

**DRAFT HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY**  
**FOR THE BOROUGH OF TELFORD AND WREKIN 2013 – 2016**



**Homelessness Strategy for the Borough of Telford and Wrekin 2013 - 2016**

**Foreword**

I am pleased to introduce the Homelessness Strategy for Telford and Wrekin for the next three years (2013-2016) and I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the local partners and organisations across the borough who have contributed towards its development.

The overall aims of the Homeless Strategy provide a framework for directing the Council's activity in partnership with the voluntary sector and other local partners. These are to:

1. Prevent homelessness in Telford and Wrekin
2. Have appropriate housing pathways, including advice and support for homeless households in Telford and Wrekin
3. Meet the Council's statutory duty to accommodate Gypsies and Travellers

The Strategy is set against the backdrop of unprecedented change in public spending, welfare benefits and social housing which will increase pressure on homelessness services at a time when resources are facing cuts.

We recognise that we face a challenging time over the next three years and beyond, however, by working co-operatively and recognising that tackling homelessness is 'everybody's' business, we are confident that the priority actions set out in this strategy, together with the support of our partners, will enable us to provide a co-ordinated approach to delivering services, to effectively tackle and reduce the risk of homelessness in Telford and Wrekin.

Councillor Charles Smith-Cabinet Member-Housing, Development & Borough Towns

## Homelessness Strategy for the Borough of Telford and Wrekin 2013 - 2016

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## Homelessness Strategy for the Borough of Telford and Wrekin 2013 - 2016

### 1. Introduction

The Homelessness Act 2002 places a legal duty on Councils to carry out a review of homelessness in their local area and develop a homelessness strategy based on the review, in consultation with other local authorities and voluntary organisations.

In 2012, a review of homelessness in Telford and Wrekin was undertaken to:

- Assess the national context, in particular the introduction of the Welfare Reform Bill and the potential impact on homelessness and service provision;
- At a local level understand the current scale and nature of homelessness and the likely increase in demand;
- Review current service provision to prevent and tackle homelessness, taking account of the national and local context and identify future challenges.

The Homelessness Strategy has been developed to respond to the challenges and following consultation with partners and local providers.

*'Homelessness means not having a home. Some people have no roof over their head and sleep on the street, in doorways or on night buses. But much more homelessness is hidden – on a friend's sofa, spare room, or in squats.*

*Even if you have a roof over your head you can still be homeless, if you don't have any rights to stay where you live or your home is unsuitable due to severe overcrowding or other reasons.'* (Shelter 2013)

This strategy sets out how the Council and local partners will work together to prevent and tackle statutory and non statutory homelessness, including eliminating the need for rough sleeping. It identifies aims and priority actions over the next three years and how they will be achieved.

### 2. Achievements since 2008

Since the 2008 Homelessness Strategy was approved, the Council and local partners have made progress in improving services and preventing homelessness in Telford and Wrekin. Some of our shared achievements so far include:

- Bringing together a range of council and multi-agency teams to deliver a new targeted approach to assessing individual homelessness cases and deliver initiatives which enable the Council to meet its statutory duty to prevent and tackle homelessness.
- The way the Council provides housing advice and support to local people has been improved:
  - Existing and new employees working at the Council's First Point Contact Centres located across the borough are trained to enable them to provide high quality, comprehensive housing advice and provide access to mediation and other support services.
  - The Council's Emergency Duty and Housing teams are now working more closely to ensure that people who approach the Council outside office hours receive housing advice and support when they need it.

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- A more co-ordinated partnership approach is taken with between the Council and local housing and support providers by:
  - Establishing a Single Allocation Panel to ensure that vulnerable households aged 16-32 receive the support they need and that their accommodation needs are met.
  - Putting in place procedures to ensure that appropriate intervention is taken to avoid evictions where possible.
- The Council has recently introduced a mediation scheme, delivered by the Council's Targeted Youth Support team by helping rebuild relationships and find solutions which allow young people to remain in the family home. Since April 2012, 91 young people have been referred.
- In 2012/13, using DCLG Homelessness Prevention Funding, the Council has:
  - Prevented nine households from losing their homes and entering temporary accommodation.
  - Resolved five Mortgage Rescue cases, alleviating £464,000 of mortgage debt.
  - Enabled 51 customers to obtain additional benefits which helped to resolve their financial difficulties.
  - The Council's Housing team have now been trained to provide information, advice and guidance to households experiencing financial difficulties.
- Since 2011, the Council has significantly reduced the use of Bed and Breakfast to accommodate statutory homeless households.
- The Council has secured funding to help vulnerable households to move from temporary accommodation to sustainable tenancies through the Bond Scheme.
- In 2012/13 the Bleak Mid Winter project which provides short term accommodation for people that are sleeping rough during the coldest months of the year prevented 100 people from sleeping rough in the borough.
- The 'Night Inn' pilot has been delivered to provide a night by night emergency provision for anyone presenting as homeless in an emergency.
- A high quality Sanctuary Scheme is delivered by the Council and local partners. Since 2011/12, 84 victims of domestic abuse have been provided with effective security measures which have enabled them to remain in their home.
- A Hospital to Home Protocol has been established to enable timely assessments to be carried out for people who are homeless at the point of admission, or become homeless during their stay in hospital.
- The Council has established a number of life skill programmes with young people accommodated within the Council's accommodation project for 16-19 year olds. This complements programmes which are provided by STAY and YMCA.
- The Council is supporting the delivery of the Freedom programme is a national programme for victims of domestic abuse.
- Working with national agencies and Registered Providers to increase the supply of new affordable homes (including general needs and specialist housing) and to make best use of the existing housing in the borough

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- Maninplace was established since 2008 and now provides 75 units of accommodation for non-statutory homeless people, and Stay has brought into management an additional 20 units of accommodation for 16-25 year olds.

### 3. National Context

#### Welfare Reform Bill

In 2012, the Government introduced the **Welfare Reform Bill** which sets out their approach to social and economic policy. Key changes in Housing Benefit policy and administration present significant implications for housing and homelessness:

- The introduction of Universal Credit to provide one single streamlined benefit
- From April 2011, the rates for Local Housing Allowance (LHA) were reduced and the rate was 'capped' at a maximum payment, set at the LHA for four bedroom properties.
- Deductions made from Housing Benefit will be gradually increased if there are non-dependent children living in the household.
- The shared accommodation rate applicable to single people has been extended from people aged 25 up to 35.
- From April 2013, Housing Benefit will be restricted for some people who are living in a property that is larger than their household size. This will also apply to working age tenants who are renting from a social landlord.

#### Localism Act 2011

This act changes the powers of local government and includes amendments to legislation relating to homelessness and housing.

- The option for Local Authorities to discharge homelessness duties with the offer of private rented sector accommodation. Local Authorities must be satisfied with the affordability and condition the accommodation and household circumstances. Tenancies must be a minimum of 12 months.
- The option for Local Authorities to withdraw its services if a suitable offer is not accepted.
- The introduction of new Flexible Tenancies which enable social housing landlords to offer shorter tenancies (minimum of two years).

A more detailed explanation of the national context is available in Appendix 1.

#### No Second Night Out Vision July 2011

The Ministerial Working Group for Homelessness which brings together eight Government departments has been working with public and voluntary sector partners to develop ways tackle the complex causes of homelessness, including housing, health, work and training.

The 'No Second Night Out Nationwide report' sets out six partnership commitments which will give local people the tools to tackle rough sleeping and put an end to second nights out on the street.

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### 4. Local Context

#### Homelessness in Telford & Wrekin

Telford and Wrekin has an estimated population of 166,641 (census 2011), however, the Council estimates suggest that this figure is slightly higher with some 170,300 people (2010).

#### Statutory homelessness

The Council has a statutory duty to:

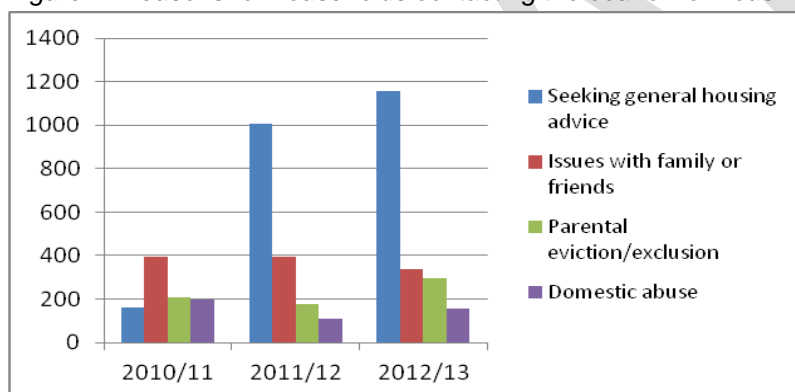
- Provide advice and guidance to all.
- Prevent homelessness where possible.
- Provide help to homeless households who are in priority need (see Appendix 2). This includes providing interim and temporary accommodation for households until they are able to move into sustainable accommodation.

