



Cheshire West & Chester Council

Review of Homelessness June 2019



Building futures, opening doors



Cheshire West
and Chester

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2. Cheshire West and Chester Council

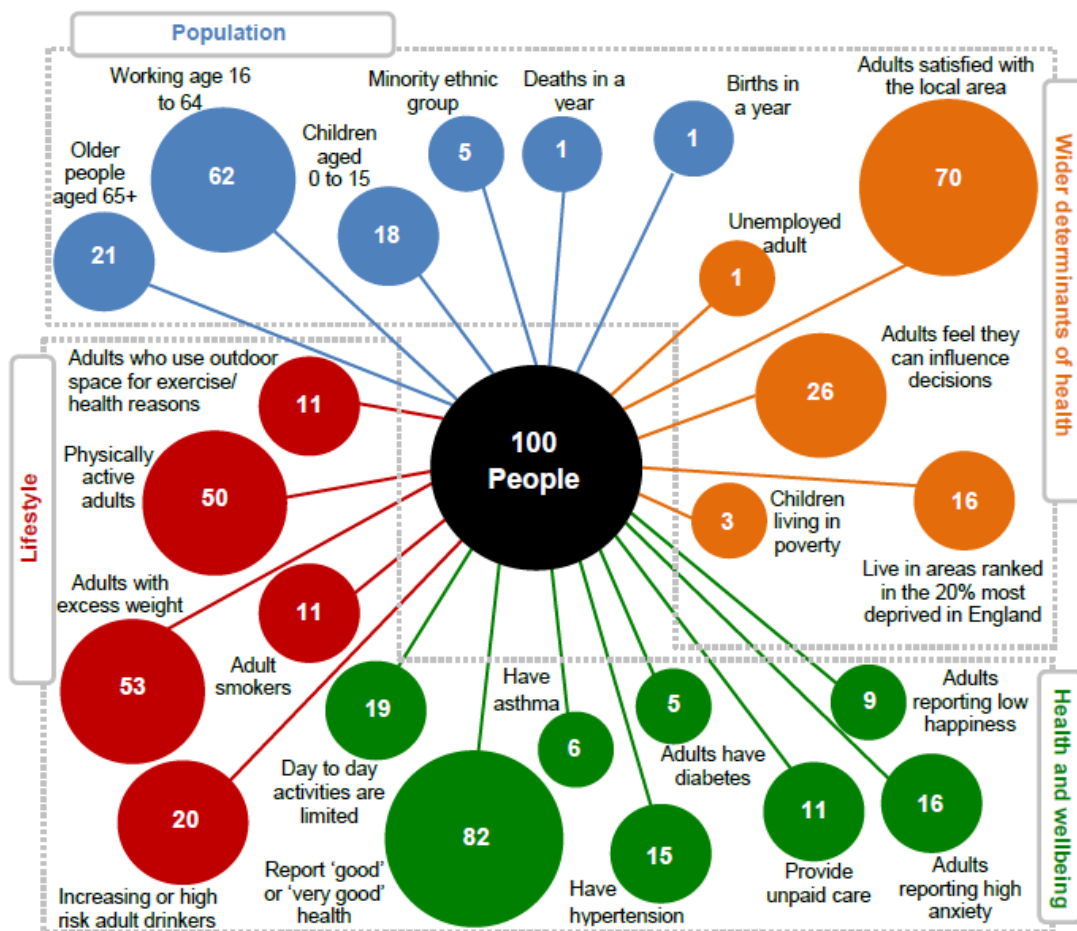
2.1. Introduction to the borough

Cheshire West and Chester Council was created in 2009 following a review of local government. The local authority covers approximately 350 square miles and is the fourth largest unitary authority in the North West. The borough includes the historic city of Chester and the towns of Ellesmere Port, Frodsham, Northwich and Winsford, as well as a patchwork of rural villages. Over 335,000 people live in Cheshire West and Chester and about a third live in rural areas.

2.2 Profile of Cheshire West and Chester

The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) is the first port of call for information about the borough. It is an evidence base that brings together intelligence about the health and wellbeing of our local residents, and wider social determinants, such as the local economy, deprivation and education. It uses a wide range of numerical and narrative data to build a comprehensive picture of need which helps us address health and social inequalities and improve the health and wellbeing of our residents.

The graphic below from the JSNA illustrates what the composition of Cheshire West and Chester would be like if it was a village of 100 people based on the information gathered from various datasets (produced January 2017).



To find out more about the people and places in our borough the JSNA is accessed online at www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/jsna

