

TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL**CUSTOMER, COMMUNITY & PARTNERSHIP SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 5th DECEMBER 2016****HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS****REPORT OF ASSISTANT DIRECTOR: COMMERCIAL SERVICES****1. Background**

The Council has a statutory duty to provide housing advice and guidance to all, prevent homelessness where possible and to provide help to homeless households who are eligible and in priority need.

2. Overview of current Homelessness Service**a) Statutory Homelessness**

The Council has a statutory duty to provide advice and guidance to all, prevent homelessness where possible and to provide help to homeless households who are eligible and in priority need as below:

- A person with whom dependent children reside or might reside or 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 disability. Having served a custodial sentence, been a member of Her Majesty's regular naval, military or armed forces.
- A person aged 16 or 17 who is not a "relevant child" (child in care) 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

If one or more of the criteria applies and the person has a local area connection to Telford, the local authority has a duty to provide temporary accommodation for households until they are able to move into sustainable accommodation.

b) Housing Advice

Housing Options First Point Advisor is available to see customers at Southwater Monday to Friday from 9am-5pm, where they offer:

- Face to face initial advice and guidance provided around housing options
- Complete applications for deposits for statutory and non-statutory clients
- Book appointments for more in depth housing and homelessness advice
- Referrals to KIP, Gateway and other housing provisions (see details below of partnership working arrangements)

c) Prevention

The Council takes a proactive approach to preventing homelessness in Telford and Wrekin 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.

Tools to support prevention of homelessness:

- Assisting people with a deposit to help secure privately rented accommodation through discretionary housing payments (DHP)
- Assisting people with hardship funding from housing benefit to pay off arrears
- Homeless prevention grant – assist with rent arrears, mediation tool to keep people at home short term i.e.: money towards food etc. Assist with additional costs such as fees for a property and rent in advance.
- Young people who have been living with family or friends and have been asked to leave may be offered mediation with a view to enabling them to return
- People who experience domestic violence are offered sanctuary measures, involving the installation of security measures within the home such as fire safe letter boxes, personal alarms and the property is gazateered with the Police.
- Signposting to debt advice (CAB-Citizens Advice Bureau)
- Signposting to resolve housing benefit problems, property disrepair, tenancy relations and adaptations
- Attending court to represent the person facing homelessness with negotiation skills
- Working with Registered Providers to find a solution to eviction
- Working with Registered providers to avoid rent arrears with those applicable to the “ bedroom tax”- this means where a bedroom or bedrooms are not being used and housing benefit will not pay full housing benefit.

d) Partnership working

- **THRIVE.** A support service delivered by STAY that offers support through the Thrive partnership, which varies depending on a customer’s needs. Their floating support service offers tailored support to meet the needs of the individual in their own home as well as out in the community whilst their accommodation based services offer accommodation combined with support. THRIVE have well established drop-in hubs around the Borough. These can be used by all and offer a service to meet the person’s immediate need. The hubs also act as a referral pathway through to our other support services.
- **KIP-** stands for KiP as in sleep, also **KiP I**nformation **P**roject
 - To be the first point of contact for homeless people in Telford whom the Local Authority deem not to be a priority under their statutory criteria
 - To help single homeless people in Telford find accommodation.
 - To beat the national target of ‘No Second Night Out’ by engaging with rough sleepers at the earliest opportunity.
 - To provide a quality support service, especially to rough sleepers, and provide a safe space at drop-in.
 - To ensure that individuals access the appropriate agencies.
 - To raise awareness of homelessness by highlighting and recording the numbers of people suffering from homelessness within Telford & Wrekin.

Maninplace- Management In Place, this was set up as an intensive housing management service to work with individuals to enable them to sustain accommodation and reduce the numbers reverting back to rough sleeping, also Maninplace took on the identity and commitment of ensuring that each man referred had a place to sleep, accessing private sector accommodation became difficult or impossible to achieve and social housing unachievable. So man in place, "Maninplace" was born. Maninplace now has 110 bed spaces and provides:

1. Night by Night Emergency accommodation (crash pad) for six people.
2. Temporary accommodation 62 bed space across several properties.
3. Social Housing 42 units (long term provision)

3. Housing Providers

a) Social Housing

Social housing in Telford and Wrekin is provided by 4 main providers:

Bournville Village Trust, Bromford Housing Group and Sanctuary Housing Association. To apply for properties with these providers visit the Homes Direct website; <https://www.homesdirect.org.uk/> and Wrekin Housing Trust. To apply for Wrekin Housing Trust properties visit their website; <https://www.wrekinhousingtrust.org.uk/>

b) Private Rented Housing

- Telford Home Finder- this website offers a range of properties for rent in Telford and Wrekin. All landlords and featured properties have been approved through a council run accreditation scheme <http://www.telfordhomefinder.co.uk/>
- **Nuplace** - Renting privately in Telford. Nuplace both build and manage the homes for rent, providing a well-designed home and a landlord service. <http://www.nuplace.co.uk/>

c) Sheltered and Extra Care Housing

There are providers that offer Extra Care Housing within Telford and Wrekin. Bromford, Bournville village Trust, Coverage Care and Sanctuary extra care are some of these. Each of these offers your own apartment which is rented directly from the registered social landlord. Care and support is provided by a care provider on site over 24 hours.