The figures stated in this section are for 2012/13 (up to end January 2013), unless otherwise stated.

#### Housing support/advice

2,919 households contacted the Council for housing support. The most reported reasons were to seek housing advice; due to issues with family or friends; due to parental eviction/exclusion; and due to domestic abuse (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Reasons for households contacting the council for housing support.



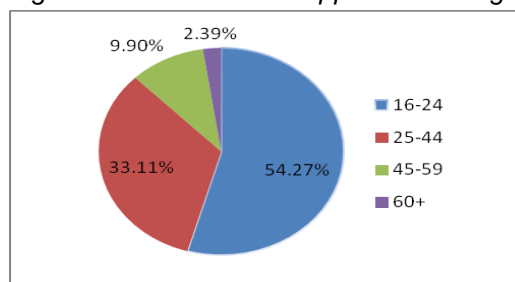
#### Homelessness prevention

The Council prevented 203 households from becoming homeless either by enabling them to remain in their own home (34%), assisting them to find alternative accommodation (63%), or assisting those who are intentionally homeless or are not in priority need (3%).

#### Homelessness applications and acceptances

Since 2010/11, the number of homelessness applications has continued to increase. In 2012/13 54% of the 293 applications made were by young people aged 16-24, of which 20.8% were aged 16-17 (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Homelessness applications – age profile

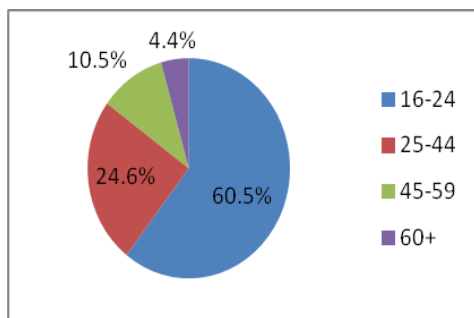


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The top reasons for people making homelessness applications are due to parents not willing to accommodate (27.3%), due to a violent partner (15.4%) and other relations not being willing to accommodate (10.6%).

Three people who were discharged from hospital to home were presented as homeless. Nine people were discharged from other institutions and four people were released from prison or remand was also forwarded to the Council’s Housing Options team.

Figure 3. Homelessness acceptances – age profile



60.5% of households who were accepted as statutory homeless and in priority need were young people (see Figure 3). This is significantly higher than the national average where 35% of priority need acceptances are aged 16-24.

For the last five years the top three priority need groups have remained the same (see Figure 4).

Since 2011/12 the number of repeat homeless acceptances has reduced from 11 to three in 2012/13 (up to end of January).

**Council managed temporary accommodation**

Throughout 2012/13, 304 homeless households were accommodated in council managed temporary housing.

Figure 4. Priority need acceptances

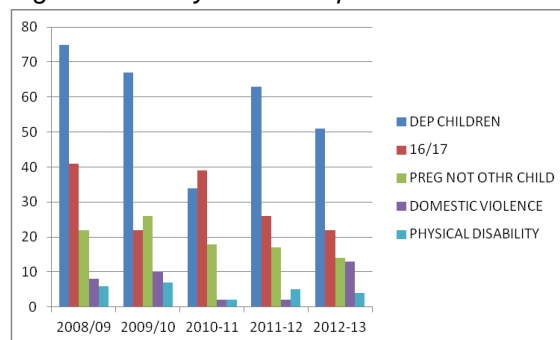
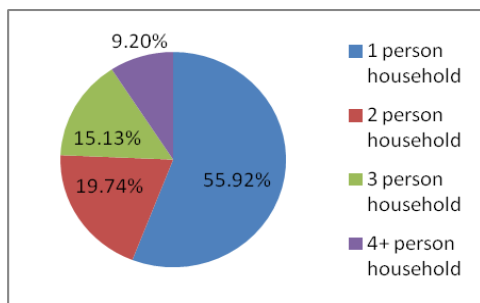


Figure 5 illustrates the size of all priority need households placed in temporary accommodation.

Figure 5. Size of priority need households in temporary accommodation in 2012/13



In 2011, 78.9% of households in Telford and Wrekin had more bed rooms in a property than they required, which is higher than the national figure of 72.6%. 5.2% of households have fewer rooms in the property than is required, compared with a national average of 8.7%.

In 2012/13, 75% of the tenancies were one and two person households indicating the demand for one and two bedroom properties.

**Non statutory homelessness**

It is recognised that many people who are non statutory homeless seek housing advice, accommodation and support from local partners in Telford and Wrekin. Third sector provision for the homelessness is serviced via supported housing and defined homeless provision (see Appendix 3).

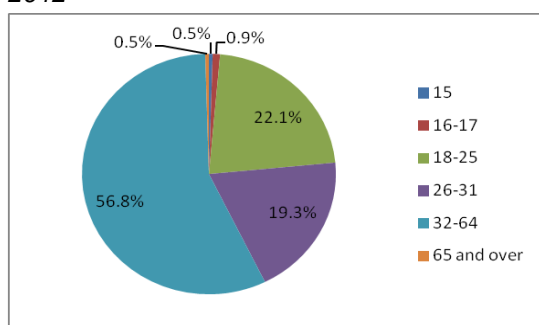
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### The Salvation Army KiP Project

The number of people being referred to The Salvation Army KiP Project continues to increase each year, with 213 people contacting them between April 2011 and December 2012 compared with 134 referrals in 2010/11. Of these, the majority (87%) were men and 56.8% were aged 32-64 (see Figure 6).

Since 2010/11 there has been an increase in the number of non-statutory homeless women (15 in 2010/11 and 28 in 2012/13).

Figure 6. Age of KiP referrals Apr 2011-Dec 2012



During 2012, KiP interviewed six people who had been discharged from hospital with no fixed accommodation. In addition, 33 people who were released from prison were referred to KiP.

Each person referred reported on average three different health issues. The most common health issues reported over the last three years were depression / anxiety / panic attacks; problems with alcohol and drugs misuse/addiction.

### Maninplace

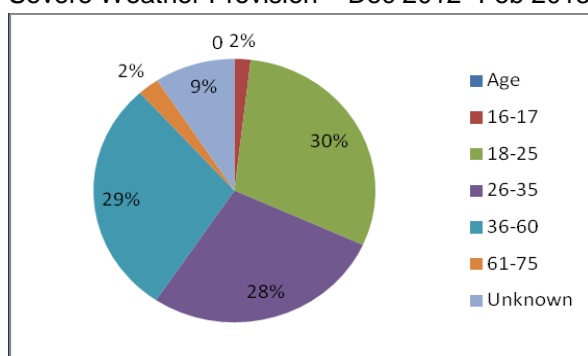
The Bleak Mid Winter Project runs every year between December and February and provides short term accommodation for people who are sleeping rough during the coldest months of the year.

70 people accessed accommodation through the project in 2012/13. In addition, 30 people were assisted to avoid them from rough sleeping through private landlord HMO, returning to family, staying with friends or other means. An additional 62 people contacted the project however, either did not leave any personal details and could not be contacted, or did not attend interview, declined an offer of accommodation or took another option.

The majority of people contacting the project were men (80%). The age profile of these people accessing is illustrated in Figure 7.

14% of people presenting themselves as homeless were due to hospital discharge and leaving prison.

Figure 7. Age profile of people accessing the Severe Weather Provision – Dec 2012 -Feb 2013



The number of people aged 18 to 25 is much higher in 2012/13 than any previous year, accounts for 30% of all who accessed this provision.

Maninplace accommodates 70 people every night in temporary accommodation, who are non-statutory homeless, of which the majority are single households.

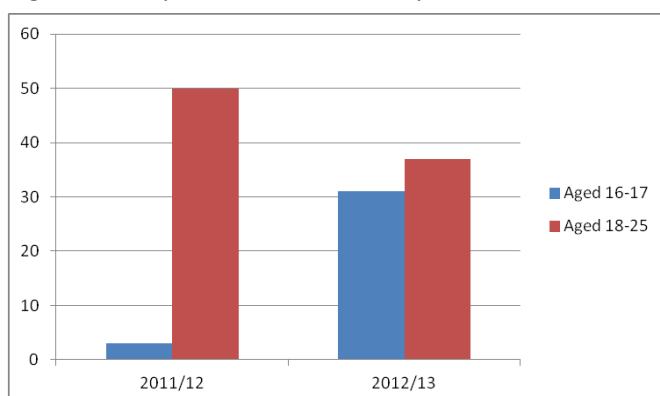
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The Council's count for rough sleepers continues to increase each year with eleven people found to be rough sleeping in the borough on 21 November 2012 compared with two in 2010.