2.3 Local housing market trends and data

- There are 155,370 dwellings in Cheshire West and Chester and an estimated 145,000 households. 85% of dwellings are privately owned.
- Almost a third of households (30%) are single person households.
- The average property price in the borough at April 2018 is £201,166. This is lower than the average UK property price of £226,906.
- Owner occupation of those aged 16 to 34 years has seen a significant reduction and an increase for this age group renting in the private sector. By contrast, there has been an increase in owner occupation of those aged 35 to 49 years.
- The average monthly rent for a 'room' in the private rental market is £376 compared to £401 in England. As at September 2018, the private sector rent for a two-bed home in the borough was £150 per week, unchanged from the previous quarter; this equates to around £650 per calendar month or £7,800 per year.
- The average local authority rent in the borough was £77.67 per week, equating to around £337 per calendar month or £4,040 per year.
- At 18 April 2019 there were 8533 applicants registered on our housing waiting list, showing the extent of local demand for social rented housing.
- On 31 March 2019, there were approximately 2032 empty homes in the borough which had been empty for more than six months. The number of empty properties brought back into use in 2018/19 was 239.
- Over the seven years from 2010-2017, on average around 1,200 new homes a year were built, with 29% being affordable housing (358 units per annum).
- The Housing Delivery Programme is on track to provide up to 1,700 new homes on Council owned land, almost 50% of which will be affordable homes, by 2022.
- 900+ new homes on Council owned land are due to complete by November 2019, including 230 Council owned properties. 20 of these are shared ownership, all built and sold, 210 are affordable rent, 162 built and sold.
- 750 new homes using the innovative Housing Investment Model across 10 sites is about to commence, with the first new homes due in 2021.
- The borough's housing stock is in relatively good condition; 80% of the borough's private homes meet the decent homes standard, compared to 75% of all private dwellings in England. However, rates of disrepair are above the national average and are increasing, 13% of homes in the borough fail the repair requirement of the Decent Homes Standard compared to 5.5%.
- 22% of all private sector households (26,200 households) are classed as vulnerable households and a quarter of vulnerable households (7,300 households) live in non-decent homes.
- Highest levels of non-decency are in rural wards, pre 1919 housing stock, converted flats, and the private rented sector.
- Earnings data published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) show that the current median gross full-time annual income for an individual living in the borough is £29,772, which is around £2,480 per calendar month or £573 per week.

2.4 Key messages from the borough profile

The current population of Cheshire West and Chester is 335,700. This is forecast to increase by about 10% to 367,000 by 2035. Older age groups will see the biggest increase, with the number of residents aged 65 plus expected to increase by 28%, and the numbers of people aged 85 and over forecast to more than double.

Quality of life is generally good for many people across the Borough, with lower levels of deprivation, higher incomes and generally good health. However, there are pockets of significant disadvantage, where residents experience poorer health outcomes, living conditions, educational attainment and economic prospects.

3. The Homelessness Review

3.1 What is a homelessness review?

The Homelessness Act 2002 requires every local authority to carry out a review of homelessness in their district every 5 years and to use the findings to publish a homelessness strategy, in consultation with other local statutory and voluntary organisations.

By law a homelessness review must consider the following:-

- a. Current and likely future levels of homelessness
- b. The activities carried out for preventing homelessness, securing accommodation and providing support
- c. The resources available for carrying out the above activities

3.2 The aims of a homelessness review

Data and intelligence can be powerful, giving us the insight to understand our communities. Decisions based on sound evidence ensure that services and resources are targeted in the right places to the right people.

A homelessness review provides an assessment of the levels and patterns of homelessness as well as identifying any gaps in knowledge and services. The information gathered in the review provides an evidence base which will help identify key priorities for tackling homelessness in Cheshire West and Chester. These will be carried forward to formulate a new homelessness strategy for the borough from 2020 onwards.

3.3 The review process

This homelessness review has been produced by Cheshire West and Chester Council as part of its statutory duty, but the Council has worked closely with and consulted many organisations, charities and voluntary groups, making it a multi-agency document. The information and evidence gathered for the review has come from a wide range of sources including:

- Consultation feedback from stakeholders, service users and the general public
- Council records and statistics
- Data from Forfutures and other organisations

When analysed alongside demographic data the information gathered for the review helps identify gaps in provision, unmet need, future trends and key areas for action. This will inform the development of the new homelessness strategy which will be drafted for consultation in the summer.

3.4 The Homeless Reduction Act 2017

The Homeless Reduction Act commenced in April 2018 and has been the biggest change to homeless legislation in decades. It builds on the existing provisions of Part 7 of the 1996 Housing Act (as amended by Homelessness Act 2002), and extends the Councils duties to those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. The new law has a focus on prevention. The key changes brought about by the Act include:

- an extension of the period of 'threatened with homelessness' from 28 days to 56 days (giving more time to prevent homelessness)

- duties to prevent homelessness and relieve homelessness (where prevention has not been successful) for all eligible households, regardless of priority need, intentionality and (local connection).
- duty to issue a personalised plan for each eligible applicant
- duty imposed on certain public bodies to notify the Council if someone they are dealing with is homeless or threatened with homelessness

An essential part of this review is to consider the impact of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 on the levels of homeless presentations to the Council, subsequent casework, what service gaps this may create, and how homelessness services may need to change and adapt to meet these new duties one year on.

3.5. Measuring homelessness

By law a homelessness review must consider current and likely future levels of homelessness.

When we hear the term homeless we often think of people sleeping on the street, which is the most visible form of homelessness, however all forms of homelessness will be considered as part of the review including statutory, street and hidden homelessness. To develop a true picture of homelessness the following will be analysed:

1. Statutory homelessness
 - a) The number of households eligible for assistance from the Council that are either already homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days
 - b) Of those how many were owed a homeless prevention duty for 56 days or a homeless relief duty for 56 days (some households will be owed both duties)
 - c) The number of households placed in temporary accommodation
 - d) Where homelessness was not prevented or relieved the number of households that were made a main duty decision on the final duties owed
2. Prevention and relief activities outside the Homeless Reduction Act 17
3. The number of people sleeping rough
4. An estimate of the number of hidden homeless (people not recorded in official statistics).

