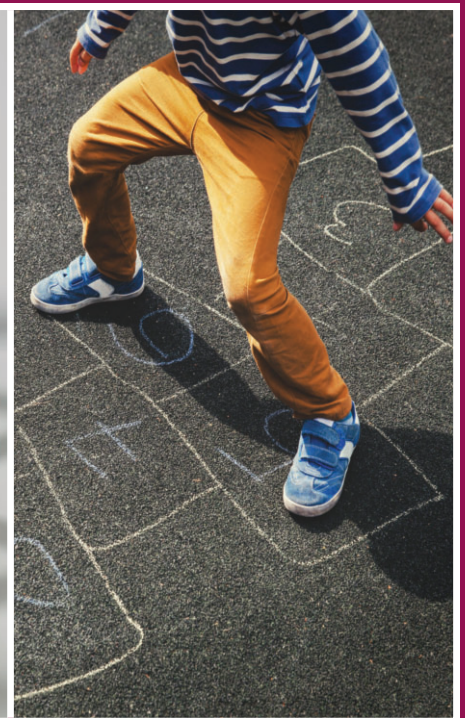


Hinckley & Bosworth
Borough Council

Homelessness Review

September 2022



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1. Introduction and Scope of the Review

Under the Homelessness Act 2002, all housing authorities must have in place a homelessness strategy based on a review of all forms of homelessness in their district. The introduction of the Government's Rough Sleeper Strategy in 2018 required all local authorities to include rough sleeping within their strategy. The Covid-19 pandemic has had significant implications, particularly in terms of housing and financial security for many of our residents. As such, a homelessness review is both timely and necessary in order to inform a new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy which will set out Hinckley and Bosworth's Council's approach to the prevention of homelessness and end to rough sleeping over the next 3 years.

The review primarily focuses on Council resources, assets and working practices, although it is recognised that there are numerous agencies, both statutory and non-statutory, that work to prevent homelessness within the borough.

The accompanying strategy sets out how we will strive to secure sufficient accommodation and support for people who become homeless or who are at risk of becoming so.

According to shelter, over the last five years core homelessness has increased year on year in England, reaching a peak just before the pandemic with 219,000 households at the end of 2019 thought to be homeless. At the end of 2021, this figure had risen to 227,000 across the UK. This figure is expected to continue rising as economic factors continue to affect many households.

2. Legal Context

Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 is the primary legislation for homelessness and provides the statutory basis for action to prevent homelessness and assistance to people who are threatened with or actually homeless.

Rough Sleeping is defined by the Government as people sleeping, or bedded down in the open air (such as on the streets, or in doorways, parks or bus shelters), people in buildings or other places not designed for habitation.

The Homeless Reduction Act 2017 introduced new duties and comprehensive reform of the way in which homelessness preventions were actioned and recorded. The new way of working is embedded within working practices at the Council and the Housing Options team, who lead the Council's response to this area of work, endeavor to deliver a flexible and person centered service.

New provisions imposed by the HRA include:

- Duty to prevent and relieve homelessness
- An extended period a household is threatened with homelessness from 28 days to 56 days
- Requirement to carry out an assessment and personalised housing plan
- Public bodies now have a duty to refer people whom they know are threatened with homelessness
- Applicants have the right to ask for a review of any points of the new legislation

The Localism Act (2011) also amended the 1996 Housing Act by allowing local authorities to discharge their homelessness duty by arranging a suitable offer of accommodation within the private sector.

The National Rough Sleeper strategy sets out an ambitious target to half rough sleeping by 2022 and to eradicate all forms of street homelessness by 2027, focusing on three aspects in its approach; Prevention, Intervention and Recovery.

The Domestic Abuse Act which became law in April 2021 places a further duty on all local authorities in England to provide support to victims of domestic abuse and their children, making provision that all eligible homeless victims of domestic abuse automatically have priority need for homelessness assistance. Work has already commenced to seek accreditation for our efforts in embedding these revisions into working practice at the Council.