### Wellington and District YMCA

68 people who were accommodated by YMCA in 2012/13, compared with 53 in 2011/12.

Figure 8. People accommodated by YMCA



There has been an increase in the number of 16-17 year olds and a reduction of people aged 18-25 being accommodated by YMCA.

Of these, the main way to help people to move on was either through Choose Your Home (13 people) or by helping people to move back to the family home (11 people).

In 2012/13, 59% of the young people accommodated had issues with substance misuse, 41% were not in education or training, 37% had complex issues and 32% were ex offenders.

### Stay

During 2012/13, Stay supported 225 young people across its range of services including Houses in Multiple Occupation, self-contained flats and floating support. Stay supports people up to the age of 32. In 2012/13, 24% of clients were under 18 and 49% were between 18 and 21. 58% were female and 42% were male.

These figures represent a 6% increase on the previous year.

### **The Local Housing Market**

- Whilst Telford & Wrekin Council is no longer a social landlord, it has an important strategic housing role, working with partners to meet the housing needs of local people and to help to balance the local housing market.
- Between 2001 and 2011 there was a 7.7% shift to private renting tenure and a move away from owner-occupation of 4.5%. This shift in tenure reflects national changes, which are closely associated with population growth.
- Total housing association stock has fallen slightly in last decade.
- New social housing vacancies (relets) has remained stable, however the number of households registered seeking housing (Choose Your Home') has risen significantly to around 17,747 in 2012/13.
- There is an estimated net shortfall of 1,240 affordable homes for local people every year. The majority of these should be for rent. The cost of entry level housing is on average eight times greater than household incomes, although this varies across the borough (2009).

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- There is a shortage of all property types (apart from one bed room flats) in the borough.
- Early indications are that housing providers are seeking to develop smaller house types including two bed room houses and one bed roomed flats. However, new supply will continue to represent a very small proportion of the borough's overall housing stock.
- The expected delivery of specialist housing, including extra care housing, has the potential to increase the supply of social housing vacancies.
- Long term empty homes in the borough are comparatively low.
- In 2011, 615 mortgage and landlord possession claims were made. In addition, 470 mortgage and landlord possession claims led to orders. These figures are slightly higher than the national figure (source: Ministry of Justice).

#### Local strategies and plans

The Homelessness Strategy supports the following local strategies and plans: Telford & Wrekin Council's Community Strategy – Our Journey to 2020; Strategic Housing Strategy (2013 - 2018), Supporting People Strategy 2013-2018, Children and Young People's plan 2012/13, Safer Stronger Communities Partnership Plan, Health and Wellbeing plan 2008-2011, Reducing Re-Offending Strategy (2013-2016), Domestic Violence Strategy (2013-2016).

## 5. Future Challenges in Telford and Wrekin

- As a result of the National Reforms it is expected that there will be an increase in households experiencing financial challenges and rent arrears which could lead to an increase in homelessness and a need to access homelessness services:
  - 2,613 households (47%) of all working age tenants will be affected by the 'bedroom tax' and will see a reduction in Housing Benefit.
  - The budget shortfall for a local Council Tax Support scheme will need to be found by reductions in Council Tax support paid to the 10,742 working age customers who currently receive this Council Tax benefit. Of these, 7,957 currently pay no Council Tax at all. In addition their entitlement will reduce by around 21% and from April 2013, they will have to start to pay a portion of their Council Tax.
  - The challenges that individuals face as a result of introduction of the Shared Room Rate, in particular for many young people who are unable to secure or sustain affordable accommodation and are left facing shortfalls, arrears and homelessness.
- There is an estimated net shortfall of affordable homes and a shortage of all property types (apart from one bed room flats).
- New social housing vacancies (relets) has remained stable, however the number of households registered seeking housing (Choose Your Home) has risen significantly over the last five years to 14,747 (5,769 in 2007).
- Mortgage and landlord possession claims and orders in the borough are slightly higher the national position.

## Homelessness Strategy for the Borough of Telford and Wrekin 2013 - 2016

- The number of homelessness applications to the Council is increasing year on year and the majority of accepted as homeless and in priority need continue to be young people (60.5%). This is significantly higher than the national average where 35% of priority need acceptances are aged 16-24.
- The number of non-statutory homeless people being referred to the Salvation Army KiP project continues to increase each year.
- Since 2011, there has been a 65% increase in people presenting themselves as homeless to the Bleak Mid-winter project (Severe Weather Provision between the months December and February).
- There are a growing number of rough sleepers in the borough - the Council's counted 11 rough sleepers on 21 November 2012 compared with two in 2010.
- The need for the Council and local partners to deliver the Government's 'No Second Night Out' vision at a local level.
- There is a limited amount of housing advice and support for people aged 18-25 as accommodation provision for non-statutory homelessness is generally targeted at people aged 16-19. This has been compounded by the closure of STAY's Hostel which was the 'front door' where young people could get support.
- There is a growing need to accommodate people with complex needs. These include people who are being presented as homeless following discharge from hospital, release from an institution, prison and remand.
- Individuals with a substance misuse, whether alcohol or drug dependency prove an ongoing challenge as people struggle to maintain all that is necessary to stay in accommodation
- Mental health problems are a concern when Houses of Multiple Occupancy are inappropriate, finding alternatives and engaging with statutory services is problematic.
- Homeless women are more difficult to accommodate due to their potential vulnerability.
- One person households make up over half of all priority need homeless households placed council owned/leased temporary accommodation, with 75% of the tenancies being 1 and 2 person households in 2012/13. This demonstrates the demand for 1 and 2 bedroom properties.
- 1,463 (55.9%) of households affected by the 'bedroom cap' require one bed accommodation
- The current provision of accommodation to support victims of domestic abuse is no longer suitable due to its location.
- The majority of Council owned/managed accommodation is in South Telford only.
- KiP is limited to the availability of suitable Houses of Multiple Occupancy accommodation with private landlords and very often the level of deposit provides a significant problem for the homeless individual. Also the standard and quality of available properties continues to be a concern.
- The current temporary and emergency accommodation is under pressure due to the growing demand in the borough

## Homelessness Strategy for the Borough of Telford and Wrekin 2013 - 2016

**PART TWO: THE STRATEGY****6. Aims and priority actions**

The overall aims of the Homeless Strategy are for the Council to work in partnership with the voluntary sector and other local partners to:

4. Prevent homelessness in Telford and Wrekin
5. Have appropriate housing pathways, including advice and support for homeless households in Telford and Wrekin
6. Meet the Council's statutory duty to accommodate Gypsies and Travellers

**Aim 1: Prevent homelessness in Telford and Wrekin**

The Government's homelessness prevention strategy states that *'there is no place for homelessness in the 21<sup>st</sup> century'*.

The Council and local partners will work together to ensure that a proactive approach is taken to prevent homelessness in Telford and Wrekin. Early intervention and the provision of integrated services are important to help local people to stay in their homes and where this is not possible, support them to find alternative accommodation before they become homeless.

**Priority action 1a: Provide a Single Referral and Access Point and Single Assessment Tool for all people who present themselves as homeless**

The Council recognises the need to ensure that appropriate support is provided all local people who present themselves as homeless.

As a result of the Welfare Reforms it is expected that there will be an increase in households experiencing financial challenges and rent arrears which could lead to an increase in homelessness and a need to access homelessness services.

In order to limit the risk of homelessness, households affected by reductions to housing and welfare benefits have been provided with early advice, in particular:

- Households affected by deductions in housing benefit payments due to the Housing Benefit Social Rented Sector room cap
- Households affected by the changes to the Council Tax support scheme

The Council has delivered briefing sessions to council employees and local partners to increase awareness and understanding of the Welfare Reforms, local implications and potential impact.

The Council's Housing Options team currently provide housing advice and support to people who are eligible and in priority need. However, this does not assist and support those people who are non-statutory homeless.

Therefore, the Council and local partners will put in place a Single Referral and Access Point for all local people regardless of whether they are statutory homeless or not, providing a pathway of advice, guidance and access to support services which meet their housing needs.

The Single Referral Access Point will be managed by the Council, in partnership with local partners. A Single Assessment Tool will also be developed so that anyone who

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presents themselves as homeless will only have to be assessed once to determine the pathway to appropriate housing and support providers.

In addition, in 2013, the Telford Crisis Network has been established to respond to the needs of people who find themselves in crisis.

Until recently, emergency response in the borough has been delivered by individual organisations at the point of need, providing shelter and/or food and other basic essentials for people to live. However, these organisations have been finding it increasingly difficult to meet the rising need.