4. Statutory homelessness

4.1 The number of households eligible for assistance from the Council that are either already homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days

The Council's Housing Options team are the first point of contact for anyone that needs housing advice or homelessness assistance.

Between April 2018 and March 2019 Housing Options opened 2973 cases for eligible households (of one or more people) approaching the Council for housing advice. A person is eligible for assistance from the Council when they have a right to enter and remain in the UK without any immigration restriction.

The table below shows that of those 2973 cases opened, 1049 were provided with advice only as they were not threatened with homelessness within 56 days. The remaining 1924 cases were threatened with homelessness within 56 days and homeless applications were opened.

Cases opened for households approaching the Council for housing advice			
Month	Advice cases only (not homeless or threatened with homelessness in 56 days)	New homeless applications opened (homeless or threatened with homelessness in 56 days)	Total cases opened during month (advice and homeless)
April	50	242	292
May	34	178	212
June	21	213	234
July	65	211	276
Aug	85	129	214
Sept	81	132	213
Oct	111	178	289
Nov	111	144	255
Dec	95	84	179
Jan	146	152	298
Feb	128	136	264
March	122	125	247
TOTAL	1049	1924	2973

4.2 The number of households that are owed a homeless prevention duty

It is important to measure prevention because without prevention activities the picture of homelessness would be a lot worse.

The HRA17 extends the Council's duties to prevent homelessness for all eligible households, regardless of priority need, intentionality and local connection. The number of people assisted under the prevention duty helps us to measure current levels of homelessness for those households that approach the Council as threatened with homelessness.

Housing Options work closely with anyone threatened with homelessness within 56 days to either enable them to remain in their home or assist them with a move into suitable accommodation. They do this by offering a range of housing options and

support. Advice is offered regardless of circumstances and is tailored towards the individual needs of the client.

An analysis of 12 months data between 1/5/18 and 31/4/19 shows that out of 1847 homeless cases opened 1121 were assessed as threatened with homelessness and owed a prevention duty. Of these 58% were households without children (single people or couples).

Cases assessed as either threatened with homelessness in 56 days, or already homeless, May 18 to April 19.	Households without dependent children	Households with dependent children	All households
Assessment of circumstances and needs	1256 (68%)	591 (32%)	1847
Threatened with homelessness and a prevention duty owed	647 (58%)	474 (42%)	1121
Already homeless and a relief duty owed	609 (84%)	117 (16%)	726

A further analysis of the 12 months data can show the cases split by prevention activities and positive outcomes. The prevention duty ended for 923 households. Of those 448 (48%) were recorded as positive outcomes where Housing Options were actively involved in preventing homelessness. The activities used to prevent homelessness are listed below. Only cases where the duty has ended have been used:

Cases where the prevention duty has ended and what was the main prevention activity undertaken for the 12 months May 18 to April 19 (for cases where the prevention duty was not successful the main activity is still recorded).

Prevention Activity (method)	Prevention Duty Owed			Positive Prevention Outcome		
	Households without dependent children	Households with dependent children	All cases prevention duty owed	Households without dependent children	Households with dependent children	All cases prevented
Accommodation secured by housing options service	183	155	338	77	100	177
Debt advice	4	5	9	2	2	4
Discretionary Housing Payment to reduce shortfall	3	6	9	1	4	5
Financial payments to reduce rent service charge or mortgage arrears	1	5	6	1	4	5
Financial payments used for other purposes (not arrears or to secure new accommodation)	2	1	3	1	0	1
Helped to secure accommodation found by applicant, with financial	75	48	123	22	23	45

payment						
Helped to secure accommodation found by applicant, without financial payment	100	54	154	69	37	106
Housing related support to sustain accommodation	18	30	48	7	12	19
Negotiation/mediation work to secure return to family or friend	37	23	60	21	14	35
Negotiation, mediation or advocacy work to prevent eviction or repossession	21	31	52	14	18	32
No activity but advice and information provided	60	32	92	3	2	5
Resolved benefit problems	1	1	2	1	1	2
Sanctuary or other security measures to home	1	0	1	0	0	0
Supported housing provided	21	5	26	10	2	12
Total	527	396	923	229	219	448

Almost 40% of positive outcomes are achieved when Housing Options secure accommodation such as social housing. 24% of positive outcomes are achieved when a bond is provided in the private rented sector. The data also shows the areas where we are not achieving many outcomes such as providing debt advice and Discretionary Housing Payments or DHP.

The data shows that the number of positive outcomes for prevention in 2018/19 is much lower than those recorded in previous years. The main reason is the change in the definition of prevention for the purposes of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and with that, changes to the criteria for data to be collected. There will be some cases during the 12 months that are still being prevented but the duty will not end and therefore be recorded on Locata for a number of weeks.

