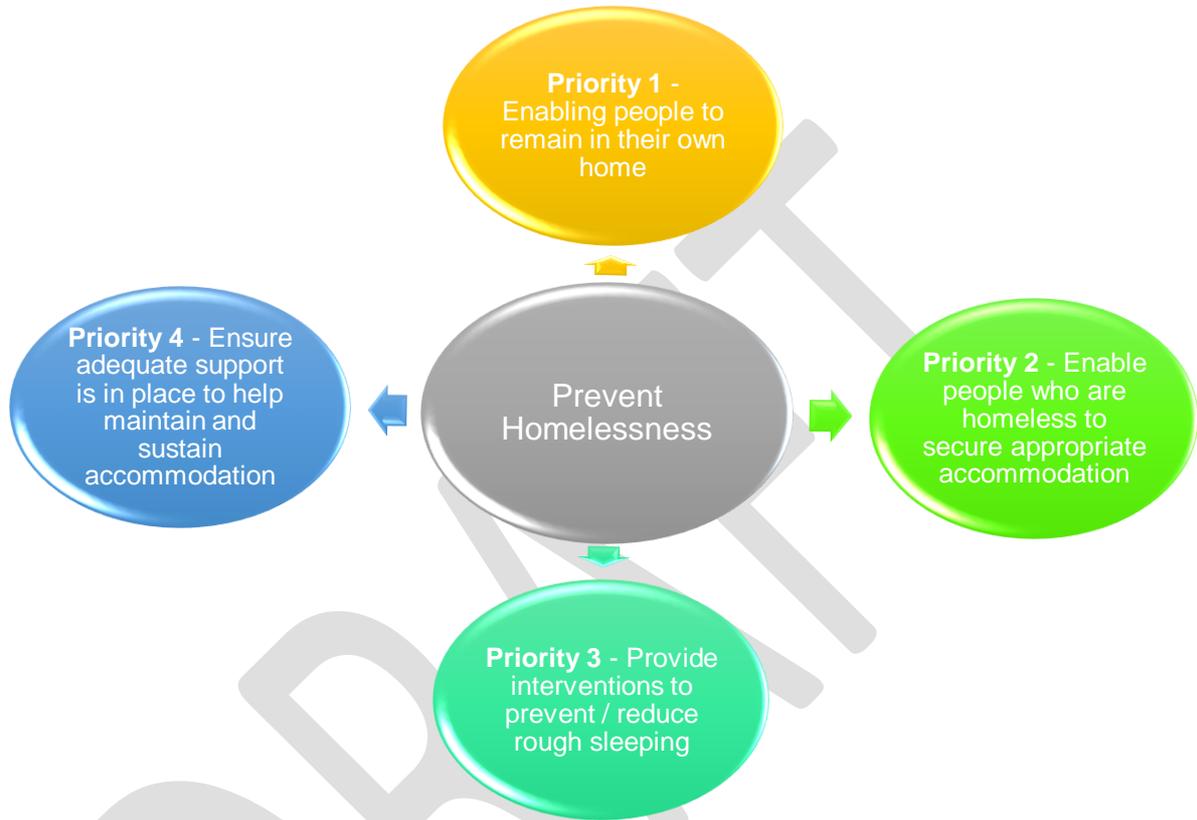
The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Steering Group has played a major role in monitoring the Strategy's action plan. The Steering Group is made up of people from a range of partner organisations and meets quarterly.

The four Strategic Priorities outline how homelessness will be prevented, as shown below. The Priorities incorporate tasks from the 2018-2021 Homelessness Strategy which have been carried forward.

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PRIORITIES

To achieve our ambition to prevent homelessness, we will focus on the following priorities



Strategic Priority 1: Enable more people to remain in their home and prevent them from becoming homeless

The issue

The MHCLG collects data on prevention and relief efforts by local authorities, which are now included in the same statistical release as statutory homeless figures.

Homelessness Prevention involves councils helping people to avoid homelessness through measures such as helping them to secure alternative accommodation or to stay in their

current home. Homelessness Relief is when an authority has been unable to prevent homelessness but has helped someone to secure accommodation, even though it was not under a legal obligation to do so.

According to a 2020 data release, 304,290 cases were assessed, with 288,470 owed a duty. Of these, 148,670 (48.9%) had a Prevention

duty, and 139,800 (45.9%) had a Relief duty.

More is needed to prevent homelessness by supporting

The Cheshire East position

The number of successful prevention and relief cases has increased year on year, with 2,776 households assisted between 2018 and 2020.

Good levels of prevention have been recorded which shows a preference for prevention. Between 2018 – 2020, 1,838 (66.2%) were assisted to find alternative accommodation, rather than remain in their own home (406). A priority for this Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy is to explore new ways to help more households to remain in their own home.

Early intervention can help prevent households from losing their homes. Almost 50% of cases had homelessness prevented through a resolution of rent or service charge issues.

Homelessness prevention involves providing people with the ways and means to address their housing and other needs to avoid homelessness.

Homelessness prevention data accounts for cases previously at risk of homelessness, for which homelessness was prevented through positive action (either allowing the household to remain in their existing home or assisting the household to obtain alternative accommodation).

Homelessness relief data accounts for cases that had become homeless (but were not accepted as owed a main duty), for which homelessness was

households at risk before they reach crisis point, as well as reducing rough sleeping.

relieved through positive action.

Homelessness relief occurs when an authority has made a negative homeless decision, that is, that a household is either intentionally homeless or is non-priority as defined within part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (amended 2002), but helps someone to secure alternative accommodation, even though it is under no statutory obligation to do so.

Prevention and Relief work are carried out with partner agencies such as the Citizens Advice Bureaux, floating support providers, etc.

The number of successful prevention cases has increased year on year for the past 3 years, with an increase from 808 to 1,044 (+29.2%). The majority of the households have been assisted to move into social housing via Homechoice, evidence that the Cheshire East Allocations Policy gives 'reasonable preference' to those households threatened with homelessness.

The number of people on Cheshire Homechoice exceeds the number of affordable housing properties available. The number is high each year, with the number of people on Homechoice varying year to year based on annual reviews of applicants, applicants' circumstances changing, and on affordable housing stock availability (the number of lets available).

Table 10: Total households on Homechoice on the 1st April 2018 - 2020

Year	Total
2018	7,931
2019	9,212
2020	8,691

This includes ex - members of HM Armed Forces who are awarded the appropriate banding and local connection.

Current activity

Successful interventions are carried out, through means such as mortgage arrears interventions, family mediation, the Emergency Assistance Fund, and support at Court via the Money Advisor.

Over 60% of preventions have involved resolving money problems with 50% rent or service charge problems, and 13% Housing Benefit problems.

Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) are used to prevent homelessness to assist people who have been affected by welfare reforms including the benefit cap, the removal of the spare room subsidy in the social rented sector and changes to Local Housing Allowance rates. They can also be used to cover rent in advance and rent deposits.

The DHP fund is administered by the Benefits Section. Private sector liaison officers work closely with Benefits Officers to maximise the chance of successful outcomes. Payments from the Discretionary Housing Payments and the Emergency Assistance Fund may be offered to eligible households.

The largest single prevention action (almost 50%) concerns rent or service charge arrears in social housing,

followed by Housing benefit problems and mortgage arrears.

Mortgage arrears and rent arrears in Cheshire East have remained at low levels as the causes of loss of accommodation. The Mortgage Pre-Action Protocol (MPAP) has led to a reduction in the number of repossessions. These findings suggest that steps taken by Cheshire East to reduce homelessness have been effective, such as:

- Participating in and funding court desks in Macclesfield and Crewe which assists in representing the resident in court in cases of mortgage and rent arrears
- Promoting the work of the money advice officer and monitoring referrals to the service to assessing the impact of any increases in mortgage interest rates on owner-occupiers

The data for Cheshire East is static, although the repossession activity by social landlords is something which will need specific work in order to establish why this is the case, and what can be done to produce reductions to match those seen in the private landlord and mortgage sectors.

Future intentions

Prevention work has seen an increase with the Homeless Reduction Act with people assisted 56 days before they are likely to become homeless. A new Section 195 inserted into the 1996 Act requires Cheshire East to take steps to help prevent homelessness for any eligible households threatened with homelessness.

Steps to be taken will be informed by the assessment set out in the Personalised Housing Plan. This will include things such as mediation to help keep families together, or financial payments. There will be a demonstrable focus on delivering proactive advice and support to enable clients to sustain their existing accommodation wherever practicable and appropriate, or, to access alternative accommodation.