2.1 The Allocation of Housing

Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 (amended) (The Act) governs the allocation of local authority housing stock in England. The Act requires all local authorities to have an “allocations scheme” which sets out the procedure followed when allocating social housing including how applications are prioritised. Certain categorises of people must be given “reasonable preference” but local authorities are able to set their own rules to determine the relative position of different applicants with reasonable preference, to reflect local priorities. In England there is general allocation guidance, plus more specific guidance for vulnerable cohorts such as those affected by domestic abuse, care leavers and those serving or from the armed forces.

3. Local Context- People and Place

Hinckley and Bosworth is a largely rural borough of 297sqkm. It is located in South-West Leicestershire within the East Midlands. The borough is at the centre of England between the cities of Leicester, Birmingham and Coventry. Just over 60% of the 113,000 population live in the main urban areas of Hinckley, Burbage, Barwell and Earl Shilton in the south west of the Borough. The remaining 38% reside in hamlets and larger villages including sizeable settlements near the Leicester fringe to the east and in the central and northern parts of the borough too. This area of the borough, particularly in the North West, is more rural, has high house prices and has little affordable and private rented houses. The geography of the borough can create additional challenges from a homelessness perspective with households at risk of homeless often seeking to remain in particular areas. From a support and service perspective, there is a considerable difference between what is available and accessible in the urban areas compared to the more rural northern parishes.

The borough has generally followed demographic trends in terms of an ageing population experienced nationally, with 22.1% of the population being over the age of 65 in 2019. This has increased since 2011 (when 18.4% were aged 65+) and is also above the national figure of 18.4%.

The borough has a relatively low deprivation ranking being placed at 232 out of 317 local authorities. Compared to other local authority areas deprivation is not a significant concern,

albeit there are concentrations of relative deprivation most notably in the urban areas, but also in pockets of the rural area especially with regard to barriers to housing and services.

Hinckley and Bosworth is not as ethnically diverse as most other boroughs and districts nationally. Based on the most recent census data (2011), the proportions of the population who identify as each broad ethnic group within the borough are as follows:

- 96.5% as White;
- 2.1% as Asian or Asian British;
- 0.2% as Black, African, Caribbean or Black British;
- 1.0% as Mixed or multiple ethnic groups; and
- 0.2% as other ethnic group.

The main language spoken is English at 98.3%, followed by European languages at 0.7% (mainly Polish), South Asian at 0.5% (mostly Gujarati and Punjabi), East Asian at 0.2% (mostly Chinese), and other remaining languages at 0.3%.

3.1 Local Housing Allowance

A typical currently weekly rent for a privately rented housing in the borough is set out below, compared to the Local Housing Allowance rate, the amount used to calculate housing benefit renting from private sector landlords.

England is split into broad rental market areas (BRMA) which are decided by the Valuation Office Agency. Hinckley and Bosworth falls into the BRMA of Coventry and Leicester. There is a significant shortfall between the LHA rate and typical market rates which is an additional concern for many households renting in the private sector. Rent levels in the private sector are determined by the market, and are not subject to caps or controls.

Table 1-LHA rates compared to typical market rents

Number of bedrooms	LHA rate	Typical weekly rent	Approximate shortfall per week
Shared room	Coventry: £77.50 per week Leicester: £78 per week	£100	Up to £30 pw
One bedroom	Coventry: £112.77 per week Leicester: £103.56 per week	£133- £150	Up to £46pw
Two bedroom	Coventry: £132.33 per week Leicester: £130.03 per week	£167- £219 (depending on house or flat)	Up to £8p pw
Three bedroom	Coventry: £155.34 per week Leicester: £155.34 per week	£173-£196	Up to £41 pw
Four bedroom	Coventry: £201.37 per week Leicester: £205.97 per week	£312	Up to £120 pw

3.2 Private Rented Accommodation

Finding affordable accommodation in the private sector can also be increasingly challenging. Many landlords within the private sector were adversely affected during the pandemic as the government imposed a moratorium over evictions for a number of months. Without doubt, this has created financial issues for many and landlords within Hinckley and Bosworth are no exception. Added to that are impending decarbonisation requirements and other regulations that will require financial investment, so it is perhaps no surprise that many landlords have decided to leave the market. The consequence of this is that there is less private sector rental accommodation available, increasing overall housing demand and limiting choice for residents. Anecdotal information suggests that private sector renters are in fierce competition with as many as 20 renters at any one time trying to pursue a single property. The end of a private rented sector tenancy is a leading trigger for homelessness applications.