From April 2018, only cases dealt with by Housing Options and recorded on the Locata system are included in the prevention figure. Previously work done by other teams within the local authority or commissioned by the local authority would also be included such as the award of DHP. Of the 2116 households that were prevented from becoming homeless during 2017/18 the Housing Options Team prevented 1052, leaving 1064 cases that were prevented by other teams. This change is apparent in the figures we now submit to the MHCLG for prevention but it is important to note that other teams and commissioned services continue to prevent homelessness, but this activity is not included in the data (unless Housing Options have opened a case). During 2018/19 the Housing Options team spent £14,000 on prevention activity such as rent in advance, rent shortfalls, deposits, storage costs and rent arrears, enabling some households to remain in their accommodation or move elsewhere without having to go into temporary accommodation. They also provided 83 bond guarantees to assist people into private rented accommodation. This is where the Council provides a guarantee in place of a cash deposit, which covers damage or rent arrears up to the maximum value of the bond which is the equivalent of one month's rent but no more than the current level of LHA entitlement.

Without prevention work homelessness would undoubtedly be higher but there are limitations on how much prevention the team can do. Prevention outcomes rely on the prevention tools available to the team. The options available to prevent homelessness can be limited for some customers due to affordability and supply and demand factors, in particular a shortage of one bedroom flats in the social and private rented sector. In addition factors such as a history of anti-social behaviour, rent arrears or a need for specific requirements in terms of location or property type reduce the housing options further.

The number of single people approaching the service has increased dramatically particularly those with high support needs and the availability of suitable supported housing for this group is limited. Move-on from supported accommodation can also be slow which results in a lack of available beds, which also increases pressure on the statutory service.

The HRA17 has undoubtedly led to more casework which takes more staff time. With a focus on prevention going forward it should be possible to increase the number of positive outcomes. Staff are now familiar with the legislation, the ICT system and more staff have been trained and recruited. Any increase in prevention will influence homelessness figures and the numbers in temporary accommodation and bed and breakfast.

4.3 The number of households that are owed a homeless relief duty (where homelessness cannot be prevented)

The HRA17 extends the Councils duties to those who are homeless including a new duty to relieve homelessness for all eligible households, regardless of priority need, intentionality and local connection.

Relief is where homelessness cannot be prevented but alternative accommodation is secured for the household. The number of people assisted under the relief duty helps us to measure current levels of homelessness for those households that approach the Council as homeless.

An analysis of 12 months data between 1/5/18 and 31/4/19 shows that out of 1847 cases 726 were assessed as already homeless and owed a relief duty. Of these 84% were households without children (so single people or couples generally).

Cases assessed as either threatened with homelessness in 56 days, or already homeless, May 18 to April 19.	Households without dependent children	Households with dependent children	All households
Assessment of circumstances and needs	1256 (68%)	591 (32%)	1847
Threatened with homelessness and a prevention duty owed	647 (58%)	474 (42%)	1121
Already homeless and a relief duty owed	609 (84%)	117 (16%)	726

During the same 12 months the relief duty ended for 562 households. Of those 154 (27%) were recorded as positive outcomes where Housing Options were actively involved in finding accommodation to relieve homelessness. The activities used to relieve homelessness are listed below:

Cases where the relief duty has ended and what was the main relief activity undertaken (for cases where the relief duty was not successful the main activity is still recorded).

Relief Activity (method)	Relief Duty Ended			Positive Relief Outcome		
	Households without dependent children	Households with dependent children	All	Households without dependent children	Households with dependent children	All
Accommodation secured by housing options service	118	44	162	32	24	56
Helped to secure accommodation found by applicant, with financial payment	95	11	106	14	2	16
Helped to secure accommodation found by applicant, without financial payment	61	12	73	26	7	33
Negotiation/mediation work to secure return to family or friend	22	6	28	5	2	7
No activity but advice and information provided	90	5	95	0	1	1
Sanctuary or other security measures to home	0	0	0	0	0	0
Supported housing provided	46	3	49	22	1	23
Other activity through which accommodation secured	32	17	49	10	8	18
Total	464	98	562	109	45	154

The figures show that the majority of households with a positive outcome (36%) are secured accommodation by the Housing Options team (usually social housing) followed by 21% that are helped to secure accommodation found by the applicant (usually a bond for private rented housing).

The figure for positive outcomes may appear low compared to the number of households owed a relief duty. What it highlights is that for 73% of the cases the Housing Options team have tried to secure accommodation in the social, private or supported sectors, or tried to negotiate a return to the family home, but this activity has not been enough to relieve homelessness.

There are other reasons why homelessness is not relieved in the data. The relief duty lasts 56 days which may not have lapsed. Also, the customer has agreed to work with Housing Options through a Personalised Housing Plan but this person centred approach does not work for everyone and the customer may not adhere to the plan. In addition Housing Options may lose contact with someone or they may withdraw their application.

With cases that are still open and continuing to be assessed the relief duty will end after 56 days and if the customer is still homeless they will receive a main duty decision on the final duties owed.

4.4 Where homelessness was not prevented or relieved, the number of households that were owed a main duty decision

Once the relief duty ends after 56 days and a household is still homeless they will receive a main duty decision on the final duties owed to them by the Council under Part 7 of the 1996 Housing Act (as amended by the 2002 Homelessness Act).

The number of people assisted under the Part 7 duty helps us to measure current levels of homelessness for those households that have approached the Council to make a homeless application.

The table below shows that there were 293 decisions from homeless applications under Part 7 during 2018/19 which is below average compared to the previous four years and shows that the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 is making some impact as fewer households progress to this stage of the assessment process.