A pathways model has been devised to connect young people with appropriate services such as supported accommodation leading to self-contained sustainable accommodation via Housing Related Support.

A reduction in homelessness has been achieved from mental health hospital through a discharge protocol signed up to by Cheshire East and the Cheshire and Wirral Partnership / NHS, which outlines key roles and responsibilities of each service and what each can expect from the others. A Link Worker assists people leaving hospital, with no home to go to, into appropriate commissioned bed spaces, for a short duration, as the Link Worker finds a more permanent housing solution.

The Action Plan to achieve Strategic Priority 1 is outlined on the next pages.

Action Plan for Priority 1: Enable more people to remain in their home and prevent them from becoming homeless

Task	What will be the outcome?	By when?
Map the prevention and relief options and develop a menu of support options which are available to anyone, and identify any gaps: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Floating support - Mediation - Access to the PRS - Access to Social housing - Access pathways to supported housing 	Improved partnership working and data sharing	April 2022
Review partnership working and information sharing between the CAB, Job Centres, DWP, Benefits Section and Housing	Improved partnership working and preparedness for any increase in evictions, money management and debt problems	August 2021
Support partnerships with the 3rd Sector, voluntary sector, and other local partners to address support, education, employment, and training needs	More vulnerable residents in non-benefit reliant households	April 2022
'Duty to Refer' processes are in place, reviewed and developed across all key services	Improved partnership working and data sharing	August 2021
Work with statutory and voluntary agencies to ensure that support is available to those clients affected by welfare reform issues, such as Universal Credit.	Reduction in households evicted due to rent arrears	April 2022
Explore 'early identification' triggers and information sharing with key agencies such as DWP, Benefits Section, supported accommodation and Registered Providers	Reduction in households evicted due to rent arrears	April 2022
Review evictions from RP properties for rent arrears, and UC problems, and work with providers in identifying causes.	Provision of timely advice for people in rent arrears in the social sector	April 2022
Develop our private landlord relationships and encourage landlords to pre-notify Housing Options about 'notices to quit' given to tenants	Improved engagement with landlords and developing an early-warning system	October 2021
Work collaboratively with key partners to review the use of financial payments to reduce arrears	Prevention of homelessness for people with affordability issues	October 2021
Review the effectiveness and develop our prevention tools for homeowners at risk of mortgage repossession and respond to economic conditions	Reduction in the number of households evicted from owner-occupied properties	April 2022

Use appropriate prevention tools to reduce evictions from family and friend's	Reduction in eviction from family and friend's accommodation	October 2021
Youth Homelessness - Map the prevention and support options and develop a menu of prevention and support	Developed pathways model for young people, working in partnership with youth agencies (such as Children's Services, other statutory partners, and local 3rd sector agencies)	October 2021
Ensure that homeless pathways work alongside pathways agreed by Care Leavers Service	Reduction in care leavers facing homelessness	June 2022
Ensure services for complex domestic abuse cases are adequately delivered in housing services	Domestic abuse cases are	October 2021
Increase links with services addressing domestic abuse, for e.g. MARAC	Reduction in homeless domestic abuse victim households	October 2021
Create a DA Safer Families or MARAC champion within Housing Options	Identification of where people may face barriers in accessing help	October 2021
Establish strategic and operational links with drug and alcohol services, developing and coordinating our services jointly, particularly with commissioned providers.	Reduction in substance misuse related anti-social behaviour, neighbour nuisance, and domestic abuse particularly connected to the risk of homelessness	April 2022
Create a working group to review the provision of tenancy sustainment and life skills training for service users before moving into settled accommodation	Improve tenancy sustainment for service users coming from supported accommodation in commissioned and non-commissioned providers and reduced repeat homelessness	October 2022

Strategic Priority 2: Help people who are homeless to secure appropriate affordable accommodation

The issue

Homeless households found to be unintentionally homeless and in priority need are owed the full housing duty. Section 208 of the Housing Act 1996 requires that where it is 'reasonably practicable', local authorities should secure accommodation within their

administrative boundary. However, the combination of a limited supply of social housing and rising costs in many areas means that some authorities are increasingly struggling to accommodate homeless households in their locality.

The Cheshire East position

Detailed and clear advice is given, with a particular focus on affordability and support, to access the Private Rented Sector (PRS). Cheshire East is developing a private sector landlord offer. Accreditation of landlords is ongoing; however it will be reviewed to ensure it is working effectively.

The Scheme aims to recognise private landlords who operate good management practices and maintain good property standards. Cheshire East Private Landlord Liaison Officers provide support and advice to private landlords. The Cheshire East scheme works well and has been seen as an example of good practice.

Current activity

The number of successful Prevention cases has increased year on year for the past 2 years. The majority of the households have been assisted to move into social housing via Homechoice.

No homeless households have had their homelessness addressed through the use of low-cost home ownership housing products (at the point of homelessness relief, although as household circumstances improved some may have entered shared ownership, for example).

A new housing-related support contract began in Cheshire East in April 2020. It has split services into 2 areas: Cheshire East North, and South. There is a requirement to link

this into tenancy sustainment as a key element of prevention work.

The Single Point of Access (SPA) receives referrals, almost half made by the Housing Options team, of which, 80% come from the Homelessness Team, with the remainder from enhanced housing options or Homechoice. Referrals to the SPA are high, but often services available are not always appropriate for those with complex needs. It is necessary to improve use of the SPA by increasing awareness of the service amongst partners and stakeholders.

Typically, clients who left services in a negative or an unplanned way are more likely to return, needing more

support than clients that leave services in a positive or a planned way.

Future intentions

The design of the new Housing Related Support service is outcome - focused, allowing families and single people the opportunity to access the support they need. This approach will ensure that those with complex needs, such as substance misuse and mental health, will be supported into independence where this is achievable, or will have a suitable service in place to support them to maintain accommodation and prevent homelessness.

The service providers are bringing innovative approaches to the programme of early intervention and prevention, which will provide significant value for money to Cheshire East, with a reduction in demand to front line services.

Work is being done to develop an enhanced PRS offer. This will see increased access to the PRS, especially for homeless and vulnerable households. It may also include incentives offered to private landlords to rent out their properties to nominated households.

There has been a re-commission of the Cheshire East Substance Misuse Service. A core value and key principle is engagement, co-production and co-design with service users. Priorities include the aim of reducing homelessness and the risk of homelessness related to alcohol-related crime, anti-social behaviour and domestic abuse. One aim is to examine what levels of homelessness originate from social and private rented accommodation as a result of

substance misuse and clarify if households were known to services.

Younger people have difficulty finding rented accommodation as a substantial proportion of private landlords have actively cut back on renting to under-35s. Although nearly all landlords are willing to rent to under-35s, nearly a third have changed their letting strategy, mostly to ensure that they have security of rent payment.

National Research by the Residential Landlord Association (RLA) stated there are particular sub-groups to whom landlords say they are less willing to let to. Two-thirds of landlords (68%) are not willing to let to under-35s on Housing Benefit / Universal Credit (HB / UC). More than two-fifths of landlords (44%) are not willing to let to students. The most common reasons why landlords were not willing to let to particular groups of under-35s tend to fall into two categories – difficulty in managing the accommodation, and fears about financial loss.

This supports evidence that HB / UC claimants are viewed as relatively distinct sub-markets which some landlords specialise in and others avoid. There was some regional variation in the willingness to let to both these groups. Recently migrants represented the third largest group that landlords were not willing to rent to.

The Action Plan to achieve Strategic Priority 2 is outlined on the next pages.