In response, local partners are working together to provide a more co-ordinated and effective crisis provision for local people. The immediate priority for the Network has been to provide emergency food provision, but longer term they will review that provision and look at other essential items to help address the underlying issues that cause people's financial crises.

### **Priority action 1b: Commission and monitor a range of support services for vulnerable groups**

The provision of Supporting People Services is an important element of the Council's preventative service provision, providing the delivery of housing related support which encompasses a wide preventative role aiming to promote independence, confidence building and social inclusion. Supporting vulnerable residents to maintain independence and remain in their home is an underlying principle of the Supporting People programme, in particular providing services for mental health and substance misuse.

The Council is developing a new support service delivery model which will create a more flexible, equitable, joined up and needs led service, through a combination of sheltered housing for older people; floating support to people in their own homes; and hub/outreach accommodation where support is provided to them through accommodation based support schemes or Sheltered Housing schemes.

The new Single Access and Referral point which will be developed with local partners and managed by the Council to ensure that local people can access Supporting People services to meet their needs (see Priority Action 1a).

Housing advice sometimes needs to be supported by practical assistance. The Council and local partners use a range of prevention tools to reduce the number of people at risk of homelessness and to help to minimise repeat homelessness.

- The Prevention Scheme – The Council will continue to use this fund to reduce the number of households who become homeless. The fund ranging from helping to clear rent areas to mediation to enable households to remain in their homes.
- The Mediation Scheme – The Council will continue to work with families to resolve issues that lead to young people being unable to remain at home.
- The Sanctuary Scheme – the Council in partnership with the Police, Shropshire Fire Service and Wrekin Housing Trust will continue to offer a range of extra security measures to enable victims of domestic abuse to remain in their own home.
- Life skills training programme – the Council is developing a programme to support

### Homelessness Strategy for the Borough of Telford and Wrekin 2013 - 2016

and develop the most vulnerable young people (aged 16-19) who are accommodated in Council temporary accommodation.

- Hospital Discharge Protocol – This Protocol enables timely assessments to be carried out for people who are homeless as at the point of admission, or become homeless during their stay in hospital. The Council will continue to work with health providers to raise awareness and ensure that that housing needs are met.
- Financial advice – The Council will continue to work with households facing financial difficulties, covering all areas of Mortgage Rescue, debt advice and counselling.
- Integrated Offender Management – The Community Safety Partnership are developing operational protocols to eliminate rough sleeping and prevent homelessness.

#### **Aim 2: Have appropriate housing pathways, including advice and support for homeless households in Telford and Wrekin**

The Council's objective is to provide suitable interim accommodation in Telford and Wrekin as quickly as possible to homeless households who are in priority need (see Appendix 2), together with a mechanism to allow households to move into sustainable accommodation.

In addition, it is recognised that many people who are non statutory homeless seek housing advice, accommodation and support from local partners in Telford and Wrekin.

The Council and local partners will continue to work together to ensure that future action and resources are focussed on overcoming the challenges impacting on homelessness in Telford and Wrekin.

#### **Priority Action 2a: Establish sustainable pathways for all homeless people from temporary accommodation into sustainable tenancies and discharge the Council's homelessness duty.**

Most affordable homes in the borough are accessed through the local choice based lettings arrangements ('Choose Your Home'). The demand for this service has increased significantly over the last five years from 5,769 to 14,747 applications. With fewer social rented homes available to meet demand, and with deposits for mortgages out of reach of those on low incomes, private renting is fast becoming the only option for many people.

The Council works with the Homes & Communities Agency (HCA) and local Registered Providers (housing associations) to increase the supply of affordable homes in the borough. As part of its strategic housing role it also:

- helps to provide a strategic framework through its Homelessness Strategy, Housing Allocation Policy and Tenancy Strategy.
- provides services that will support tenants to maintain their tenancy and prevent unnecessary evictions
- provides an Anti-Social Behaviour unit in partnership with the Police to tackle

## Homelessness Strategy for the Borough of Telford and Wrekin 2013 - 2016

local issues.

In 2012/13, the Council carried out a review of how its property related schemes operate; the use of accommodation to support homeless people; and the future challenges for Telford and Wrekin which will impact on homelessness.

This has led to the development of a comprehensive package of support and accommodation to address local challenges and meet the housing needs of both statutory and non-statutory homeless households. This includes the provision of short term accommodation and a mechanism to enable households to move on into permanent accommodation quickly. The Council will:

- Restructure its portfolio of temporary accommodation, purchasing or leasing additional accommodation and carrying out alterations to existing accommodation (if economically viable).
- Consider expanding the existing Bond Scheme which provides a bond guarantee to private sector landlords to allow households to secure accommodation. The expansion of this scheme will assist more households to move on from temporary accommodation by securing sustainable tenancies and will enable the Council to discharge its homelessness duty into the private rented sector. This scheme may also be used to assist households who need to move out of accommodation with social landlords due to the Welfare Reforms.
- Work with local partners to revise the Council's Housing Allocation Policy to ensure it is fit for purpose; supports the prevention of homelessness; provides temporary accommodation; and enables service users to access and secure longer term or permanent accommodation in the community. (Also see 2f).

### Priority Action 2b: Enhance provision to accommodate young people

The number of young people presenting themselves as homeless continues to increase; including people aged 18-25.

In response to this and the increasing pressures resulting from the introduction of the Shared Room Rate, the Council and local partners will increase the supply of rented, affordable, specialist accommodation for this group:

- Bromford Housing Association and Stay will develop a 16 unit supported accommodation for young people with complex needs 'Foyer provision' in Woodside.
- Sanctuary Housing Association will develop 12 units of accommodation in Ketley for young

These projects will be implemented by 2015.

The Council will look to create additional units of temporary accommodation within its current facilities for young people.

In addition, through developing their work with local private sector landlords, Stay will increase the number of accommodation units available to people aged 16-25.

### Priority Action 2c: Develop a social lettings model and Landlord Accreditation

## Homelessness Strategy for the Borough of Telford and Wrekin 2013 - 2016

**Scheme to help people into private rented sector tenancies**

The Councils Tenancy Relations Service advise both landlords and tenants on their rights and responsibilities.

Sustaining tenancies in the private rented sector and sustaining access to private rented and voluntary sector accommodation is fundamental to prevent and tackle homelessness, both as a mechanism for the initial placing of homeless and to move persons on into permanent accommodation.

Therefore, improving the ability of residents to access all housing that is available in Telford and Wrekin is crucial to enable local residents to better manage their own housing pathway. In addition, improving Council relations with the private and voluntary sector is crucial to maintaining a steady supply of accommodation for the existing Services that the Council provides for the homeless.

Currently, where households are not in priority need (see appendix 2) and are non-statutory homeless, the Council's statutory duty is to provide advice and guidance.

This usually includes information on private lettings, Choose Your Home, referrals to voluntary sector partners, referral to the Single Allocations Panel for supported housing and details of hostels for street homeless. Despite the advice provided not all of these households will successfully find somewhere to live.

To meet the above needs the Council, in partnership with voluntary sector partners and private Landlords is exploring the creation of a Social Lettings Agency to provide affordable, good quality accommodation to homeless households.

The agency will provide:

- A mechanism to find accommodation for all service areas within the Council that need residential accommodation
- To set up a Landlord accreditation scheme to apply to all private landlords that the Council uses.
- To establish links with the local private rented sector landlords to provide properties through the agency for those clients who contact the homelessness services.
- Be a main point of contact, providing information and assistance to residential landlords and being a link to all of the services that are available in the Council
- To work closely with the voluntary sector to provide accommodation for non statutory homeless.
- To purchase accommodation to provide long term tenancies for those with challenging circumstances and would otherwise be unable to move on into sustainable accommodation

Once established the Social Lettings Agency will initially focus on supporting those affected by the Welfare Reforms and setting up service level agreements with the voluntary sector. A Landlord Accreditation scheme will be developed and a programme will be put into place to purchase residential accommodation in accordance with the model.

**Priority Action 2d: Adopt a No Second Night Out Model**

## Homelessness Strategy for the Borough of Telford and Wrekin 2013 - 2016

The Government has a requirement that before the winter months begin and severe weather becomes a factor, that there is provision across the country to prevent people from sleeping rough on the streets of England. 2011 saw the introduction of the Government's "No Second Night Out" vision, which is intended to ensure that any person that has slept rough does not do so for a second consecutive night.

In response to this, a co-operative partnership has been developed with the Council and local partners; Stay Supported Housing, The Salvation Army KiP Project, Wellington & District YMCA, Bourneville Housing Association and Maninplace to deliver the Bleak Mid-Winter Project.