Decision	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	Post HRA17 2018/19
Accepted as homeless, in priority need, and unintentionally homeless	90	84	99 (33%)	105 (30%)	92 (31%)
Homeless but not in priority need	22	34	24 (8%)	41 (12%)	113 (39%)
Homeless, in priority need but intentionally homeless	74	49	52 (17%)	61 (17%)	52 (18%)
Not homeless	134	88	117 (39%)	137 (39%)	26 (9%)
Not eligible for assistance (due to immigration status)	9	10	5 (2%)	6 (2%)	2 (0.7%)
Lost contact prior to assessment					8
TOTAL	329	265	297	350	293

The breakdown of decisions shows that only 92 households (31%) were accepted and owed the full housing duty under the legislation. This is similar to previous years. Other households were homeless but were either not in a priority group (39%) or intentionally homeless (18%). The number of cases considered to be not homeless has dramatically reduced to 9% of outcomes which does reflect the impact of the HRA17 and the focus on prevention.

The number of outcomes of no priority need is high compared to previous years. This shows that more single people are applying as homeless but not considered vulnerable under the legislation.

The household breakdown of those cases accepted is shown below with comparisons with the previous four years of P1E submissions (homelessness statistical return prior to HRA17). It clearly shows that the number of single people being owed the final duty is much higher. 55% in 2018/19 compared to 35% in 2017/18 or 34% in 2016/17.

P1E households accepted as homeless showing household type					HRA17
Household Type	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Households with children	11	33	53	61	37
Single people	40	48	34	37	51
Other households	7	3	12	7	4

TOTAL	90	84	99	105	92
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The main reasons for homelessness of those cases accepted as homeless and owed a main duty are listed below. Further analysis of the data is required to establish why 'other' has been recorded for 19 cases. What the data does show is that the three main reasons for homelessness is the ending of an assured shorthold tenancy, families no longer able to accommodate and domestic abuse. These findings are similar to previous years when we submitted the P1E homelessness statistical return.

Accepted cases reason for homelessness 2018/19				
Main reason for loss of settled home	Single people	Couples	Households with children	Total
Domestic abuse	5	0	5	10
End of private rented - assured shorthold tenancy	4	2	12	18
End of private rented - not assured shorthold tenancy	4	0	0	4
End of social rented tenancy	3	0	0	3
Eviction from supported housing	4	0	0	4
Family no longer willing or able to accommodate	7	1	3	11
Fire or flood / other emergency	1	0	0	1
Friends no longer willing or able to accommodate	1	1	3	5
Mortgage repossession	1	0	1	2
Non-racially motivated violence or harassment	3	0	2	5
Other	13	0	6	19
Relationship with partner ended (non-violent breakdown)	2	0	3	5
Reason unknown	3	0	1	4
Property disrepair	0	0	1	1
Total	51	4	37	92

The reason for priority need of those 92 accepted cases are detailed below. This shows that 30 households are in priority need due to dependent children which over the past 5 years has usually accounted for 50% of accepted cases but in 2018/19 only accounts for 33%. The number of people considered vulnerable due to mental health issues is higher than previous years when it has usually accounted for 18-20% but in 2018/19 is has gone up to 26%.

Accepted cases priority need decision 2018/19				
Priority need decision	Single people	Couples	Households with children	Total
Household includes dependent children	0	0	30	30
Vulnerable as result of mental health problems	20	3	1	24
Vulnerable as result of physical disability / ill health	12	1	1	14
Vulnerable as fled home because of violence / threat of violence (domestic abuse)	7	0	2	9
Vulnerable as fled home because of violence / threat of violence (not domestic abuse)	4	0	1	5
Applicant is care leaver and aged 18 to 20 years	2	0	0	2
Vulnerable as a care leaver 21+	2	0	0	2

Household includes a pregnant woman	0	0	2	2
Former asylum seeker	1	0	0	1
Vulnerable as result of learning difficulty	1	0	0	1
Vulnerable as result of old age	1	0	0	1
Priority need not known	1	0	0	1
Total	51	4	37	92

4.5 The number of households placed in temporary accommodation

This section looks at the number of households that have been placed in temporary accommodation and bed and breakfast.

Accommodation provided to homeless households is generally referred to as temporary accommodation but the term interim accommodation is used for accommodation when the household is homeless and possibly in a priority group but the case is still being investigated. Interim accommodation is provided until a decision is made on a homeless application. If the Council accepts a final duty to accommodate then temporary accommodation is offered, which has to be suitable for the household's needs. If the household is not accepted any interim accommodation is withdrawn.

The Council currently provides 41 units of temporary accommodation. Support for people in temporary accommodation is provided by Forfutures as part of the homelessness support contract. The types and locations of TA are listed below:

Temporary accommodation units		
Block with self contained flats	Chester	13
Shared house	Chester	8
House with self-contained flats	Chester	5
Dispersed self-contained flats	Ellesmere Port	7
House with self-contained flats	Northwich	8
Total		41

The number of people in temporary accommodation and bed and breakfast gives us some insight into the levels of homelessness for those households that have approached the Council and are owed an accommodation duty. Accommodation is not provided unless Housing Options have confirmed homelessness.

At the end of April 2018, 56 households were in TA, 24 of which were in B&B (43%). During the year this rose to 75 households in September, 39 of which were in B&B (52%). At the end of March 2019 there were 88 households in TA, 52 of which were in B&B (59%).