Action Plan for Priority 2: Help people who are homeless to secure appropriate affordable accommodation

Task	What will be the outcome?	By when?
Develop different methods of communicating information and giving advice, via social media, advertising, etc.	Stakeholders are more aware of services for those at risk of homelessness	December 2022
Explore prevention and housing options for single males	Increased accommodation options and support given to single males	June 2022
Map the options available for people with complex needs and the demand, and identify gaps in provision and services	Housing pathways in place or in development with each key partner for each client group	June 2022
Develop a protocol for repeat presenters who have exhausted all options	More options explored at the 'hard to house' panel to find solutions for those who have exhausted previous housing options.	June 2022
Develop our client engagement and involvement in reflective reviews of service offers for single homelessness.	Services are reviewed and developed in relation to clients own lived-experience, comments and opinions	June 2022
Promote and implement the Hospital Discharge Protocol and increase understanding of Mental Health Capacity	Increased knowledge and understanding of pathways for Mental Health clients reaching different thresholds	March 2023
Work with health services to reduce the number of unplanned discharges, especially from mental health units, through use of the discharge protocol and effective use of the Link Workers and commissioned emergency beds.	Reduction in the number of people homeless after leaving hospital	June 2022
Develop our knowledge base and relationships with private landlords of shared and HMO accommodation	Easier access to the Private Rented Sector	March 2023
Review the effectiveness of the Common Allocations Policy in awarding priority to prevent or relieve homelessness.	Households are receiving appropriate offers of accommodation	June 2022
Examine options for joint meetings, profile raising, and joint training with Care Leaver Service	Improved outputs for care leavers	June 2022
Review of the Corporate parenting strategy in line with Homelessness Reduction Act	Improved outputs for care leavers	June 2022

Ensure care leavers / young people are appropriately represented within the Cheshire East allocations policy	Earlier identification of those vulnerable Children in Care and Looked After Children, in line with the Cheshire East Corporate Parenting Responsibility	June 2022
Identify private landlords with rented properties of a suitable standard willing to accept nominations for Housing Options	Development of an enhanced private sector offer	May 2022
Limit the use of B and B accommodation for all client groups, justified by a 'spend to save' approach	Resourcing of the local prevention model using cost benefit analysis of alternatives / reduction in B&B use	May 2023

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Strategic Priority 3: Provide interventions to prevent rough sleeping

The issue

Rough sleeping is the most visible face of homelessness. According to the latest figures, collected in the Autumn of 2019, there were 4,266 individuals

sleeping rough on a single night across England. This represents a decrease of 8.7% from the 2018 levels of 4,677.

National Rough Sleepers Strategy

In August 2018 the MHCLG published its Strategy for providing long term reductions to the numbers of individuals sleeping rough, and to work towards preventing individuals having to sleep on the streets. This was to further support the Government's pledge to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and to end it by 2027.

The Strategy and 2027 vision are built around 3 principles of Prevention, Intervention, and Recovery:

Prevention

- Implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act
- £20 million of targeted funding for 48 projects providing prevention and early intervention for at risk clients
- £20 million fund for establishment of Homeless Prevention Trailblazers

Intervention

- Rough Sleeping Initiative - Working with 83 LAs in 2018/19 - £30 million
- Somewhere Safe to Stay Pilots - Builds on the NSNO principles
- Rough Sleeping Navigators - ensuring rough sleepers have support to access support
- Hostels - providing supported placements

Recovery

- Working to boost supply of affordable housing
- Supported Lettings
- Supporting individuals to overcome and issues / needs they have
- Housing First models - £28 million for 3 pilots across England
- Move on Fund - £100 million to provide further affordable housing

The Government believes that the above approach will provide the necessary support to individuals who are currently sleeping rough, as well as preventing those individuals at risk of rough sleeping from going onto the streets.

The Cheshire East position

The number of rough sleepers is continuously monitored by the Council, through information from partners and a new dedicated outreach worker team, who provide an estimate of rough sleeping on one night each year

chosen between 1st October and 30th November. This is a snapshot on a single night, and not an assessment of the total number of rough sleepers over the whole year.

Table 12: Rough sleeping recorded on a single night each year in Cheshire East

2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
4	21	10	8	6

The above figures reveal that Cheshire East experienced a reduction in recorded rough sleepers between 2018 to 2020. However, the 2017 figure showed a substantial increase and rough sleeping became a much more visible problem in the borough for the first time.

Commissioned partners are providing No First Night Out, emergency, and 24/7 support.

The Housing Options Team is committed to tackling rough sleeping and has a range of solutions available to people who find themselves sleeping on the streets.

In April 2020, Cheshire East commissioned a new housing related support service, providing supported accommodation, emergency accommodation and support. Emerging Futures were awarded the contract for emergency accommodation and 24-hour access provisions across the Borough. As part of this service, Emerging Futures delivers 36 units of emergency accommodation, and provides interventions to support the health and wellbeing of service-users, preventing them from falling into further crisis, and reducing potential demand on expensive social care, health and homelessness services. More detail on Housing Related Support is provided in Strategic Priority 4.

Until October 2018 there were no dedicated outreach services available in Cheshire East. However, Cheshire East was successful with two consecutive funding bids made to the MHCLG as part of the Rough Sleepers Initiative in 2018 and 2019, and for 2020/21 to create a series of targeted interventions to tackle local issues.

Current activity

The aim of the Rough Sleepers Initiative (RSI) was to establish a

cross-Governmental plan of action to significantly reduce the number of

people sleeping rough across England. The initiative was supported with an additional £30 million funding to be used in 2018 - 2019 for authorities which had experienced high numbers of people sleeping rough, or those where rough sleeping numbers had increased substantially from the 2017 formal count figures compared to previous years.

Cheshire East was one such area with the number of rough sleepers encountered on our “typical” night in 2017 increasing to 21 from 4 the year before.

In October 2018 Cheshire East, using RSI funding, created 4 interventions to tackle rough sleeping in the Borough which were co-produced with the new Rough Sleepers Team at MHCLG.

The interventions were designed to address key challenges which the Housing Options Team has

experienced concerning rough sleepers in recent years:

- 1) Ability to adequately **respond to reports** of people sleeping rough and have the ability to engage with those individuals on their terms,
- 2) To enhance the **levels and types of emergency accommodation available** – (additional to the commissioned No Second Night Out provision existing in Cheshire East to cater for more complex needs presented by rough sleepers.
- 3) To create a **more accurate database of intelligence** with regards to the demographics of those sleeping rough as well as locations (hot-spot areas) and the needs those individuals have, to better deliver services to them.

To reflect these areas the interventions were created to run from October 2018 until March 2019:

1	Creation of an Outreach Team
2	Enhancing Emergency Accommodation
3	Housing - Led Provision
4	Rough Sleepers’ Co – Ordinator (changing to Rough Sleepers’ Monitoring Officer in Year 2)

The ultimate aim of each of the interventions was to enable a substantial reduction in the number of people currently sleeping rough, as well as working to prevent people

from ending up on the streets in the future, in line with MHCLG's Rough Sleeping Strategy.

Future Intentions

MHCLG have announced that there will be a further year's funding available from a £112m funding pot as part of the Government's rough sleeping programme. In 2020/21, MHCLG awarded £438,339 to Cheshire East Council through the Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) fund, to continue short-term interventions to reduce rough sleeping.

A further £450,000 RSI capital grant was secured to purchase 8 new properties to accommodate individuals with complex issues and provide intensive floating support, in partnership with Plus Dane Housing. The cost for intensive support will be funded via the Flexible Homelessness Grant.

Funding was secured from RSI in 2020/21 to deliver a 'Fresh Start' programme that aims to deliver 6 units of self-contained accommodation with intensive support for service-users with multiple barriers to housing, including those released from prison with complex needs. This contract was recently awarded to P3 with the aim of moving service-users in from March 2021.

The Homelessness Service has embedded the RSI interventions within its core services through the re-commissioning of the Housing Related Support service, in April 2020.

Cheshire East will continue to implement and support the RSI. Furthermore, Cheshire East is exploring opportunities for partnership working with voluntary groups to reduce rough sleeping in Macclesfield.

The Action Plan to achieve Strategic Priority 3 is outlined on the next page.

Action Plan for Priority 3: Provide interventions to prevent rough sleeping

Task	What will be the outcome?	By when?
Use service data and in consultation with commissioned services, explore funding opportunities under the Government's Rough Sleeping Initiative to address gaps in service or opportunities to reduce rough sleeping	Reduction in rough sleeping numbers	June 2024
Explore funding options to assist in periods of cold weather SWEP provision (SWEP will primarily cover the months of November to March)	Successful implementation of SWEP each winter	June 2022
Develop a protocol for repeat presenters who have exhausted all options via a multi-agency approach to ensure that progress is made in providing a pathway for clients with a poor housing history.	More options explored at the 'hard to house' panel to find solutions for those who have exhausted previous housing options.	June 2022
Develop links with partners and local churches / faith groups to provide services to rough sleepers	An expanded voluntary sector offer is in place	June 2022
Develop a profile of local rough sleepers to enable effective targeting of pathways and resources	Earlier identification of those sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough to increase homelessness prevention	June 2022
Identify people at risk of rough sleeping at an early stage through information sharing, partnership networks and development screening tools and Duty to Refer.	Earlier identification of those sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough to increase homelessness prevention	June 2022
Develop a joint protocol with Adults and Mental Health teams in the assessment, support and treatment for rough sleepers who have Care Act eligible needs, long-standing Mental Health issues and self-neglect concerns.	Clear pathways for the assessment and engagement of rough sleepers to receive necessary support and treatment for long-standing issues, including dual diagnosis.	October 2021

Strategic Priority 4: Ensure adequate support is in place to help maintain and sustain accommodation

The issue

Supported housing is housing for vulnerable people to maintain their dignity and be part of a community.