Woodlands Supported Housing

This new and innovative service brings together a partnership between Bromford, Stay, Telford College of Arts and Technology and Telford & Wrekin Council, working closely with other stakeholders and the local community.

The new housing at Woodlands View and Meadow Croft Court, Woodside, provides 22 apartments for young people aged 16 to 32 and opened at the end of April 2015. The scheme will provide a wraparound, 24-hour service based on site, providing a holistic approach to supporting young people to meet their aspirations in life and helping them to identify their own personal journey. Their web page is; <http://www.bromford.co.uk/news-hub/press-releases/2015/march/new-scheme-to-open-in-telford-for-young-people/>

The Gateway is managed by Bromford Housing Group and is a single access referral point for Short Term Supported Accommodation Services to help people with a need for accommodation and support. The Gateway helps them to gain the necessary skills to move on to independence.

4. Additional Support for Specific Vulnerable Groups

a) 16/17 year olds

Any young person aged 16/17 presenting as homeless will be offered mediation in the first instance to try to reconcile family and friend relationship breakdowns.

Where possible this enables the Housing Options Team time to work with the family to make appropriate referrals to the Gateway for a planned move into supported housing

If mediation is not appropriate or successful Housing Options work alongside Children's Social Services to complete a joint assessment of that young person's needs.

Dependant on the outcome of the assessment that young person may elect to go into Local Authority Care or if not Housing Options will provide temporary accommodation if there is not a vacancy identified through the Gateway that day.

b) Care Leavers 18+

All Care Leavers will be referred through to The Gateway prior to their 18th birthday to try prevent them becoming homeless.

The Council has a statutory duty towards Care Leavers aged 18+ under the homeless legislation. To avoid homeless presentations Housing and Social Services hold monthly meetings to discuss all care leavers before their 18th birthday. Each individual's accommodation needs are monitored and plans put in place accordingly.

c) Prison Releases

Housing Options have implemented a protocol with Local Prisons (Through the Gate) Through the Gate was Launched in July 2008 and with offices in north and south London, its workers can be the only safety net a released prisoner has to rely on. St Giles Trust charity works with offenders in prison and after their release. Resettlement teams within prison send notification to local authorities of offenders being released to Telford and Wrekin 28 days prior to the release date.

Housing Options, KIP, Maninplace and Probation/CRC-Community Rehabilitation Company have a weekly meeting set up to discuss all prison releases to ensure early identification can lead to a plan of accommodation and support on release

d) Managing Homelessness from Hospital Protocol

There is a protocol in place to ensure that anyone ready to be discharged from hospital that may be homeless has a timely housing assessment to avoid a delay in discharge and bed blocking.

The Protocol has been signed up to by these relevant agencies:

- Telford & Wrekin Council Housing Services
- Telford & Wrekin Council Social Services, Adults and Children
- Telford & Wrekin Council Public Protection Services
- Shropshire & South Staffs NHS Foundation Trust
- KIP Project. <http://www.thesalvationarmykipinformationproject.org/>

- Maninplace. <http://www.madeleyonthemap.co.uk/directory/listing/maninplace-support-for-non-statutory-homeless/>
- Telford and Wrekin Care Commissioning Group- Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital (SaTH)- The Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust
- Princess Royal and Royal Shrewsbury hospitals-(SaTH)-
- POhWER – independent advocacy. <https://www.pohwerreferrals.net/>

e) Emergency Duty Team (EDT)

EDT provides a number of functions across the Local Authority including homelessness out of hours.

Housing Options email EDT throughout the day notifying them of any relevant queries dealt with during the day. If they then later present out of hours EDT are aware of the situation and are able to respond accordingly.

Should EDT require emergency accommodation KIP/Maninplace have a number of bed spaces available for EDT to place people. As a last resort EDT will use B&B.

All out of hours contact is reported back to the Housing options Team to continue with the next working day.