There is also a growing reluctance from some landlords to take applicants with a poor credit history or anti-social behaviour concerns and even with financial incentives, some applicants are still refused. The full extent of hardship, following the pandemic, may yet to be realised but an increasing trend in homelessness presentations and people seeking advice and support, or trying to access the housing register for the first time is certainly evident. The emergent cost of living crisis will inevitably exacerbate this position even further.

3.3 Council Housing

Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council has responsibility for approximately 3220 Council properties. In addition, the Council owns and manages 11 sheltered housing schemes. Over recent years the Council has developed a bungalow scheme at Groby, 30 properties at Bennett Close in Hinckley, 11 new homes at Middlefield place in Hinckley and has remodelled a shelter housing scheme in Market Bosworth. Our aspiration is to continue to grow our housing supply in order to meet affordable housing need.

3.4 Our stock- Supply and Demand

There is significant demand for rented social housing in the borough and demand continues to increase year-on-year. In terms of meeting the demand, the Council currently has a total dwelling stock of approximately 3,220 units of accommodation. On average, 220 properties become void annually, representing an annual stock turnover of around 7%. The Council loses an average of 25 properties each year through the Right to Buy.

The level of demand for all Council homes is high and there is particular demand for one-bedroom flats and two-and-three-bedroom houses. The Allocation policy prioritises those most in need of housing but waiting times can still be lengthy and there is not enough Council housing available to meet social housing requirements within the borough.

3.5 Registered Providers

Agreements exist between Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council and some Registered Providers (RPs) who also meet affordable housing need within the borough. Whilst the majority of RP vacancies are advertised directly through the Choice-Based Lettings scheme, there will be some RPs that advertise vacant properties through their own website. On average, RPs advertise around 100 properties a year in total, across all providers, via the Choice-Based Lettings scheme.

3.6 Affordable Housing Needs

New affordable homes for rent are generally delivered either by way of a developer providing a number of homes for affordable housing on new developments, by selling to a Registered Provider (RP) or, in more recent years, by RPs having their own development programme and developing sites solely for affordable housing. In all these instances the legal agreement with the Local Planning Authority is that new homes for affordable housing shall be let through the Council's Choice Based Lettings scheme. For the 5 years up to April 2021 a total of 260 new homes for rent were delivered.

A Housing Needs Study carried out in 2019 which looked to inform the Local Plan assessed the need for 271 new affordable homes per annum up to 2036 to meet the need. Need includes affordable home ownership as well as affordable homes to rent.

Targets for affordable housing are set on what it is viable for a developer to deliver, which is not sufficient to meet the overall need.

Affordable housing for rent on new sites charge an "affordable rent" which is up to 80% of local market rents. These are higher than the target rents the Council charges on most of our tenancies, but less than private landlords charge. Currently rents are around, or only slightly above, Local Housing Allowance rates and so are more appealing to applicants claiming benefits.

The Housing Needs Study assessed the different property types required to meet the identified need, and has assessed the different needs as follows:

Table 2- Housing Need requirements

	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4+ bed
Affordable Home Ownership	10%	50%	30%	10%
Affordable housing for rent	25%	40%	30%	5%

These needs, and information from the Council's housing register, are used to inform negotiations with developers on the supply of new affordable housing to be provided.