Schemes provide both housing and support to help vulnerable people live as independently as possible in their community and maintain their tenancies, so preventing homelessness and poverty. These schemes are designed for client groups such as people with mental health issues, learning or physical disabilities, substance misuse issues, victims of, or at risk of domestic violence, teenage parents, ex-offenders, or older people.

More than 700,000 people in the UK benefit from the support and supervision provided within the supported housing sector. The vast majority of provision is sheltered accommodation for older people.

The Cheshire East position

Housing related support is the provision of short - term hostel accommodation, or support that maintains independent living through support at a client's home. This enables people where possible and appropriate to maintain their support networks as well as their independence.

In 2019 Strategic Housing carried out a re-modelling and delivery of services to enable a sustainable Housing Related Support service for 2020 – 2023. The new service commenced in April 2020 This will be linked into tenancy sustainment as a key part of homeless prevention.

Table 14: breakdown of the Housing Related Support Service

PROVIDER	SERVICE	UNITS
Concrete	Floating Support North and South	55 units North 70 units South
Emerging Futures	Complex, Over 25 and Mental Health North	30 units
Emerging Futures	Complex, Over 25 and Statutory Beds South	27 Units
Plus Dane	Under 25s, Fast Track and Women North	20 Units
Concrete	Under 25s, Fast Track and Women South	18 Units (can be flexible to provide more)
Emerging Futures	Emergency, NFNO, 24/7 access North and South including SWEP	12 Units North 24 Units South

The services work individually with people to provide support to:

- Gain skills to maintain a tenancy
- Manage finances, such as addressing debts and help to maximise income
- Gain access to other services (e.g. Mental Health, Substance Misuse)
- Access education, training and employment
- Address drug or alcohol problems.

All these services provide support to:

- Residents facing homelessness or at risk of homelessness within the next 56 days
- Residents who would be in need of short - term housing related support to enable them to move to a sustainable long - term tenancy
- Residents that need support to maintain a tenancy
- Residents that have barriers to accessing housing.

Floating Support

Service Provider: Concrete

This service provides short term floating support (resettlement and sustainment). Floating support services can work with clients wherever they are in Cheshire East. This could be for resettlement, for example to help someone settle into their new home after moving out of a hostel or hospital etc. It could also be to help someone where they may be at risk of losing their home and becoming homeless. There are 70 placements in the South and 55 in the North.

Short-term Supported Housing: Under 25s, Fast Track and Women South

Service Provider: Concrete

This service provides temporary supported accommodation to people under 25 and families experiencing homelessness. It also provides some 'Fast Track' placements for individuals experiencing homelessness that have low support needs and no barriers to housing. The service provides 18 placements in the South.

Supported Housing: Under 25s, Fast Track and Women North

Service Provider: Plus Dane

This service provides temporary supported accommodation to people under 25 and families experiencing homelessness. It also provides some 'Fast Track' placements for individuals experiencing homelessness that have low support needs and no barriers to housing. The service provides 20 placements in the North.

Supported Housing: Complex, Over 25 and Mental Health

Service Provider: Emerging Futures

This service provides temporary supported accommodation to people experiencing homelessness with complex needs, mental health issues, and people over the age of 25. Complex needs clients have multiple, interconnecting needs, which affect their ability to access temporary accommodation and / or living independently. This service provides 27 placements in the South, and 30 placements in the North.

Single Point of Access

Housing related support applications are received and processed by the Single Point of Access (SPA), which is contracted by and managed by the Housing Options Service. The SPA is a secure web-based application system. It is set up for referral agencies to make referrals for people with housing - related support needs.

The SPA links clients to services to help clients to live independently and manage their own tenancy, and if appropriate prevent a return to needing further support.

The Cheshire East Allocations Policy underpins the ability to move people who are in housing need to appropriate social housing. With an average of 8,611 registered for housing on Homechoice each year, and an average of 1,300 properties available annually, it is vital the Policy strikes the balance between supporting sustainable, settled neighbourhoods whilst giving priority to those people who are in urgent housing need.

The Policy has been reviewed to:

- ensure that the Policy is Homelessness Reduction Act compliant
- respond to customers' comments
- respond to Elected Members' comments
- tackle under-occupation to make best use of housing stock

An improved understanding and awareness of the SPA needs to be developed, as some providers are making referrals via the SPA for clients with welfare reform issues and rent arrears. This may lead to evictions from social housing. Increased awareness of the SPA amongst partners such as the Prison Service and Young Offender's Institutions is also required to ensure that clients are aware of where to go to access services. An exercise to promote the SPA to partners and stakeholders will be carried out.

Current activity

Emergency AssistanCE scheme

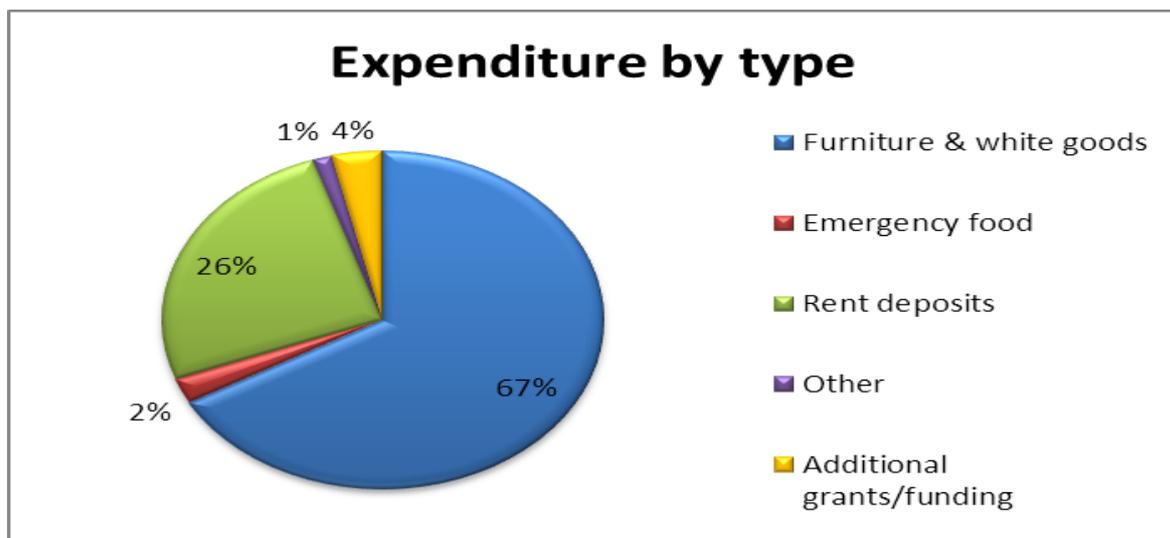
Emergency AssistanCE is a scheme introduced by Cheshire East following the changes to the Social Fund by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) from April 2013. Following the abolition of Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans, the Council has developed this policy to provide support for the most vulnerable households facing immediate short-term needs in an emergency, or as a consequence of a disaster, to prevent a serious risk to the health and safety of themselves or their family.

Any award is intended to:

- support vulnerable people facing immediate hardship, following a crisis or disaster
- prevent homelessness, in conjunction with support from the Housing Options Team
- keep families together and safeguard vulnerable people

The Emergency Assistance scheme is available to vulnerable people who are in receipt of state benefits. In exceptional circumstances awards may be allowed to those on a low wage.

The majority of funding has helped households to purchase essential items for the home such as fridges and washing machines, and furniture. The next largest funding allocation was for rent deposits.



The Homeless Prevention Fund

The Homeless Prevention Fund is used for anything that would stop someone from being homeless and this can be adapted to be a personalised approach for someone who is sleeping rough. Rough sleepers have a variety of needs to get them back into accommodation and for some financial support is needed to start a new tenancy or to clear off debts which make it difficult to be able to move into a property.

This scheme has limits, but the approach of the service attempts to be open minded and flexible so that applications can be received to cover individual and exceptional circumstances. The Fund is retained fully within the Housing Options Service, with a case for its retention based on the quality of the service and the value for money it provides, especially in 'spend to save' scenarios.

Financial assistance and advice are also available at the Citizens' Advice.

Website and information

Cheshire East meets the standard for public websites. There is a good range of information which is easy to locate. The information is clear on the main areas required, with a good range of links. There is also a good range of telephone numbers for customers to contact for help. It also makes best use of the template available.