5. Key data

<u>Key data</u>	<u>2015/16</u>	<u>Year to date</u>	<u>Projection 16/17</u>
Number homeless applications	206	106	190
Number of withdrawn applications	46	18	35
Number found intentionally homeless	8	6	15
Number found not in priority need	4	1	5
No found ineligible. This is for clients that have No Recourse to Public Funds or not Habitually Resident.	1	3	6
Number found not homeless	71	42	75
Number of priority need acceptances	76	46	80
Total nights usage of B&B	48	0	0

2015/2016

Telephone enquiries	3430
Cases closed as no further contact	1260
Cases closed at clients' request	377
Cases closed as all advice given	686
Cases closed at first point	1106

General information for 15/16

% general enquiries closed in 7 days	98%	BME groups	4
Average time to make a decision	25 working days, guideline is 33 working days	No people in B&B for more than 6 weeks(Government guideline)	0
16/17 yr. olds accepted as being in priority need	18	16/17 year olds in B&B	0
Cases where homelessness has been prevented	213	General enquiries closed at first contact	940
Number of households in temporary accommodation that the Council owns	13		

Main reason for homelessness 2015/16

Violent partner
Parents not willing to house
Non-violent breakdown
Termination of Assured Shorthold Tenancy (Most private tenants are given assured shorthold tenancies, usually for 6 or 12 months. Your deposit must be protected and you must be given at least 2 months' notice to leave)

6. Future Direction

Homelessness Strategy - The current Homelessness Strategy is due for renewal at the end of March 2017

Homelessness Reduction Bill – Government are currently pushing forward with the adoption of the Homelessness Reduction Bill. This Bill would push additional elements to preventing homelessness and change the timescale of working with priority homeless clients from the client being homeless within 28 days to if they are becoming homeless within 56 days.

Landlord Accreditation – following the launch of the landlord accreditation scheme in July 2014, we have worked closely with landlords and letting agents to not only improve the private rented sector but to also offer a platform to those in need of housing to have access to landlords and properties that have been inspected by the local authority. This has allowed us to set up direct tenancies with private landlords and letting agents with clients that may have contacted the housing and advice team and were either homeless or due to become homeless. Having consulted with landlords and letting agents, we are now proposing to make changes to the landlord accreditation to encourage more landlords to join. The proposed new scheme is set out in Appendix A.

Landlord Accreditation (Appendix A)

Landlord free membership

- Listed as an accredited landlord on the Telford Homefinder website (opportunity to opt out if desired).
- Use of Telford Home Finder, which is Telford & Wrekin Council's property portal (additional costs apply).
- When using Telford Home Finder, void properties inspected and advisory list of repairs given to landlord.
- Sign up to a code of conduct

Landlord paid membership - £100

- Includes all benefits of free membership.
- One free gas safety certificate per year.
- free smoke alarms per year (for the first 50 landlords)
- Discount to all inclusive tenant find service via Telford Home Finder to £250 + VAT.
- Discounted management fees for landlords with multiple properties.
- Quarterly newsletter with articles relevant to changes that affect landlords and their tenants.
- Regular training evenings or networking meetings (sessions would typically be 2 hours).
- Void properties inspected by Telford Home Finder to ensure they meet HHSRS standard, feedback given to landlord to ensure the standard is met if these are being let on Telford HomeFinder.
- For tenancies that are arranged by Telford Home Finder any Housing Benefit payments will be made directly to the landlord where possible.
- Access arranged to the Housing Benefit portal.
- Listed as a member of the landlord accreditation scheme on the Telford Home Finder website.
- Access to free Telford & Wrekin Council property maintenance on one property to carry out: up to £300 work of property maintenance service work to install additional security measures or safety precautions or works that are not to meet the HHSRS requirements but would improve the safety or security of the building for the tenants. The works will be linked to measure that will help with reducing anti social behaviour or raising standards of security in the private rented sector.
- Provide information/forms available to everyone online. For example, form 6a when a section 21 is required.
- 3 passes enabling you to use a commercial vehicle at the recycling center each year.
- Offer an unbranded tenancy agreement on request.
- Information sent to members regarding local forums and conferences.
- Reminder to landlords that membership is tax deductible.
- Identify a basic welcome pack that landlords can use to provide to tenants.
- * all landlords signed up to a code of conduct

Agent membership higher tier - £350

- * Advertise property with Telford Homefinder at no extra cost.
- * Access to Telford Homefinder's large tenant base of working and housing benefit tenants.
- * Houses inspected in line with HHSRS standard prior to tenant moving in with feedback.

- * Quarterly newsletter.
- * Tenant Relations Officer advice.
- * Help with deposits for tenants that qualify.
- * Housing benefit safeguarded where applicable.
- * Agents logo on Telford Homefinder website and can put accreditation logo on their own website
- * 3 x free gas safety certificates (agents can charge these back to their landlords)?
- * Free Smoke alarms (to the first 10 letting agents)
- * Answers on housing benefit queries without the long wait
- * Information on any legislative changes
- * Information on tenants.
- * All agents signed up to a code of conduct

Agent membership lower tier - £120

- * Advertise property with Telford Homefinder at no extra cost.
- * Access to Telford Homefinder's large tenant base of working and housing benefit tenants.
- * Houses inspected in line with HHSRS standard prior to tenant moving in with feedback.
- * Quarterly newsletter.
- * Tenant Relations Officer advice.
- * Help with deposits for tenants that qualify.
- * All agents signed up to a code of conduct