Households in TA on last day of the month during 2018/19					
Month	B&B	Northwich	Chester	Ellesmere Port	TOTAL
April	24	6	20	6	56
May	31	4	23	5	63
June	25	4	25	5	59
July	36	7	24	3	70
August	40	7	21	4	72
Sept	39	8	24	4	75
Oct	51	8	26	5	90

Nov	50	6	26	7	89
Dec	43	5	27	6	81
Jan	57	6	24	5	92
Feb	51	6	22	3	82
March	52	6	23	7	88

Homelessness law stipulates that Councils must provide suitable temporary accommodation for households that meet the criteria. Regulations stipulate that bed and breakfast is never suitable for 16 or 17 year olds and only suitable for families for up to six weeks.

Due to demand and a shortage of temporary accommodation the Council uses bed and breakfast in a variety of locations in and outside the borough. 220 more households were placed in bed and breakfast during 2018/19 than the previous year. 75% of the households were single people age 18 or over whereas 20% were households with children. Last year the figures were 66% and 30%.

Single people with complex needs are difficult to place and bed and breakfast is often the only option currently available whilst their application is investigated. The tables below show the number of households placed in bed and breakfast every month and the split between single people and families. The previous year is included for a comparison (the figures do not include discretionary placements made during SWEP)

2018-19 Number of households placed in bed and breakfast					
Households are only counted once and included in the month they went into B&B only (excludes SWEP)					
MONTH	Single people		Households with dependent children	Other/ couples	TOTAL
	16/17	18+			
April	0	37	5	1	43
May	0	24	9	4	37
June	0	27	8	3	38
July	0	22	12	2	36
August	0	20	8	4	32
Sept	0	28	6	0	34
Oct	0	55	13	0	68
Nov	0	29	8	4	41
Dec	0	26	7	3	36
Jan	0	51	9	4	64
Feb	0	28	7	1	37
March	0	28	8	0	36
Total	0	375	100	26	501

2017-18 Number of households placed in bed and breakfast					
Households are only counted once and included in the month they went into B&B only (excludes SWEP)					
MONTH	Single people		Households with dependent children	Other/ couples	TOTAL
	16/17	18+			
April	0	8	3	0	11
May	0	13	6	1	20
June	0	22	12	1	35
July	0	12	6	1	19
August	0	24	9	1	34

Sept	0	19	4	3	26
Oct	0	16	7	0	23
Nov	0	10	8	1	19
Dec	0	9	5	1	15
Jan	0	17	8	0	25
Feb	0	15	7	0	22
March	0	21	9	2	32
Total	0	186	84	11	281

Further analysis of the 52 households in bed and breakfast at the end of March 2019 shows that 41 are single people who have connections across the borough. Of the 11 families most have one child and mainly require accommodation in Chester.

20 of the 52 households in bed and breakfast are also on the waiting list for supported accommodation.

Households in B&B at the end of March 2019	
Household makeup	Number of households
Single males	30
Single females	11
Couples	0
Families + 1 child	6
Families + 2 children	4
Families + 3 children or more	1
Total	52

The total number of households leaving bed and breakfast each month and the number of weeks in bed and breakfast is shown below. It shows that 606 households (single people, couples or families) left bed and breakfast during 2018/19. Some of these would have been first placed during 2017/18.

The use of bed and breakfast is extremely high compared to previous years. The HRA17 has had a big impact and the number of people placed under the relief duty is one of the reasons why bed and breakfast is being used a lot more. This duty did not exist in previous years and now applies to any homeless household irrespective of priority need.

2018/19 Month	Number of households	Number of days	Number of Weeks	Average number of weeks
April	54	582	83.14	1.54
May	43	632	90.29	2.10
June	46	704	100.57	2.19
July	43	624	89.14	2.07
Aug	41	1024	146.29	3.57
Sept	44	780	111.43	2.53
Oct	63	1198	171.14	2.72
Nov	57	1081	154.43	2.71
Dec	50	832	118.86	2.38
Jan	63	694	99.14	1.57
Feb	49	1528	218.29	4.45
March	53	1567	223.86	4.22

Total	606	11246	1606.57	2.65
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5. Rough sleeping

Rough sleeping is also known as street homelessness and applies to those people who sleep in the open air or buildings not designated for habitation. It is the most visible form of homelessness and the number of people sleeping on the streets of England has doubled over the last eight years (4,677 in 2018).

The number of rough sleepers in Cheshire West and Chester is measured each year by an official rough sleeper count, but we also have reliable data from our outreach services, and SWEP (Severe Weather Emergency Protocol).

5.1 Official Rough Sleeper Count

Every council is required to submit an official figure of numbers of rough sleepers found on one night to the MHCLG. In 2018 our figure was based on intelligence gathered by the forfutures outreach team, partner agencies including the Police, Community Safety Team, Housing Options, CCTV, voluntary and faith sectors, and local businesses. It included a headcount on the morning of 9 October 2019. The date had been agreed with other nearby local authorities in order to avoid the possibility of double counting. 17 rough sleepers were identified and verified which was one less than in 2017.

The table below shows the figures for England over the last eight year and some comparisons with our neighbouring authorities.