The website offers effective and relevant housing advice and information at the earliest possible stage which enables a customer to make choices about which option is best for them. It enables an exploration of possible tenure options and a tailoring to their individual circumstances, such as information about social rented housing from housing associations, or the private rented sector.

The website is kept up to date with good quality information and useful links. Information sharing and drop-in sessions, newsletters and increased understanding of roles and responsibilities of organisations and agencies will be developed.

Future intentions

The Housing Options Team during a recent Diagnostic Peer Review was assessed as being sympathetic to the customer's needs with a clear methodical approach in one to one contact with clients. The Team was assessed as having excellent levels of engagement with customers, with detailed and clear advice being given. There was a focus on affordability and support with accessing the Private Renter Sector. Clear and appropriate next steps were discussed with the customer.

However, information sharing was been identified as an issue. Third sector (voluntary sector, the economic sector consisting of non-governmental organisations and other non-profit organisations) services are used by Housing Options but information is sometimes erratic.

Under the HRA there are opportunities for applicants to request a Section 202 review (concerning the decision about someone's eligibility for assistance or the offer of accommodation). More cases are likely to be reviewed due to the number of clients that this new duty will affect. There will also be increased legal costs.

The Action Plan to achieve Strategic Priority 4 is outlined on the next pages.

Action Plan for Priority 4: Ensure adequate support is in place to help maintain and sustain accommodation

Task	What will be the outcome?	By when?
Engage with third sector and voluntary Initiatives to develop closer working arrangements with the Housing Options team to identify homeless triggers, develop awareness and support people to come in off the streets	Rough sleepers are provided with an enhanced offer of support and assistance to resolve homelessness	June 2022
Examine how promotion and marketing of housing, homelessness and Homechoice services can be carried out	The Housing Options Team is better promoted, including hard to reach groups and those with accessibility issues	Dec 2021
Provide briefings and training for Elected Members, and joint training for teams and partners on the local response to homelessness	All departments are signed up to the Homelessness Strategy to deliver the aims, and understand the importance of, preventing homelessness	June 2022
Homelessness support and assessment teams are well-trained, knowledgeable, and empathetic to current issues affecting the street homeless populations	Increased knowledge of Mental Health and substance misuse issues across all services	June 2022
Carry out periodic quality checks by customer feedback review and ensure case management is to a high standard	Improvement in the quality of service received by the client and senior officer review	Dec 2021
Liaise with providers and promote the SPA and Homechoice, and promote any training opportunities	Improved use of the SPA by increasing awareness of the service amongst stakeholders	Dec 2021
Complete an analysis of the type of issues that are referred to SPA but which are not able to be placed	Increased understanding of referrals to the SPA	June 2022
Use HRS outcomes to measure progress towards increased wellbeing and move on rates into long-term tenancies	Better understanding of the reasons for clients' housing need	June 2023
Ensure that the website is kept up to date with good quality information and useful links (ensuring accessibility features, such as different font sizes, audio/visual, and translation)	Easy access to free information when it is needed to help people find their own housing solutions	Dec 2021
Provide a range of relevant policy, performance, and strategic documents on the Housing Service webpages	Local policy and strategy documents are monitored, reviewed, and adapted to reflect local priorities and good practice	Dec 2022
Clearly set out on the HO website what a customer may expect when getting in contact, such as service standards and procedures for dealing with clients (appointments, drop-in, telephone calls, etc.)	The customer has clear expectations of service levels	Dec 2021
Correct and updated Housing information is provided on the CE and 'Live Well Cheshire East' websites and regularly reviewed	There is easy access to free information when it is needed to help people find their own housing solutions	Jan 2022

How will we deliver this strategy and who will be involved?

This Strategy outlines a series of homeless interventions which will reduce homelessness levels in Cheshire East. The problem of homelessness is multi-faceted, requiring a range of co-ordinated activity. Each of these interventions will have short-term resource implications for the Council, either directly or indirectly.

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021-2025 sets the framework for activity to deliver homelessness reductions in the short to medium term, and will both support, and be supported, by strategic documents such as the Housing Strategy and Tenancy Strategy, and work on an enhanced private rented sector interface.

The Council is working towards reduced homelessness through this Strategy, as it ties together the strategic priorities for improving services to communities. We consulted with partners in 2019 – 2020 who said that the strategic priorities were still relevant, with the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Steering Group identifying key priorities for the new Strategy.

Strategic approach

Improved partnership working will help to deliver identified outcomes for service users. With limited resources and reductions in funding, innovation and good practice will deliver improvements and savings. It is essential to avoid duplication of work and of services within, and between, services.

Cheshire East has already adopted a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness which has buy - in across all Cheshire East services. However, strategically important external partners may be unable, through pressures on their service, to meet demand. In this case funding arrangements may be reviewed, or the partners may be supported in exploring funding streams or shared services with other partner organisations. Budget holders and decision makers would be made aware of a lack of capacity in strategically relevant services.

Monitoring

The Strategy will be monitored in partnership, with accountability for delivery resting with identified leads to support performance management of the Strategy. The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Steering Group will monitor the overall action plan and monitoring plans for each strategic priority and be responsible for driving forward the delivery of the action plan. It is intended that the Steering Group will be a strong and effective partnership. Membership will be reviewed to ensure that it is as inclusive as necessary, with a wider role for voluntary, third sector, and Faith groups.

Task and Finish groups will support the work of the Steering Group, focusing on specific projects and will report back to the Steering Group on progress and on any areas of concern.

The Delivery Plans

Cheshire East knows our priority areas to focus on and the Council has identified the major gaps that need to be addressed. Cheshire East knows that it is essential that it works in partnership to achieve the shared vision of preventing homelessness and have produced delivery plans with tasks clustered under the 4 key priorities.

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Appendix 1 Local Data

Housing delivery in Cheshire East

The housing market needs to diversify, opening up to smaller builders and those who embrace innovative and efficient ways of working. Housing associations are supported to build more, and the Self Build Register assists people who want to build their own homes. Cheshire East can evidence a 5-year land supply, using a standard formula of build rates and lead-in times which are applied to all housing sites. The next table shows how the delivery of affordable housing units only goes some of the way to meeting housing need.

Table 1: Housing completions 2015 – 2020

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Net completions	1,473	1,762	2,321	3,062	3,065
Affordable completions	360	398	613	727	482
Additional social rented	29	36	81	98	49
Additional affordable rented	253	162	294	320	222
Additional intermediate	78	200	238	309	211

Human Trafficking / Human Slavery

Cheshire East Council has a statutory duty for Adult Safeguarding under the Care Act. The types of abuse include categories for human trafficking, and therefore, Cheshire East Council has a statutory duty to identify, report, and support victims of human trafficking as well as the duty as first responders.

Given the seriousness of trafficking there is a need for joined up working between departments and local agencies, to promote a strategic response and good practice in supporting people in need. The Council's Emergency Response Plan will assist with the management of an incident, and Housing Services in attendance will establish how much temporary accommodation will be needed.

Local context

There are 178,158 homes in Cheshire East². There are more social rented than private rented properties.

Table 2: Housing tenures

Tenure	Number of properties
Owner –occupied	134,430
Private rented or living rent free	21,755 ³
Social rented	21,973 ⁴

Table 3: Private Rental Market rents⁵

The next tables show a Private Rental Market Summary of monthly rents recorded in 2019 / 2020 in Cheshire East:

	Count of rents	Mean	Lower quartile	Median	Upper quartile
Summary	3,840	784	550	650	850

and a Private Rental Market summary of monthly rents by number of bedrooms recorded between 2018/2019 in Cheshire East:

Table 4: Private rented monthly rent in £'s⁶

Number of beds	Count of rents	Mean	Lower quartile	Median	Upper quartile
One bed	500	516	425	495	590
Two bed	1,900	672	550	625	750
Three bed	990	853	650	795	950
Four bed	350	1,670	995	1,395	1,950

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/council-taxbase-2019-in-england>

³ Tenure by household size by number of bedrooms, Source: Small Areas; Office for National Statistics

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statistical-data-return-2018-to-2019>

⁵ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/datasets/privaterentalmarketsummarystatisticsinengland>

⁶

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/bulletins/privaterentalmarketsummarystatisticsinengland/april2019tomarch2020#local-authority-analysis>

Local Housing Allowance

Welfare reform has affected LHA rates, which were frozen until 2020. The Council pays out the following in LHA monthly figures in Broad Rental Market Areas (BRMA) (£s).