The Salvation Army KiP project, provide daytime first response and Maninplace manage the project every year during the months of December to February and provides short term accommodation for people that are sleeping rough during the coldest months of the year.

In response to the increase in people presenting themselves as homeless, Telford & Wrekin Community Safety partnership has invested funding into a partnership agreement between the Council and Maninplace. This will enable the delivery of services offered through the Bleak Mid Winter Project all year round. This new initiative will be called 'Nights Inn' and an emergency line will be available 24/7.

Nationally, it is recognised that the risk of offending or reoffending is reduced when a prison leaver or an offender has the appropriate accommodation and ongoing support and given the individual and opportunity to succeed and integrate back into society.

Therefore, the 'Nights Inn' initiative will include a support service to reintegrate prison leavers back to the area.

The Council will strengthen its partnership working with the Prison Service, the Integrated Offender Management Team, Probation, and Youth Support Services to ensure that no one prison leaver or Integrate Offender Management nominal 'slips through the net' and that their accommodation needs are met.

This cooperative approach will allow all partners to develop an appropriate engagement, support and enforcement package designed to concentrate on the offender rather than the offences.

### **Priority Action 2e: Work with Private Landlords to bring empty properties back into use.**

Within the borough there are estimated to be around 300 empty properties. These are not only a waste of a valuable housing opportunity, but are often detrimental to local communities causing blight, reducing the values of surrounding properties and contributing to a sense of general decline.

In response to this a Home Improvement Agency will be established to identify empty properties, promoting the reporting of such properties, working with each owner to identify what could be done to get the property back into use and working with a cross council Housing Action Team (HAT) to co-ordinate support/action to bring properties back into use, linked with housing options and temporary accommodation

## Homelessness Strategy for the Borough of Telford and Wrekin 2013 - 2016

to meet the housing needs identified.

A further report will be brought to Cabinet detailing the interventions to be implemented to tackle empty properties.

**Priority Action 2f: : Work with local Registered Providers (RPs) (through the Council's Allocation Policy and Tenancy Strategy) to help local people to access and retain affordable housing and to make best use of the Borough's housing stock**

The Council's Homelessness Strategy, Housing Allocation Policy and Tenancy Strategy are closely linked and will be developed in a co-ordinated way. The Tenancy Strategy will set out how the Council will work with local Registered Providers to influence the type and length of tenancies that will be offered (including the circumstances where this may vary). It will also describe the process under which tenancies will be renewed or terminated at the end of a fixed-term. Also see 2a above.

**Aim 3: Meet statutory duty to accommodate Gypsies and Travellers**

The Council has a duty under The Housing Act 1996 and Homelessness Act 2002 to accommodate those gypsies and travellers which are assessed as homeless/or unlawfully encamped and have a right to be within the Borough due to a local connection in the area determined by employment, family or there are special circumstances which result in unlawful encampment in the area i.e. health.

It is recognised and accepted that the Telford & Wrekin Gypsy and Traveller community is expanding and therefore plans need to be put in place to ensure that this community is able to live and integrate as part of the wider community in the borough.

In addition, issues currently arise as a result of unlawful encampments being established in the local area by transient Gypsies and Travellers who have lawful sites elsewhere in the country. The Council will explore options for effectively managing this transient accommodation.

**Priority Action 3a: Develop a strategic plan identify appropriate locations that meet the needs of the Gypsy and Traveller community**

The Council has identified the following actions in order to meet its statutory obligation to provide temporary accommodation:

- Extend the existing Gypsy and Traveller site off Lodge Road in Donnington. This extension of this site will be subject to planning permission.
- Designate a site for temporary gypsy and traveller accommodation, located off Holyhead Road in Snedshill, adjacent to the M54 motorway. It is proposed that this site is used to accommodate those gypsies and travellers who we have a statutory responsibility for, whilst permanent accommodation is developed at Lodge Road. The site may also be large enough to accommodate transient gypsies and travellers who are unlawfully encamped in the Borough. The designation of this site for gypsies and travellers, whether for lawful or

## Homelessness Strategy for the Borough of Telford and Wrekin 2013 - 2016

unlawful gypsies will require planning permission and an extensive period of consultation would take place with local residents and businesses as part of this process.

Travellers using either site will be required to pay an appropriate rent, service charge and Council Tax and will be subject to a tenancy agreement setting out conditions for using the site. The Council believes that by making appropriate provision for travellers it can reduce the incidence of illegal encampments and enable the faster enforcement of removing illegal encampments.

The council are developing and identifying long term solutions through the Shaping Places strategy.

### **Priority Action 3b: Establish a programme of support to address health and wellbeing and educational needs of the Gypsy and Traveller community**

The Council will continue to work with Health and Education services to deliver statutory services to this community. Additional training opportunities are being piloted and will be reviewed to ascertain their effectiveness and develop these further if appropriate.

In addition, the Council and local partners are putting together a three year plan to look at how the Council more effectively manages illegal encampments which can adversely impact on residents and businesses within the Borough. A task group, involving officers from across the Council and the Police, will take this review forward and develop a clear policy for dealing with illegal encampments.

In 2013, the Council will initiate a formal consultation process with the Gypsy and Traveller community who legally reside in Telford and Wrekin, to listen to their views on the service that they receive and any ideas that they have for future service provision.

### **Priority Action 3c: Work with the wider community and the Gypsy and Traveller community to improve the understanding of the different cultures and needs**

The Council will continue to be represented at the One Telford Safer Stronger Businesses meeting which is made up of local businesses. The challenges that both local businesses and the Gypsies and Travellers face will be reviewed at this meeting to identify positive solutions for both. This is also an opportunity to raise awareness of the Gypsy and Traveller culture and traditions.

The Gypsy and Traveller community access local schools, health facilities and local amenities in the borough and the designated Gypsy Liaison Officer actively encourages them to integrate with the community wherever possible, such as participating in community wide events and discussions around local decision making.

The Council will continue to offer support, advice and guidance to local residents who raise any challenges that they may be facing whilst living in the same area.

## Homelessness Strategy for the Borough of Telford and Wrekin 2013 - 2016

**7. Resources to implement the Homelessness Strategy**

This section of the strategy outlines the following:

- the resources available for preventing and tackling homelessness;
- Arrangements to monitor the delivery of the strategy.

**Resources available for preventing and tackling homelessness**

Financial resources for tackling homelessness are limited and are likely to come under significant pressure in the future. Resources preventing and tackling homelessness come from a variety of sources:

- **Preventing Homelessness Grant** – this is a specific Government funding source for Local Authorities based on the level of need identified in each area and is intended to fund the development of preventative initiatives such as mediation, outreach and resettlement services. After 2013, CLG Homelessness Grant will not be specifically tied to homeless prevention and these activities will be funded through the business rates retention scheme
- **General Fund** – the Local Authority funds the majority of revenue expenditure on homelessness and related activities from the General Fund. This includes the costs of providing a housing options and advice service, grant funding to voluntary partners that provide services to homeless people and the cost of providing emergency accommodation to homeless households who have made an application for assistance.
- **Supporting People Funding** – Current and future years of funding are under pressure to generate savings and are subject to the review of the provision of Supporting People Services in 2013. *Supporting people since 2011/12 is funded through the General Fund.*
- **Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)** – are housing benefit payments made to people who are experiencing housing difficulties and can help them to access and retain accommodation. This provides a valuable source of funding in preventing the homelessness. In fund will come under increasing pressure due to new calls on it from households at risk of rent arrears leading to a risk of homelessness due to the Welfare Reform.
- **Funding for new Affordable Homes** Capital funding for new accommodation-based services for homeless households and new affordable housing is provided by the Homes & Communities Agency (HCA) and increasingly by Registered Providers from their own resources, as national grant rates have been reduced. The HCA also has a number of targeted funding programmes, including Empty Homes and Gypsies & Travellers. The supply of non-grant funded affordable homes, e.g. through (s106) agreements with private house builders has been falling.
- **Other funding** – from time to time additional grant resources are made available for new accommodation based initiatives and/or to improve existing accommodation. It is difficult to access the size and scope of resources down to a local level or whether they will be available in future years. The Council and local

### Homelessness Strategy for the Borough of Telford and Wrekin 2013 - 2016

partners will seek additional investment and funding to improve services to prevent and tackle homelessness

#### Homelessness Strategy Monitoring

A range of methods for monitoring the progress against actions contained in the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan will be put in place. This framework seeks to make use of existing structures:

- **Homelessness Taskforce** – This partnership of service providers will meet quarterly to review progress of the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan and challenges.
- **National Performance Indicators and Statutory Returns** – Performance will continue to be monitored through quarterly P1E returns and will be reviewed regularly by the Council.
- **Local Performance Indicators** – The Council's Cohesion Service will continue to monitor local indicators relating to homelessness. Whilst these figures are not reported to central Government they will continue to be used to give a detailed picture of service delivery and improvements needed.