Local authority	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
England	1,768	2,181	2,309	2,414	2,744	3,569	4,134	4,751	4677
% change		23%	6%	5%	14%	30%	16%	+15%	-2%
Cheshire East	0	3	3	4	12	0	4	21	10
% change								+425%	-52%
Halton	0	0	0	2	1	1	3	4	5
% change								+33%	+25%
Cheshire West and Chester	2	4	3	0	5	5	7	18	17
% change								+157%	-5%
Warrington	7	11	7	11	5	5	5	4	21
% change								-20%	+425%

Of the 17 rough sleepers identified in Cheshire West and Chester, most were male over the age of 25.

Official Rough Sleeper Count 2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
Total number of rough sleepers	17	18	7	5	0
Female	4				
Male	12				
Not known / prefer not to disclose	1				
Age 18-25	1				
Over 25	15				

Not known / prefer not to disclose	1	
UK national	16	
Not known / prefer not to disclose	1	

5.2 Current cohort of rough sleepers known to outreach and other services

Outreach workers visit all locations where there is good reason to believe that people may be sleeping rough and respond to local intelligence on the whereabouts of rough sleepers. The team will try to locate them as soon as possible after the information is received. Referrals and intelligence will come from a number of sources:

• Rough Sleeper Hotline	• Churches and the faith sector
• Housing Options	• CCTV
• Cheshire Police	• Outside In (multi-agency group)
• ASB unit	• Voluntary groups including Soul Kitchen, SHARE
• Turning Point/WDP	• Emergency Duty Team
• CATH	• Forum Housing and other RPs

The number of rough sleepers identified by Outreach workers in May 2019 was 34. A breakdown of gender, age and other issues is shown below:

Rough sleepers identified in May 2019	
Total	34
Male	30
Female	4
Age under 18	0
18-29	13
30-39	10
40-49	6
50-59	4
60+	1
Alcohol issues	31
Drug Issues	30
Mental health issues	30
Ex-veterans	0
Ex-offenders	32

Many rough sleepers have mental health and substance misuse issues. The main drug issues identified in Chester are spice, speed, crack and heroin. Injecting drugs lead to abscesses and leg ulcers which require clinical treatment but those sleeping rough often miss appointments with GPs and specialist nurses.

5.3 SWEP (Severe Weather Emergency Protocol)

The MHCLG requires all local authorities to have a plan to accommodate rough sleepers during periods of severe cold weather.

Cheshire West and Chester Council will offer to accommodate anyone identified as rough sleeping when the weather forecast predicts a minimum 'feel like' temperature of zero degrees Celsius or lower on any day.

The SWEP period usually covers the months of November to March, however due to severe cold weather it was triggered from 26-30 October in 2018 as well 2-3 April, 10 April, and 12-14 April 2019. A new model of provision was not fully ready in October which meant 60 placements were made in bed and breakfast when SWEP was triggered 5 times.

In total SWEP was activated 45 times compared to 68 times during winter 2017/18. The table below shows some comparisons with 2017/18.

SWEP provision	SWEP 2018/19 (45 nights)	SWEP 2017/18 (68 nights)
Pop Up	358	Not available
Emergency beds	165	270
Bed and breakfast	142	601
Total placements	665	871
Number of different individuals using SWEP provision	137	125 using B&B (no other data)
Number of individuals who refused all SWEP provision	30	No data

The figures show that over the six months 167 individual rough sleepers were identified by Outreach during SWEP and 137 took up an offer of provision whilst 30 individuals refused an offer. On average 13 people were placed every SWEP night and 6 people refused. No individuals were turned away or refused a SWEP placement. Everyone that presented was made an offer based on their personal risk assessment whilst also considering Criminal Behavior Orders and exclusion zones.

The SWEP figures show that on average 19 people were sleeping rough each night which is higher than the official estimate but joint outreach carried out in June will help us review and update this estimate.

6. Hidden Homelessness

6.1 An estimate of the number of hidden homeless

Official homelessness figures may not be capturing the extent of homelessness. Many people who become homeless do not show up in official figures. This is known as hidden homelessness. This includes people who become homeless but find a temporary solution by staying with family members or friends, staying on floors or sofas, (sofa surfers) living in squats or other insecure accommodation. Research by the charity Crisis indicates that about 62% of single homeless people are hidden and may not show up in official figures. Women's homelessness is particularly under-reported and frequently linked to experiences of abuse. The National Audit Office estimates that nationally this could be tens of thousands of people, but the full extent is not known.

The HRA17, which gives new rights to single people, may be helping to reduce the number of hidden homeless. It is difficult to give a local figure on hidden homelessness but the housing register is a good place to start and provides an insight into the number of people who are sharing facilities or without access to basic facilities.

In May 2019 there were 9603 people registered for social housing. Of these:

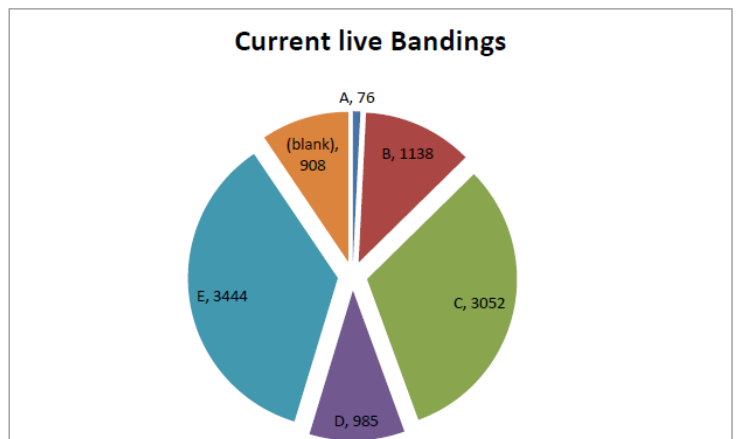
Band	Number of applications
Band A (urgent housing or medical need, homeless)	76
Band B (high housing need, risk of homelessness, overcrowded, no access to facilities, high medical need)	1138
Band C (medium housing need, sharing, overcrowded)	3052
Band D (no housing need age 55 or over)	985
Band E (no housing need age under 55)	3444
Pending	908
Total	9603