Table 5: LHA by BRMA monthly figures April 2021 – March 2022

	1 bed shared	1 bed self-contained	2 bedrooms	3 bedrooms	4 bedrooms
East Cheshire	360.00	495.01	599.99	824.99	1,300.01
West Cheshire	318.29	449.99	550.02	650.00	894.99
South Cheshire	260.71	394.98	495.01	594.99	824.99
South Manchester	359.83	524.99	650.00	749.99	1,100.00
Staffordshire North	264.84	374.99	425.01	550.02	744.99

There are implications of LHA levels for the major towns and settlements. Properties are above the LHA level, resulting in a shortfall which means households are going to struggle to pay their rent and fall into arrears. See **Appendix 2**.

Required income levels to meet housing costs

Traditionally households have needed at least the average income to purchase a property. Those on less than average have been encouraged to take up sub-prime mortgage offers. The level of debt caused by households being overstretched can lead to extreme hardship for households, in many cases resulting in repossession. Similarly, working households have needed an average income which enabled access to private rented homes.

Required household income to purchase lower quartile housing (x3.5 times income)	Required income to rent lower quartile housing (third of monthly earnings)
£41,428	£1,670 (or £20,040 per year)

The average household income in Crewe, for example, is £20,960, which gives a lower quartile house price to earnings ratio of 6.4.

Many tenants on benefit in the private rented sector encounter 3 main difficulties: (i) LHA which doesn't cover all the rental costs, (ii) a shortage of affordable properties, and (iii) landlords unwilling to rent to benefit-reliant households.

The Cheshire East 'Local Welfare Safety Net' report says that there are currently just 26,000 households in Cheshire East in receipt of one or more welfare benefit.

Table 6: Universal Credit - reliant households

Total households	Universal Credit - reliant households	% of households
169,460	17,773	10.4

Housing Related Support

Housing Related Support has been re-commissioned, and the new services commenced in April 2020.

Housing related support is the provision of short - term hostel accommodation, or support that maintains independent living through support at a client's home. This enables people where possible and appropriate to maintain their support networks as well as their independence. This is covered in Strategic Priority 4.

Empty properties in Cheshire East

The number of empty residential properties in Cheshire East has increased by 6.9% between 2017 and 2019.

Table 7: The next table shows the number of empty properties in Cheshire East⁷

	2017	2018	2019
All vacant dwellings	4,166	4,332	4,635
Empty for 6 months or more	1,396	1,685	1,781
Private registered provider vacant	111	186	230
Private registered provider vacant for 6 months or more	49	74	118

Although empty properties are not the solution to homelessness, they may help to reduce it.

As properties are bought and sold, or re-let, there will be a period of vacancy in between the changes in occupation. Such 'transactional vacancies' are not usually the cause of problems but are a normal part of the operation of the housing market. Household flows exist which affect both the number of households in an area and the number of properties which are occupied, as seen in the next table:

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-dwelling-stock-including-vacants>

Table 8: The impact of household movement on the number of households and properties in Cheshire East

	Household flow	Number of			
		Households		Properties occupied	
1	HH moving into Cheshire East and into an empty property	Increases	↑	Increases	↑
2	HH moving into Cheshire East and into an occupied property	Unchanged	■	Unchanged	■
3	HH moving within Cheshire East, leaving empty and entering empty	Unchanged	■	Unchanged	■
4	Whole HH moving within Cheshire East, leaving empty and entering occupied	Decreases	↓	Unchanged	■
5	Whole HH leaves Cheshire East	Decreases	↓	Decreases	↓
6	Splitting HH, person leaving enters vacant	Increases	↑	Increases	↑
7	Splitting HH, person leaving enters occupied	Unchanged	■	Unchanged	■
8	Splitting HH, person leaving leaves Cheshire East	Unchanged	■	Unchanged	■
9	Household Dissolution	Decreases	↓	Decreases	↓

A number of empty properties are necessary for a healthy housing market and to allow household flows 1, 3, and 6 above. It may be possible for some empty properties to be brought back into use which may accommodate homeless households via leasing schemes or nominations.

Commercial properties are typically unsuitable for habitation.

Appendix 2

Initial assessments of statutory homelessness duties owed April 2019 – March 2020⁸

	Number of households	Number as %
Total number of households assessed	1,514	
Total households assessed as owed a duty	1,496	
Households assessed and duty owed:		
Threatened with homelessness - Prevention duty owed	1,044	69.0%
<i>Of which:</i> due to service of valid Section 21 Notice	102	6.7%
Homeless - Relief duty owed	452	29.9%
Not threatened with homelessness within 56 days - no duty owed	18	1.2%
Reason for loss of last settled home for households owed a prevention duty:		
Family or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate	188	18.0%
End of private rented tenancy - assured shorthold	271	26.0%
Domestic abuse	22	2.1%
Non-violent relationship breakdown with partner	82	7.9%
End of social rented tenancy	210	20.1%
Eviction from supported housing	16	1.5%
End of private rented tenancy - not assured shorthold	16	1.5%
Other violence or harassment	9	0.9%
Left institution with no accommodation available	8	0.8%
Required to leave accommodation provided by Home Office as asylum support	5	0.5%
Other reasons / not known	217	20.8%
Reason for loss of last settled home for households owed a relief duty:		
Family or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate	124	27.4%
End of private rented tenancy - assured shorthold	37	8.2%
Domestic abuse	37	8.2%
Non-violent relationship breakdown with partner	55	12.2%
End of social rented tenancy	19	4.2%
Eviction from supported housing	69	15.3%
End of private rented tenancy - not assured shorthold	17	3.8%
Other violence or harassment	17	3.8%
Left institution with no accommodation available	10	2.2%

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statutory-homelessness-in-england-financial-year-2019-20>

Required to leave accommodation provided by Home Office as asylum support	5	1.1%
Other reasons / not known	62	13.7%
Accommodation at time of application for those owed a prevention duty:		
Private rented sector	289	27.7%
Living with family	216	20.7%
No fixed abode	0	0.0%
Social rented sector	240	23.0%
Living with friends	113	10.8%
Homeless on departure from institution	16	1.5%
Rough sleeping	0	0.0%
Owner-occupier / shared ownership	41	3.9%
Temporary accommodation	88	8.4%
National Asylum Seeker Support (NASS) accommodation	4	0.4%
Refuge	2	0.2%
Other / not known	35	3.4%
Household type of households owed a prevention duty:		
Single parent with dependent children - Male	23	2.2%
Single parent with dependent children - Female	288	27.6%
Single parent with dependent children - Other / gender not known	1	0.1%
Single adult - Male	290	27.8%
Single adult - Female	234	22.4%
Single adult - Other / gender not known	1	0.1%
Couple with dependent children	108	10.3%
Couple / two adults without dependent children	73	7.0%
Three or more adults with dependent children	7	0.7%
Three or more adults without dependent children	19	1.8%
Not known ⁸	0	0.0%
Households assessed as a result of a referral, including under the Duty to Refer		
Total households assessed as a result of a referral	118	100.0%
Total households referred under the Duty to Refer	77	65.3%
Adult Secure Estate (prison)	9	7.6%
Youth Secure Estate	0	0.0%
National Probation Service	8	6.8%
Community Rehabilitation Company	2	1.7%
Hospital A&E, Urgent Treatment Centres or in-patient care	1	0.8%
Mental Health in-patient care	13	11.0%
Jobcentre Plus	10	8.5%

Adult Social Services	9	7.6%
Children's Social Services	5	4.2%
Nil Recourse Team	0	0.0%
Secretary of State for defence in relation to members of the armed forces	0	0.0%
Other / not known	20	16.9%
Households referred by an agency (not subject to the Duty to Refer)	40	33.9%
Households referred by another local authority	1	0.8%
Ethnicity of main applicants owed a prevention or relief duty⁷:		
White	1,387	92.7%
Black / African / Caribbean / Black British	17	1.1%
Asian / Asian British	18	1.2%
Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups	9	0.6%
Other ethnic groups	10	0.7%
Not known ⁸	55	3.7%

Appendix 3 – Rough Sleeping Initiative Outcomes

Intelligence & Outcomes

Since Cheshire East began the RSI it has:

- secured a substantial number of successful longer - term accommodation placements for individuals who were sleeping rough
- reduced the number of visible rough sleepers across the Borough
- built new and enhanced agency partnerships
- gathered a large amount of intelligence to give a much clearer picture of who has been accessing the services
- Recently secured capital grant funding to purchase new properties to provide sustainable accommodation with intensive support
- Embedded emergency accommodation, such as No First Night Out and Severe Weather Emergency Protocol, into accommodation services provided by our commissioned partners.