## Homelessness Strategy for the Borough of Telford and Wrekin 2013 - 2016

## 8. Homelessness Strategy action plan and performance indicators

Action	By when	Lead	Resources (within existing / to source)	Performance indicators (link to a performance framework)
<b>Aim 1: Prevent homelessness in Telford and Wrekin</b>				
<b>Priority action 1a: Provide a Single Referral and Access Point and Single Assessment Tool for all people who present themselves as homeless</b>				
Develop a Single Referral and Access Point	April 2014	Cohesion Services – T&WC (coordinate with partners)	Within existing	Number of all homelessness presentation presented
Develop a Single Assessment tool	April 2014	Cohesion Services – T&WC (coordinate with partners)	Within existing	Single assessment tool that identifies need and provides tailored support packages
Improve access to employment and training for homeless people	April 2014	Cohesion Services – T&WC (coordinate with partners)	Within existing	To be developed as part of the consultation
Seek to identify funding sources across a range of partnerships and emerging opportunities throughout the life of the strategy.	Ongoing	Homelessness Taskforce (T&WC and partners)	Within existing	Identify funding sources across a range of partnerships
Review the local partnership performance monitoring arrangements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify gaps in strategy information</li> <li>Set up appropriate mechanisms to capture and report this data in the future</li> <li>Develop a partnership performance management framework to enable a coordinated evaluation of <u>all</u> homelessness in Telford and Wrekin (both statutory and non statutory)</li> </ul>	April 2014	Homelessness Taskforce (T&WC and partners)	Within existing	Develop a performance mentoring framework for the Homelessness Task Force

## Homelessness Strategy for the Borough of Telford and Wrekin 2013 - 2016

Action	By when	Lead	Resources ( <i>within existing / to source</i> )	Performance indicators ( <i>link to a performance framework</i> )
Develop revised Council Housing Allocation Policy.	April 2014	Family & Cohesion Services, T&WC	Within existing	Ensure clear pathway and procedures back in to Social Housing
<b>Priority action 1b: Commission and monitor a range of support services for vulnerable groups</b>				
Map and scope the support services available to vulnerable groups	April 2014	All housing and support providers	Within existing	Monitored through the Task Force
Develop and implement briefings to front line staff and partners to raise awareness and understanding of the support services available and how to access them	ongoing	Homelessness Taskforce	Within existing	Monitored through the Task Force
Carry our refresher training to enable the Housing Options team to deliver mortgage rescue, debt advice and counselling to households facing financial difficulties.	ongoing	Cohesion Services, T&WC	Within existing	Performance framework
Improve coordination of service for older people experiencing homelessness	ongoing	Adult Services, (Older People Team) T&WC	Within existing	Monitored through the Task Force
Develop multi-agency services to help people with a learning disability	ongoing	Adult Services, (Disability Team) T&WC	Within existing	Monitored through the Task Force
Work in partnership to achieve targets around supporting all vulnerable households to live independently	ongoing	Homelessness Taskforce	Within existing	Monitored through the Task Force
Improve opportunities for service users to influence the services they receive	ongoing	Adult Commissioning Service, T&WC	Within existing	Monitored through the Task Force
<b>Aim 2: Have appropriate housing pathways, including advice and support for homeless households in Telford and Wrekin</b>				
<b>Priority Action 2a: Establish sustainable pathways for all homeless people from temporary accommodation into sustainable tenancies</b>				

## Homelessness Strategy for the Borough of Telford and Wrekin 2013 - 2016

Action	By when	Lead	Resources ( <i>within existing / to source</i> )	Performance indicators ( <i>link to a performance framework</i> )
<b>and discharge the Council's homelessness duty.</b>				
Enhance current prevention and housing support schemes to all council and partner housing related services	ongoing	Family & Cohesion, Commissioning Services T&WC	Within existing	Monitored through the Task Force
Review the business case for purchasing new premises using a combination of capital received from sales and additional funds so as to maximise the effectiveness of the portfolio	April 2014	Asset & Property Management, T&WC	To be reviewed	Monitored through the Task Force
Consider conversion of two of the existing 3 bed Council owned accommodation into house shares and or Houses of Multiple Occupation	April 2014	Asset & Property Management, T&WC	Within existing	Monitored through the Task Force
Review privately leased in properties and look to hand back those which are in poor condition or subject to uncooperative landlords	April 2014	Asset & Property Management, T&WC	Within existing	Monitored through the Task Force
Consider purchasing housing from the Wrekin Housing Trust, bringing these properties up to standard to deal with the rise in demand due to the Welfare Reforms.	April 2014	Asset & Property Management, T&WC	To be considered by A&P	Monitored through the Task Force
Carry out alterations to accommodation currently used for victims of domestic abuse to improve efficiency and enable the Council to meet its objectives in providing support to non statutory homeless persons, together with emergency facilities and will create additional one bed roomed accommodation in North Telford	April 2014	Asset & Property Management, T&WC	Within existing	Monitored through the Task Force
<b>Priority Action 2b: Enhance provision to accommodate young people</b>				
Develop a 16 unit supported accommodation and 6 units	2015	Bromford Housing	Government	Partnership steering

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Action	By when	Lead	Resources ( <i>within existing / to source</i> )	Performance indicators ( <i>link to a performance framework</i> )
of first stage move on accommodation for young people with complex needs		Association and STAY	funded	group
Develop a Young Persons Hub, where young people can go and discuss housing issues and get advice and assistance	2015	Bromford Housing Association and STAY	Partnership Resources	Partnership steering group
Develop a 12 unit accommodation for young people	2015	Sanctuary Housing Association	Partnership Resources	Partnership steering group
Develop additional units of temporary accommodation within the councils current facilities for young people	April 2014	Asset & Property Management, T&WC	Within existing	Monitored through the Task Force
Develop a programme of life skills activities to promote independence for young people	ongoing	Cohesion Services, T&WC	Within existing	Monitored through the Task Force
Develop work with the private sector to provide additional units of accommodation in response to the WM Framework for 16/17 year olds, and this increasing demand in relation to 16-25 year olds.	Ongoing	STAY	Partnership Resource	Partnership steering
<b>Priority Action 2c: Develop a social lettings model and Landlord Accreditation Scheme to help people into private rented sector tenancies</b>				
Create a Social Lettings Agency managed by the Council to provide affordable, good quality accommodation that meets statutory and non-statutory homelessness requirements	April 2014	Asset & Property Management, T&WC	Within existing	Monitored through the Task Force
Develop a Landlord Accreditation Scheme in consultation with partners and private landlords	April 2014	Asset & Property Management, T&WC/ Family and Cohesion Services, T&WC	Within existing	Monitored through the Task Force

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Action	By when	Lead	Resources ( <i>within existing / to source</i> )	Performance indicators ( <i>link to a performance framework</i> )
Set up a virtual advice point (one stop shop) for landlords to get help and advice. As part of this one stop shop we will:	April 2014	Asset & Property Management, T&WC/ Family & Cohesion Services, T&WC	Within existing	Monitored through the Task Force
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to work with landlords and tenants to reduce rent arrears in the Borough</li> </ul>	Ongoing	Tenancy Relations Service Family & Cohesion Services, T&WC	Within existing	Monitored through the Task Force
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to work with landlords and tenants to guide them through the possession process and ensure the correct legal framework is adhered to</li> </ul>	Ongoing	Tenancy Relations Service Family & Cohesion Services, T&WC	Within existing	Monitored through the Task Force
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to work with landlords and tenants guiding them through the process of claiming housing benefit, discretionary housing payments, overlap payments and safeguarding, ensuring sustainable tenancies in the borough</li> </ul>	Ongoing	Tenancy Relations Service Family & Cohesion Services, T&WC	Within existing	Monitored through the Task Force
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to support landlords when their property is abandoned, ensuring correct surrender allowing the property to be brought back into use</li> </ul>	Ongoing	Tenancy Relations Service Family & Cohesion Services, T&WC	Within existing	Monitored through the Task Force
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to support landlords to set up tenancies ensuring inventories, agreements and rent books are correct and appropriate records are kept</li> </ul>	Ongoing	Tenancy Relations Service Family & Cohesion Services, T&WC	Within existing	Monitored through the Task Force
Review the business case for converting the house in Dodmoor Grange into a House of Multiple Occupancy	April 2014	Asset & Property Management, T&WC	To be reviewed	Monitored through the Task Force
Develop a crash pad to accommodate 18 to 65 year olds into emergency accommodation	April 2014	Asset & Property Management, T&WC	Capital investment sourced	Monitored through the Task Force