4. Homelessness Data

In order to consider homelessness trends it is necessary to look across two sources of data. Prior to the introduction of the Homeless Reduction Act (HRA) the Council maintained information on homelessness prevention and reported homelessness data to the government by way of a statistical return called a P1E. The HRA imposed new duties to provide both housing advice and support triggered by a new prevention duty triggered when households were deemed to be threatened with homelessness within 56 days. A new recording system was introduced called H-CLIC. The introduction of the new system means that data collected pre and post HRA is not comparable although broad trends can be observed. Table 3 details the number of homelessness approaches over the last 3 years.

Table 3- Number of Homelessness approaches by year

	April 19- March 20	April 20- March 21	April 21- March 22
Number of approaches for assistance	605	1,003	971

Reasons for homelessness can be varied but the top 5 reasons for homelessness are provided below, together with the number of homelessness applicants in each of those categories.

Table 4- Top 5 reasons for Homelessness

Top 5 reasons for homelessness	April 19- March 20	April 20- March 21	April 21- March 22
Asked to leave by family	121	243	189
Relationship breakdown	48	131	95
Section 21 notice	81	71	111
Fleeing domestic abuse	32	83	101
Sofa surfing	68	71	35

The main reason for homelessness within the borough continues to be family or friends being no longer able or willing to provide accommodation. With just under 20% of all cases giving this as the reason for homelessness last year. This was increasingly challenging during the pandemic due to government directives intended to stop the spread of the virus, such as social distancing etc.

In total 1002 people contacted the Housing Options team for housing advice last year. Of those 88 homelessness cases were relieved with a further 243 people being supported with the provision of temporary accommodation. People between the ages of 25- 32 were the most likely to approach as homeless or as likely to become homeless. Over 54% of our customers told us they were not in employment. A further 30% of our customers told us that they had a support need, eg mental or physical health needs.

This year so far most homelessness applicants continue to be between the ages of 22 and 33 which is broadly the same as previous years.

Ethnicity data collections demonstrates that most applicants to the Housing Options service are predominantly from a white UK background.

5. Rough Sleepers

Historically, Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council has not typically experience high levels of rough sleeping within the borough and cases have remained consistently low over the last 4 years. However, there is a significant risk of an increase in rough sleeping due to the ongoing financial impacts that are likely to affect many residents over future months and years. The Rough Sleeper Initiative LR is a partnership arrangement with funding from the government that aims to support people off the streets and develop their wellbeing and stability, helping to reduce numbers of rough sleepers.

5.1 The Rough Sleeper Initiative Leicestershire & Rutland

Below is a breakdown of the current services /services provided by this initiative.

SERVICE/POST	PURPOSE	ORGANISATION
RSI Coordinator	The role provides a coordinated approach to all funded services and case management throughout the pathway, it also acts as a single point of contact for all services and the districts	North West Leicestershire District Council (District Lead for RSI)
Outreach Team	The outreach team respond to all rough sleeper reports across the districts, carrying out daily outreach at 6am to find and engage with anyone sleeping rough in Leicestershire and Rutland. They refer into accommodation and/or support services and offer long-term support for those unable to or refusing to accept accommodation	The Bridge East Midlands
Supported Lettings	Offer tenancy support for rough sleepers moving into tenancies or in B&B placements.	The Bridge East Midlands
Mill House	6 Bed hostel specifically for rough sleepers, offering a short-term off the streets accommodation option to stabilise and support with move-on.	Falcon Support Services
Personal Budget	Provides a source of funding for personal budgets and landlord incentives, to assist rough sleepers during their journey through the pathway. This can be utilised at any point for individuals who have been confirmed as rough sleeping within the timespan of the project	NWLDC – Managed by the RSI Coordinator
Homes First	6 Supported Properties using a housing led approach with intensive support. Aimed at complex cases where numerous accommodation options have failed previously.	East Midlands Homes

The following information provides a snapshot of rough sleeping figures from Oct 21-Jul 22

Rough sleeper reports received during the month – via street link, self-reports or public reports

Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22	Apr-22	May-22	Jun-22	Jul-22
3	4	3	1	7	3	1	2	4	12