Also, as part of the funding from MHCLG, Cheshire East has been required to undertake bi-monthly rough sleeper counts, in addition to the formal count required by Government to be carried out between October and the end of November each year.

The approach to these counts has been to utilise the new services / interventions to create a dedicated database of where individuals have been sleeping rough in each of the main towns of the Borough, and then use of that data to inform where and when to search areas for individuals sleeping rough.

Table 13: Cheshire East counts

Bi-Monthly Counts	Informal / Formal	Rough Sleepers Located	Known to services
September 2018	Informal	4	3
November 2018	Formal	10	7
January 2019	Informal	11	11
March 2019	Informal	6	6
July 2019	Informal	2	2
September 2019	Informal	2	2
November 2019	Formal	8	8
January 2020	Informal	6	6

As the RSI services were implemented, the numbers of rough sleepers located increased but the number of those individuals who were known to, and engaging with, services

to assist them off the streets increased. Throughout the interventions, the RSI teams have been engaging with 100% of those sleeping rough in the Borough.

Referrals

Since the introduction of the RSI in Cheshire East and the promotion of the service there has been a substantial increase in the number of individuals being referred to the services. Referrals are received from sources such as Streetlink, and other partner agencies.

There was an increase in the number of referrals in 2018 - 2019, which was welcomed as it proved that the approach of promoting the service with agencies and the wider public had been successful. Each referral is an opportunity to gather more information, but also to engage with those

individuals sleeping rough and to create a successful outcome for them.

During the course of the initial RSI period the service successfully engaged with 260 individuals. There was an expected peak in October as the services began, and then decreased and stabilised over the remaining winter months.

There was a split of engagements between Crewe, which has become a "hot spot" for rough sleeping, and the rest of the Borough. There were 135 individuals involved with services within the Crewe area, compared to 125 for the rest of the Borough.

Emergency accommodation

People classed or likely be classed as not in priority need under homelessness legislation were provided with emergency accommodation. This was either in the No Second Night Out (NSNO) or Extended Winter Provision (EWP) provisions (over the winter months only). As expected, the number of EWP placements were lower than NSNO placements in this area to reflect the fact that EWP is an extended provision, and not the main accommodation.

Another element of the enhanced accommodation offer is in relation to the creation of dedicated, complex needs statutory temporary accommodation, in both North and South of the Borough. This was done to reflect the needs of clients who are in priority need under homelessness legislation, but also have a substance misuse issue which would normally place them at a higher risk of losing statutory temporary accommodation.

The model adopted enabled the team to place individuals with a partner agency operating the service in Macclesfield and Crewe, who were able to provide bespoke substance misuse - related support to individuals accessing those accommodation units. The service has been able to keep people in those units at times when individuals would have been evicted from other types of accommodation due to their support needs / behaviour.

The complex statutory accommodation model has also been recognised by MHCLG within the national Rough Sleeping Strategy delivery plan as good practice.

This shows that during October 2018 – March 2019 a total of 29 individuals accessed the complex needs temporary accommodation units. The lower numbers are to be expected due to there being less beds compared to

other types of accommodation, and to the complex nature of the individuals

accessing the services generally and requiring placements.

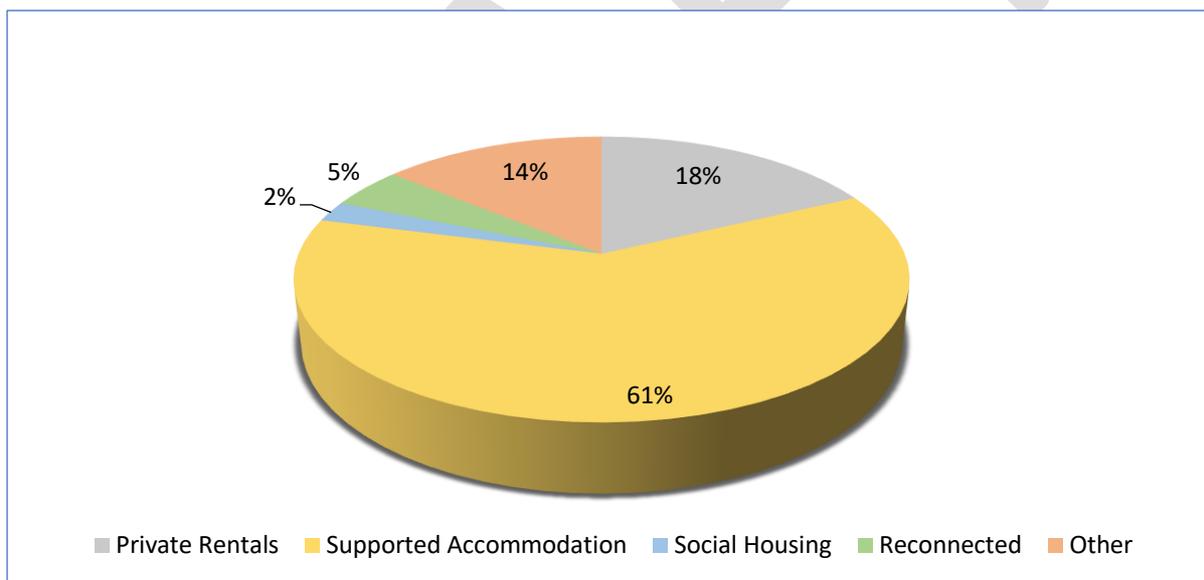
Outcomes

The Cheshire East RSI has achieved a high number of successful move - on resolutions for individuals, both those accommodated, and those managed in the community, into accommodation which is available to them for 6 months or more.

The chart shows 61% of all placements being within current commissioned Housing Related

Support (HRS) services in the Borough. Placements into private rental accommodation had the 2nd highest number (18%). The “other” category accounts for around 14% of all resolutions across the period; this includes the teams securing accommodation for individuals moving back with family members, for example.

Successful move on Year 1



A further area of successful progress has been in relation to the gathering and collation of intelligence on the rough sleeping cohort, and of a dedicated database monitoring the individuals through the service, and which are reviewed frequently. A large amount of intelligence on the locations of where individuals have been sleeping has also been collated and

plotted, and this has been used to inform the bi-monthly counts undertaken as part of MHCLG funding.

RSI Intervention Reflection

Cheshire East Council has been continually evaluating the interventions in place to ensure they remain fit for purpose, particularly with regards to meeting the needs of the rough sleeping cohort.

As part of that reflection, several elements were identified as requiring modification to our approach. These were:

- Broadening the spectrum of longer - term outcomes

Although the number of outcomes is good, it is clear that the private rented and especially social housing sectors need to be targeted more effectively to engage with the RSI process. Work has been ongoing with the private rented sector and new relationships are being sought between Housing Options and individual landlords in particular. Further exploration of those relationships and work with local registered social landlords forms a key area of work in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

- Providing accommodation on a 24 / 7 basis

When some elements of the enhanced accommodation interventions were established, they were designed to build on already commissioned services.

However, as the project was evolving and more intelligence was gathered about the cohort in Cheshire East, it became clear that the way NSNO provision was operating in the north and south of the Borough could be seen as contributing to the day-time visibility of rough sleepers and in particular, street drinking. This was due to individuals being required to leave the accommodation during the day and going back onto the streets.

It also provided less opportunity to effectively engage with individuals who were being accommodated.

These two main issues were highlighted to be addressed in the second year of RSI funding.

Rough Sleepers Initiative – Cheshire East – Year 2

Due to the successes of the RSI Nationally between October 2018 and March 2019 MHCLG announced further funding to be made available to continue the good work already started and to build on it across England.

A further funding bid was made by Cheshire East and was successful in securing an additional **£388,303** of funding to be used in 2019 - 2020 financial year.

A process of co-production was again undertaken between Cheshire East and MHCLG with interventions used in year 1 reviewed to see if they were still relevant and fit for purpose. As the funding provided was lower than had originally been requested, especially in regard to the accommodation interventions, the numbers of

units needed was re-visited whilst addressing the challenges identified during the initial 6 month period.

Changes were also made to the Rough Sleepers' Co-ordinator role which altered that role to become a contract monitoring position. We were successful in embedding this role, as well as two Rough Sleeper Outreach posts, as permanent posts within the Housing Options and Homelessness Service in 2020-21.

Intelligence & Outcomes

Building on the work which was commenced during the first phase of the RSI, Cheshire East has continued to deliver successful outcomes for individuals sleeping rough and has begun to move towards a more preventative approach in line with the principles in the Government's national Rough Sleeping Strategy.