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Action	By when	Lead	Resources (within existing / to source)	Performance indicators (link to a performance framework)
<b>Priority Action 2d: Adopt a No Second Night Out Model</b>				
Establish a 'first point' response for non-statutory homeless people to be accommodated.	Ongoing	Maninplace	Partnership funding	Monitored through the Task Force
Establish and implement an Offender Protocol which will support homeless offenders into accommodation	ongoing	Integrated Offender Management Steering Group	Partnership funding	IOM steering group
<b>Priority Action 2e: Work with Private Landlords to bring derelict properties back into use</b>				
Encourage owners of empty properties to bring their properties back into use and rented under the bond scheme or temporary accommodation	Ongoing	Home Improvement Agency	Within existing	Monitored through the Task Force
<b>Priority Action 2f: Work with local Registered Providers (RPs) (through the Council's Allocation Policy and Tenancy Strategy) to help local people to access and retain affordable housing and to make best use of the Borough's housing stock.</b>				
Develop Council Tenancy Strategy.	TBC	Development, Business & Housing, T&WC / Family & Cohesion service – T&WC	Within existing	Monitored through the Task Force
<b>Aim 3: Meet statutory duty to accommodate Gypsy and Travellers</b>				
<b>Priority Action 3a: Develop a strategic plan identify appropriate locations that meet the needs of the Gypsy Traveller community</b>				
Develop local policy to respond to national requirements to manage Gypsy and Traveller sites	July 2013	Development, Business and Housing – T&W Council / Family & Cohesion service – T&WC	Within existing	Monitored through the Task Force
Develop plans for an extension of Gypsy and Traveller site at Donnington to assist with bid for HCA funding.	End April 2013	Development, Business and Housing – T&W Council	Within existing	E.g. Reduction in the number of unlawful encampments

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Action	By when	Lead	Resources ( <i>within existing / to source</i> )	Performance indicators ( <i>link to a performance framework</i> )
Develop and submit bid to secure partnership funding to develop site.	End of April 2013	Asset & Property Management, T&WC	Funding secured, planning permission pending.	Monitor through the Homelessness Task Force.
Identify and procure land within the borough to meet interim needs of the Gypsy and Traveller community.	End Sept 2013	Asset & Property Management, T&WC	Land identified for a temporary tolerated transit site. Pending planning permission.	Monitor through the Homelessness Task Force.
Explore future Gypsy and Traveller site locations to meet the long term needs of this community.	2018	Asset & Property Management, T&WC	Need has been identified through the "Shaping Places Strategy".	Monitor through the Homelessness Task Force.
Work with the Gypsy and Traveller community to expand sites and facilities on land which they already own.	Ongoing	Asset & Property Management, T&WC	Funding secured, planning permission pending.	Monitor through the Homelessness Task Force.
<b>Priority Action 3b: Establish a programme of support to address health and wellbeing and educational needs of Gypsy Traveller community</b>				
Deliver European Funded project 'Springboard' to deliver current training, review and expand the programme to the Gypsy and Traveller Community.	End Dec 2013	Education and Skills – T&WC	Within existing	Monitor through the Homelessness Task Force.
Complete formal consultation with the Gypsy and Traveller community	End Sept 2013	Community Engagement, Equality and Action – T&WC	Within existing	Monitor through the Homelessness Task Force.

## Homelessness Strategy for the Borough of Telford and Wrekin 2013 - 2016

Action	By when	Lead	Resources (within existing / to source)	Performance indicators (link to a performance framework)
Use feedback from 2013 consultation exercise to inform future service provision	Ongoing	Family & Cohesion service – T&WC	TBC	Monitor through the Homelessness Task Force.
Raise awareness within the community regarding the health and well being services and facilities available within the borough	Ongoing	Gypsy & Traveller Officer	Within existing	Monitor through the Homelessness Task Force.
Work with the Gypsy and Traveller Community to encourage their participation in sport and leisure activities	Ongoing	Education and Skills – T&WC	Within existing	Monitor through the Homelessness Task Force.
<b>Priority Action 3c: Work with the wider community and the Gypsy Traveller community to improve the understanding of the different cultures and needs</b>				
Continue to raise public awareness of the needs and cultural lifestyles of the Gypsy and Traveller community	Ongoing	Gypsy & Traveller Officer	Within existing	Monitor through the Homelessness Task Force.
The Council will continue to be represented at the One Telford Safer Stronger Businesses meeting which is made up of local businesses. The challenges that both local businesses and the Gypsy Travellers face will be reviewed at this meeting to identify positive solutions for both. This is also an opportunity to raise awareness of the Gypsy and Traveller culture and traditions.	Ongoing	Family & Cohesion services – T&WC	Within existing	Monitor through the Homelessness Task Force.
Explore ways to encourage the Gypsy and Traveller community to participate in community wide events and discussions around local decision making.	Ongoing	Gypsy & Traveller Officer	Within existing	Monitor through the Homelessness Task Force.
Continue to offer support, advice and guidance to local	Ongoing	Gypsy & Traveller Officer	Within existing	Monitor through the

## Homelessness Strategy for the Borough of Telford and Wrekin 2013 - 2016

Action	By when	Lead	Resources ( <i>within existing / to source</i> )	Performance indicators ( <i>link to a performance framework</i> )
residents who raise any challenges that they may be facing whilst living in the same area.				Homelessness Task Force.
Deliver awareness raising session to community groups to improve the understanding of the different cultures and needs	Ongoing	Gypsy & Traveller Officer	Within existing	Monitor through the Homelessness Task Force.
Identify measures which demonstrate the prevention of anti-social behaviour and cohesion in the community and develop further work to respond to issues raised.	March 2014	Gypsy & Traveller Officer	Within existing	Monitor through the Homelessness Task Force.

## Homelessness Strategy for the Borough of Telford and Wrekin 2013 - 2016

### Appendix 1 – National Context Explained

The **Housing Act 1996** is the key legislation for homelessness and contains the legal provisions for statutory homelessness.

Since then the Government introduced the **Homelessness Act 2002**, and in March 2005, the Government published '**Sustainable Communities: settled homes; changing lives: a strategy for tackling homelessness**' which places emphasis on a the need for a proactive partnership approach to the preventing and reducing homelessness, reducing the number of households in temporary accommodation and ending the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for families with children.

**'Making Every Contact Count'** - The Government's homelessness prevention strategy was published on 16 August 2012. The key points of the strategy reflect these conclusions:

- The responsibility for homelessness prevention is widened to all local services
- An integrated approach should be taken at local level, with a commitment to making every contact with a vulnerable person count
- Commitments are made for five cross cutting priority areas including troubled children/adolescents, health, crime, skills/employment and specific social groups.
- Ten 'local challenges' are set for local authorities. These include using elements of the Localism Act to strengthen the approach to homelessness prevention.

In 2012, the Government also introduced the **Welfare Reform Bill** which sets out their approach to social and economic policy. Key changes in Housing Benefit policy and administration present significant implications for housing and homelessness:

#### **Universal Credit**

The Universal Credit is a new single payment for people looking for work or on a low income. It will cap the total amount of benefit that can be claimed and will restrict Housing Benefit entitlement for social housing tenants whose accommodation is larger than the Government deems them to need.

The introduction of Universal Credit will be rolled out nationally from October 2013 on a geographical basis, to be fully implemented by 2017.

Some claimants may find budgeting more of a challenge due to a change from weekly to monthly payments. It is also likely to impact on the Council, both directly as set out above and as a result of increased demand for other services from those suffering financial hardship.

#### **Housing Benefit Social Rented Sector Room Cap – 'bedroom tax'**

From 01 April 2013, the Government is introducing a national Housing Benefit Social Rented Sector room cap, commonly known as the 'bedroom tax'. This will mean a reduction in the amount of Government Housing Benefit for people of working age, who rent their homes from a Housing Association if they are considered to be living in a property that has more bedrooms than they and their family require.

If the customer receiving the benefit or their partner have reached the age to claim pension credit then they are exempt from this change.

**Homelessness Strategy for the Borough of Telford and Wrekin 2013 - 2016**

The Department for Work and Pensions has set criteria for determining the number of bedrooms that a family require. If the house has more bedrooms than the family require based on the criteria, then Housing Benefit will be reduced by:

- 14% if the person has one extra bedroom, or
- 25% if the person has two or more extra bedrooms.

Local Housing Associations have identified that approximately 47% of all their working age tenants will be affected by this cut in benefit, which equates to around 2,613 people in Telford and Wrekin.

2,136 households in the borough have one bedroom more than they require and will receive a 14% reduction in Housing Benefit, losing an average of £13 per week. 477 households have two or more bedrooms than they require and will receive a 25% reduction in Housing Benefit, losing an average of £24 per week.