Recorded on the street on the first morning of the month – verified by the outreach team

Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22	Apr-22	May-22	Jun-22	Jul-22
2	1	2	1	1	5	2	3	2	3

Recorded on the street on the last night of the month – verified by the outreach team

Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22	Apr-22	May-22	Jun-22	Jul-22
1	2	1	1	5	2	3	2	3	8

Total number of new individuals verified throughout the month

Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22	Apr-22	May-22	Jun-22	Jul-22
4	3	0	1	6	2	1	0	2	11

6. Temporary Accommodation

The Council uses a variety of different types of accommodation to meet the needs of those who are homelessness or threatened with homelessness. The Council also has a statutory duty to provide temporary accommodation in other circumstances including people requiring emergency accommodation or to existing tenants who require accommodating due to major remedial works at their property.

The Council has a family hostel, Illiffe House, which comprises 21 units of accommodation. There are shared bathrooms within this facility. Since the beginning of the pandemic there has been a sustained pressure on this facility and the lack of social and affordable housing within the borough more generally, coupled with increasing housing demand, has resulted in protracted stays in this facility for many of our families.

The Council also has a second hostel facility called the John Nichols street hostel but this facility is largely redundant due to the small room sizes, poor layout, steep stairways and narrow passageways. A review of this facility is currently underway.

It is recognised that there is a significant lack of hostel provision within the borough and throughout the county for single people. During the pandemic reliance on temporary accommodation was significant due to government mandates such as “Everyone in” which determined that all people who were homeless or at risk of homeless were to be provided with temporary accommodation. Last year the Council provided temporary accommodation for 243 people. Of these people 26.7% were families with 73.25% being single persons.

Temporary accommodation requirements have continued to increase over the last 3 years although, as stated, some of the increase is due to directives from government during the pandemic. It is not clear what continued demand there will be on the Housing Options service to meet responsibilities in line with the provision of temporary accommodation. What is clear is that current reliance on temporary accommodation such as bed and breakfast or hotel accommodation is not financially sustainable for the Council and that other solution needs to be consider. Despite some government funding expenditure over recent years has exceeded the budgetary allocation.

7. Prevention- Our approach

The Housing Options team strives to provide a person centre approach. Through our prevention policy there are a range or ways that we can provide financial support to our homeless applicants or financial incentives to private sector landlords.

We provide support in the following ways;

- Rent in advance,
- Prevention payments- support with mortgage arrears, rent arrears, bonds, guarantees
- Help with court costs
- We also seek to access discretionary housing grants to support those with rent shortfalls and other funding such as the house support grant where appropriate.

Hinckley and Borough Council has continued to develop wider support for residents throughout the pandemic. A Resident Support service was quickly established to support our most vulnerable residents, with support provided for those shielding requiring access to food, medicine and in relation to wider concerns such as support with wellbeing and loneliness.

Beyond the pandemic a welfare support service has been introduced to the Housing Service to provide financial support and assistance to those experiencing financial hardship. We are looking to continue and expand this service as we anticipate the cost of living crisis will continue to impact our residents.

Last year the Council entered into a new partnership with DASH (Decent and Safe Homes) provided by Derby City Council. DASH has partnered with Local Authorities in order to introduce a truly innovative service for landlords which reflects the positivity of the new legislation. This is aimed at giving councils a service which provides the opportunity of preventing homelessness in advance of the 56 day prevention duty time period. Last year this collaboration prevented 29 private sector evictions.

Their service includes:

- Support for landlords in what can be a very stressful time
- Help to create a personalised housing plan agreed with the tenant
- Rent arrears assistance through Housing benefit services, Universal credit, local government homeless prevention funds and charities
- Completing a financial assessment of tenants to maximise income to help ensure success moving forward
- Referrals and signposting to specialist services for more long-term support if needed
- A mediation service between landlords, tenants and Local authorities

The Council also offers a range of specialised services that support people with more specific concerns, concerns that can often affect or compound their housing situation. These roles include Hostel to Home officers, Tenancy Support officers and Domestic Abuse link officers.