The general number of engagements has been lower than the first year, as many individuals have already been assisted. In terms of the split of engagements between North and South of the Borough, 60% have been engaged with in the south, compared to 40% in the rest of the Borough.

Emergency accommodation

The lower number of clients is to be expected due to the lower level of provision generally compared to other types of accommodation, and the complex nature of individuals accessing the services.

However, this number is higher than the initial period of the RSI which may indicate that there are greater numbers of rough sleepers with complex needs coming through the system.

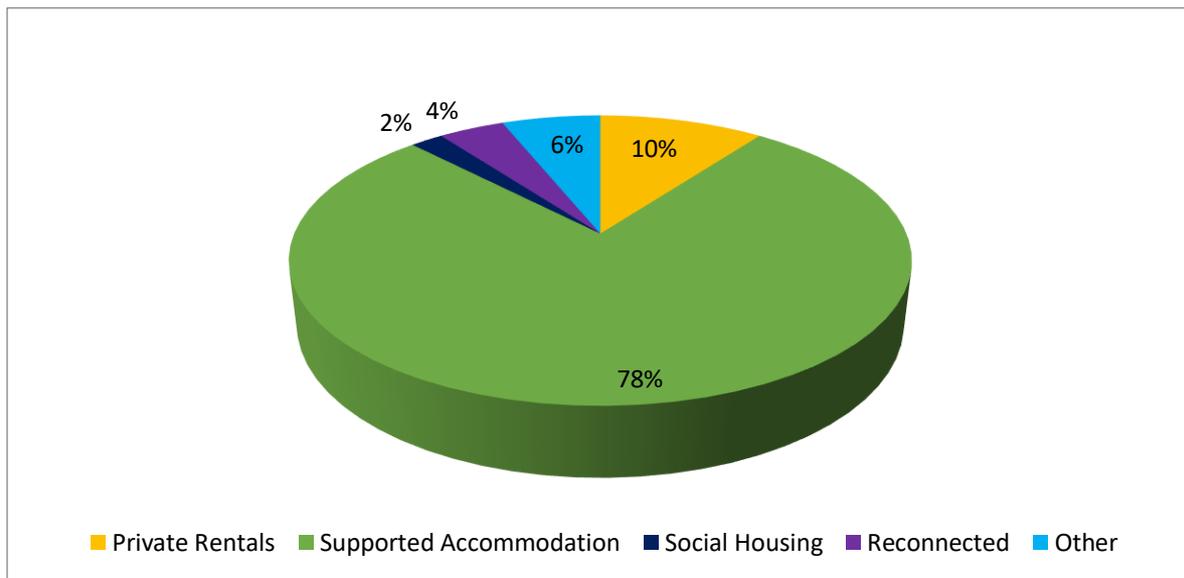
Outcomes

As well as **178 individuals** who have been provided with emergency accommodation as part of the RSI, Cheshire East has continued to achieve and deliver longer term outcomes for individuals into accommodation, which is for 6 months or more.

The chart shows 78% of all placements being within the currently commissioned HRS services in the Borough.

Placements into private rental accommodation had the 2nd highest number (10%). The "other" category accounts for around 6% of all outcomes across the period; this includes the teams securing accommodation for individuals back with family members, for example.

Successful move on year 2



More work needs to be undertaken with private landlords in order to increase the numbers of placements into that tenure, although accessing this type of accommodation is proving increasingly difficult.

Glossary

Black And Minority Ethnic (BAME) Black And Minority Ethnic, term used to describe minority groups recognised as falling under the Race Relations Act 1976.

Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) is an extra amount of money that the Council can give someone already receiving some Housing Benefit or housing costs in Universal Credit, to help them pay their rent (it cannot be awarded to help pay for non-rent charges like water rates and service charges). It is not a benefit, and there is no automatic right to it. It is awarded at the discretion of Cheshire East. There is no fixed amount and the amount to be paid is assessed. This is a limited fund and cases are considered individually in line with the policy.

Emergency Assistance This policy has been created to provide support for the most vulnerable households facing immediate short-term needs in an emergency, or as a consequence of a disaster, or to prevent a serious risk to the health and safety of themselves or their family.

Extended Winter Provision Accommodation and support provided to rough sleepers throughout the winter months and not just during the coldest periods.

Homechoice Cheshire East does not have any council housing of its own and does not operate its own council housing waiting list. However, it is partnered with Guinness, Plus Dane, Cheshire Peaks and Plains Housing Trusts, and over 20 other social landlords, who advertise affordable, rented properties (referred to as 'social housing') via a website called Cheshire Homechoice. Housing applications can be made through the Homechoice website.

Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) The Homelessness Reduction Act makes changes to legislation contained in Part 7 of the Housing Act of 1996. The HRA places a duty on Cheshire East to intervene earlier to prevent homelessness, and to take reasonable steps to help homeless people to find accommodation. It also requires Cheshire East to expand the category of people who we have to help to find accommodation.

Local Housing Allowance (LHA) The Local Housing Allowance (LHA) arrangements are a way of working out Housing Benefit (HB) or housing costs in Universal Credit for people who rent from a private landlord. Local authorities use LHA rates based on the size of household and the area in which a person lives to work out the amount of rent which can be met with HB. HB paid under the LHA arrangements is normally paid to the tenant, who will then pay the landlord.

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) The Government department that sets policy on supporting local government: communities and neighbourhoods, regeneration, housing, planning, building and the environment, and fire.

No First Night Out (NFNO) is an innovative approach to preventing people from sleeping rough for the first time in London, which enhances the No Second Night Out (NSNO) with a more preventative approach.

No Second Night Out (NSNO) NSNO helps to identify where rough sleepers are coming from and improve prevention and recovery services so that they don't have to sleep rough.

Registered Provider (RP) A registered provider is defined as providing social housing. Social housing includes low cost rental (such as affordable rent properties) and low-cost home ownership. Registered providers include local authority landlords and private registered providers (such as not-for-profit housing associations and for-profit organisations).

Rough sleepers / street homeless Households who find themselves with no support networks such as friends or family who are able to offer short term accommodation will likely end up street homeless (rough sleeping). Anyone who is sleeping rough or street homeless is the most visible sign of homelessness.

Single Point of Access (SPA) Housing related support applications are received and processed by the Single Point of Access (SPA), which is contracted by and managed by the Housing Options Service. The SPA is a secure web-based application system. It is set up for referral agencies to make referrals for people with housing related support needs

Shared accommodation rate: Changes to exemptions

The shared accommodation rate of the LHA applies to those who are under the age of 35, living alone and renting privately. The market cost of sharing accommodation is cheaper than renting a self-contained property and this is reflected in how the shared accommodation rate is set.

Exemptions from the shared accommodation rate

There are a number of exemptions which enable claimants to receive the higher one-bedroom LHA rate in certain circumstances, such as for those in receipt of the SDP, Care leavers up to the age of 22 and those aged 25 and over who have spent at least three months in a homeless hostel.

Changes to the exemptions

In March 2020, the government announced that, from October 2023, it would be extending the age thresholds for the Care Leavers and homeless hostels exemptions so that they both applied to under 25 year olds. For Care Leavers, this means extending the qualifying age from 22 up to 25 years old and for those who have spent at least three months in a homeless hostel, the lower age limit will be removed to include all claimants aged under 35.

At the Spring Budget this week it was confirmed that due to the impact of COVID-19 on young people, the implementation date has been brought forward by over two years to the end of May 2021. Regulations will be laid on 6 May 2021 and come in to force on Monday 31 May 2021. Affected claimants will be entitled to claim the exemption from that date.

While LAs may choose to identify and contact claimants they believe to be in scope of the updated exemptions there is no expectation of this. Claimants will be expected to self-identify to claim an exemption.

Streetlink is a website that enables the public to alert local authorities in England and Wales about people sleeping rough in their area. This service offers the public a means to act when they see someone sleeping rough, and is the first step someone can take to ensure rough sleepers are connected to the local services and support available to them. The service is funded by Government as part of its commitment to end rough sleeping.

SWEP Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) aims to prevent rough sleeping during extreme cold weather. When night-time temperatures are predicted to fall below zero for 3 nights in a row SWEP provides emergency accommodation for rough sleepers. During periods of extreme cold housing authorities must provide facilities for rough sleepers to prevent deaths as a result of weather conditions. Cheshire East activates SWEP also based on wind chill and extreme weather conditions.

Universal Credit A monthly payment for people who are on low income or who are unemployed. It is being rolled out in stages across the UK and is replacing other benefits. How much is paid depends on the customer's circumstances, including their income, how many children they have and also the Local Housing Allowance Rate.