1,463 households require one bed accommodation based on their family make-up i.e. single or couples with no dependants or non dependants. This just shows the high demand there will be for one bed accommodation. 55.99% of people affected by the bedroom cap in Telford and Wrekin require one bed properties. A small number of these will require extra bedroom for overnight carer or on medical grounds. 25 households are under occupying by 3 or more bedrooms.

**Council Tax Benefits**

On 01 April 2013, the Government are abolishing the national Council Tax Benefit Scheme which is administered by Local Authorities on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions. Instead, each Council has been tasked with designing its own local scheme and criteria for how it will award Council Tax reductions to customers who are financially vulnerable. This new scheme will be called Council Tax Support.

Councils will be given a ring-fenced budget from the Government from which to award Council Tax Support, which for Telford & Wrekin is approximately £3.1 million less than we would need to continue to support everyone at current levels.

The Government have stipulated that customers of pension age are protected from any loss in support and a national set of entitlement rules will remain in place for them. This means that the whole of the £3.1 million funding shortfall needs to be found by reductions in Council Tax support paid to the 10,742 customers of working age who currently receive this benefit in the borough.

Of these customers, 7957 currently receive full Council Tax Benefit and therefore pay no Council Tax at all. They will also see their entitlement reduce by around 21% and will have to start to pay a portion of their Council Tax from April 2013.

**Shared Room Rate**

In January 2012, the Government extended the shared room rate to single claimants aged under 35 on Housing Benefit in the private rented sector (previously under 25). These claimants are restricted to the rate for a single room in a shared house, rather than the rate for a self-contained one bedroom property.

**Homelessness Strategy for the Borough of Telford and Wrekin 2013 - 2016****Localism Act 2011**

This act changes the powers of local government and includes amendments to legislation relating to homelessness and housing.

**It enables Local Authorities to discharge homelessness duties with the offer of private rented sector accommodation.** Local Authorities must be satisfied with the affordability and condition the accommodation and household circumstances. Tenancies must be a minimum of 12 months. This amendment aims to prevent homeless people from waiting in temporary accommodation for an allocation of social housing.

**It enables Local Authorities to withdraw its services if a suitable offer is not accepted.** However, if an offer is accepted, the person/people will retain their 'priority need' for two years. This means that if for example, the person/people become unintentionally homeless within the two year period and have cause to represent themselves as homeless they will have a priority even if their circumstances have changed and they actually no longer have a priority need.

**New Flexible Tenancies have been introduced which enable social housing landlords to offer shorter tenancies (minimum of two years).** This means that at the end of the term the RSL is entitled to apply to the court for repossession. Before this amendment tenancies were not for a fixed term and possession could only be regained if the tenant broke the conditions of the tenancy. Most housing associations are supporting residents to manage and maintain their tenancies; including support with skills development and seeking employment. Local authorities have the ability to influence the overall approach of providers through their tenancy strategies.

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**Appendix 2 – Statutory homelessness: priority need homeless groups**

- Person with whom dependant children reside or might reasonably be expected to reside
- A Pregnant woman
- Homeless or threatened with homelessness as a result of an emergency such as fire, flood or other disaster
- Vulnerable as a result of old age, mental illness or handicap or physical disability, having served a custodial sentence, been a member of Her Majesty`s regular naval, military or air forces.
- A person aged 16 or 17 who is not a “relevant child” or a child in need to whom a local authority owes a duty under section 20 of the Children Act 1989
- A person under 21 who was (but is no longer) looked after, accommodated or fostered between the ages of 16 and 18.
- A person aged 21 or more who is vulnerable as a result of having been looked after, accommodated or fostered
- Aged 18 – 20 and vulnerable, having been looked after by Social Care
- Fleeing domestic Abuse from an associate/perpetrator

## Homelessness Strategy for the Borough of Telford and Wrekin 2013 - 2016

### Appendix 3 – Local voluntary sector housing and support providers

- The **Salvation Army KiP Project** provides the first response service to non-statutory homeless people. This includes Drop-in, outreach, tenancy support, signposting and information service. KiP now assist individuals beyond the previous age range of 26 to 65. Due to a recognition of the increasing need, they now offer the service to 18 to 65.
- **Maninplace** operate a social lettings agency to support and provide emergency and temporary accommodation for non statutory homeless who are aged 26 to 65.
  - The Night Inn is the point of access into this accommodation and provides immediate emergency accommodation (maximum of 10 day stay) reducing the need to use Bed and Breakfast.
  - Other accommodation caters for a variety of needs and ranges from specialist accommodation for the entrenched rough sleepers.
  - Provides ring fenced accommodation in line with the No Second Night Out concept.
- **Stay** is a registered charity that supports young homeless people and young families aged between 16 and 32 in a range of services in Telford and Wrekin.

#### Working with Single Homeless or Vulnerable Service Users

Since Stay was established by Telford Christian Council in 1990, our role has been to house and support young, vulnerable and homeless people and young families. Our work with this client group involves the provision of a range of accommodation types – Houses in Multiple Occupation, dispersed flats in the community and supported housing schemes. We also run a floating support service for young vulnerable people.

The ethos of Stay's support is one that places the young person at the centre of their support, working with them to help them take ownership of the issues that may have contributed to their homelessness and vulnerability.

Our approach to supporting young people aims to prepare them for transition into adulthood, working with them to develop the key skills required to live independently. Our work with young people begins at the very first contact with them. This helps us to understand their needs, where they are in their own personal development, and any pertinent issues that may impact on their progression. From then on, via thorough and personalised support planning; ongoing progress reviews; and regular, creative keyworking with dedicated and professional staff, the emphasis of our work is firmly placed in helping the young person from a position where things are done for them to one where they do things for themselves.

All of Stay's work is done in partnership with housing providers, statutory and voluntary agencies. Since 2009, Stay has also worked productively with the private rented sector to broaden our property base, from where we support young people who are homeless and vulnerable

## Homelessness Strategy for the Borough of Telford and Wrekin 2013 - 2016

- **LIFE Housing** provides shared accommodation and support to up to three young homeless women from the age of 16, who are either pregnant or have a child under the age of five. Support includes:
  - Access to LIFE skills training that will enable them to live successful independent lives with their children.
  - Floating support in the community enabling the client of sustaining their own tenancies
  - Early intervention work, supporting young families for up two years.
  
- **Wellington and District YMCA** provides accommodation and support for young homeless people. Support includes motivating and encouraging them to develop strategies to change lifestyles and improve their chances of stable tenancies.
  
- **Wellington and District YMCA** provide accommodation and support for young homeless people aged 16-25. Support includes motivating and encouraging clients to develop strategies in changing unacceptable or chaotic lifestyles and improve their chances of independent living.
  - YMCA success focuses on staff deploying a consistent approach with all clients regardless of their history or needs.
  - YMCAs warnings procedure is applied as a tool that teaches clients what is or is not acceptable behaviour. By showing the client how they can rectify their mistakes. Mistakes are seen as a learning curve that with the right support acts as a guide to help them through problems made on their journey into independent living
  - YMCA confronts all issues with a determination of real life solutions and consequences to actions.
  - Homeless people usually have complex issues, disgusted by the need to obtain stable accommodation. Some often present well on the surface and appear to have no needs at all. Our experience eradicates this myth and ensures that we are aware they exist by taking action immediately, during a 3-day induction. A client with complex and chaotic lifestyles can only be helped fully using other relevant agencies
  - YMCA operates because of well-established practises and working relationships with other agencies this enables us to sign post when the need arises. However, more often than not these agencies have waiting lists or the clients do not fit the full criteria for entry into a service.
  - YMCA work successfully with: Future Focus, Risq counselling, C.M.H.T, Substance misuse, NACRO, Nova training, TCAT and County Training, Stay, Maninplace, Kip, Housing providers, Telford & Wrekin Council, CAB and the Crisis Network
  - YMCA offer floating support when a client moves into independent accommodation. The support can continue up to 2 years, however, 6 weeks is often enough to help them establish their new tenancy. The support consists of, assisting clients understand their tenancy agreement their housing providers ideals, setting up utilities and assisting them to familiarise their surrounding in their chosen area
  
- **The Supporting People programme** provides housing related support to homeless households and those at risk of homelessness. This support is delivered to people in

**Homelessness Strategy for the Borough of Telford and Wrekin 2013 - 2016**

their own homes or is provided to them through accommodation based support schemes or Sheltered Housing schemes.

- **Registered Social Landlords: Wrekin Housing Trust, Bromford, Bournville and Severnside Housing** – provides social housing for local people in need of accommodation. This includes specialised support and supported accommodation for vulnerable groups.

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