8. Our Partners

The Council has strong and effective partnerships across its services. There are a number of both statutory and non-statutory partner agencies the Council works with to support those who are homeless or those who are at risk of becoming homeless. These include;

- DWP
- Adult Social Care
- Leicestershire Probation Service
- Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service
- Leicestershire police
- Turning Point
- Citizens Advice
- Call before you serve
- Salvation Army
- Rough Sleeper Initiative
- Emmaus
- Lawrence house,
- Action Homeless
- County community recovery services
- Other district and borough councils

8.1 Established joint protocols

There are a number of established protocols in place between agencies to help managed and respond to the needs of some of our more vulnerable customers which include the Care Leavers Protocol and the Prison Release Pathway. Cross authority work is currently underway to develop a Pan Reciprocal Agreement to support victims of domestic abuse and other high risk community safety concerns to move home within LLR to a safe place.

8.2 Duty to Refer

The HRA legislation brought in a new Duty to Refer which requires prescribed public sector bodies to identify and refer on those who are homeless or considered to be at risk of homelessness. The prescribed bodies include prisons, probation service, care services (both

adults and children's) and emergency/urgent health care. The Duty to Refer promotes opportunities for more joined up working, better communication and a more holistic service for the customer.

9. Funding and Resources

In addition to internal funding the Council also received Government funding each year which enables the Council to employ a number of key frontline officer posts alongside supporting our prevention agenda. Unfortunately the current nature of government funding means that some posts can only be secured on a temporary basis. This can affect our ability to recruit and retain staff. The Homelessness Prevention Grant is the mechanism through which the Council receives most of its funding to prevent and address homelessness pressures. This funding arrangement is currently under review and it is hoped that longer term funding provision will be progressed which will enable the Council resource the service more effectively, over a longer term.

10. Homes for Ukraine

In response to the war in Ukraine and implementation of the two UK resettlement schemes, Homes for Ukraine and the Family Visa Scheme the Council has been instrumental in providing direct support and assistance to both sponsors and their guests in relation to the Homes for Ukraine scheme. The scheme launched on the 18 March 2022 and encourages sponsors to provide accommodation for their guests for at least 6 months, with the ability to extend the scheme for up to 12 months in return for monthly thank you payments. There are currently over 70 sponsors providing accommodation for Ukrainians with the borough. A priority for the Council over the next 6 months is to support with the transition from temporary to settled accommodation for Ukrainian refugees whom are currently accommodated via the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

11. Cost of living crisis

Without doubt the emergent cost of living crisis is set to adversely affect most if not all households within the UK to some extent. With inflation expected to rise to 18% by next year, there are uncertain times ahead for many residents within the borough over the coming months. The Council already provides a Welfare Support service and demand for this service continues to increase. Unfortunately the reality of the cost of living crisis is that many householders, including both home owners and renters, will no longer be able to meet their financial liabilities in respect to their mortgage or rent commitments. As such, we expect to see a rise in people accessing our services for housing advice over the coming months and an increase in the number of homelessness cases next year, as our residents struggle to balance their financial commitments in the face of excessive living costs.

12. Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

In May 2022 a stakeholder event was held to ensure that agencies involved in preventing and addressing homelessness, both indirectly and directly, had an opportunity to inform the proposed strategy. During the stakeholder event 5 priority themes were identified which have provided the basis for our 3 year Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and the 5 key priorities are set out below;

- 1. We will continue working to prevent all forms of homelessness**
- 2. We will take action to prevent rough sleeping**
- 3. We will work towards increasing the availability of affordable and suitable rented accommodation, reducing our reliance on temporary accommodation**
- 4. We will take action to establish greater local collaboration between partners**
- 5. We will ensure that our services and solutions are personalised**

In order for our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy to be effective and relevant feedback from our customer is essential. As such, a survey is currently underway. Feedback from the customer survey will be included in the final version of the Homelessness Review in due course.