The housing register data below details the breakdown of housing circumstances for each applicant and shows that 1394 people are sharing and cannot afford to move and almost 600 people are overcrowded. Unfortunately not everyone in housing need registers for accommodation but looking at this data does indicate that there may be some people who are homeless but have found a temporary solution.

Row Labels	Count of UAI
55 or over	989
Armed forces discharged within 5 years	16
Armed forces who will be discharged	2
Assessed as ready to move-on	109
At risk of becoming homeless	390
Customers without access to basic facilities	8
Demolition order	4
Employment purposes	48
Exceptional need to move	23
Families in upper floor flats	54
Fostering/ adoption, additional bedrooms	1
High medical need	390
Need to move to a particular locality	254
No housing need (under 55 years)	3444
Not known	45
Overcrowded	68
Overcrowded and require 1 additional bedroom	518
Prevention of homelessness	250
PRS	146
Sharing and cannot afford to move	1394
Statutory homeless	20
Under-occupying	111
Under-occupying by 1 bedroom	256
Unsafe or insanitary housing conditions	8
Urgent medical need	15
Urgent need to move	121
Young people leaving care	11
(blank)	908
Grand Total	9603

Row Labels	Count of UAI
A	76
B	1138
C	3052
D	985
E	3444
(blank)	908
Grand Total	9603

Row Labels	Count of UAI
Live	8713
Online to be Validated	682
Pending	208
Grand Total	9603



7. Future levels of homelessness

7.1 Future levels of homelessness

Future levels of homelessness are difficult to predict. They are influenced by national trends and factors such as child poverty, labour and housing markets.

Recent statistics show that homelessness, rough sleeping and the number of households placed into temporary accommodation is on the increase. This trend has been mirrored in Cheshire West and Chester. Since the last homelessness review in 2014 the Government has maintained a focus on homelessness prevention while at the same time introducing a range of welfare reforms and annual reductions in government grants to local authorities. There are a number of challenges that need significant intervention to reduce homelessness:

1. Welfare reforms have included the introduction and extension of benefit caps, the roll out of Universal Credit and reduced local housing allowance rates for under 35s all of which impact not only on the ability of people to afford to remain in accommodation but also on the Council's abilities to assist them into new accommodation which is affordable to them. This is in spite of new duties to prevent homelessness under the HRA17.
2. A lack of affordable housing particularly for single people under 35, who are on low incomes or unemployed and impacted by the under 35 shared room rate.
3. Accessing the private rented sector is difficult when there is a tendency for private landlords to select tenants who are perceived to be low risk.
4. Poverty and low incomes are key barriers for accessing suitable housing and maintaining stable and financially sustainable tenancies. Access to employment is a key mechanism for preventing homelessness.
5. There is an ongoing undersupply of social housing (council and registered social landlords) and social housing providers can be reluctant to house people perceived to be high risk in terms of welfare dependency and their ability to maintain a tenancy without ongoing/intensive support.
6. The ongoing need for efficiencies and savings in local government and continued austerity does impact the support and advice services available locally for those who are vulnerable.
7. A number of the people presenting as homelessness have a mixture of complex needs such as substance misuse, mental health and offending. Some of these people are spending periods of time rough sleeping and begging, others are in and out of supported housing, prison and hospital and a number are precariously housed, often 'sofa surfing'. The challenge is encouraging people to engage in the services available and ensuring all partners are pulling together for the same aim.

In Cheshire West and Chester we can reduce homelessness levels in the borough by:

- Preventing homelessness
- Supporting people to keep them in the homes
- Providing the right amount of accommodation at the right time

8. Review of activities that contribute towards providing prevention, support and supported accommodation

8.1 Housing Options

The Council's Housing Options team is responsible for the statutory homelessness duties, including prevention and relief as detailed in section 4. The team operate a triage and case management service and are based in Ellesmere Port. The two teams are made up of 25.5 staff. The housing register is separate to Housing Options and is administered by a team of seven staff including a team leader. The role of this team is cover in more detail in section 9 on social housing. All three teams are managed by the West Cheshire Homes Manager and come under Strategic Housing and Commissioning.

8.2 Help in Emergencies for Local People (HELP) scheme

This is a discretionary scheme which is administered by the Council's Welfare Support and Visiting Team. An emergency payment can be considered to cover any short term needs arising because of an emergency. An award may be made for a specific period of time to meet immediate living expenses. Normally vouchers will be used instead of cash, which can be exchanged for various specific items, such as food. The HELP Scheme also offers resettlement payments for people who are leaving accommodation where they received substantial care or supervision. Examples of this type of accommodation are:

- care home
- hostel
- local authority care
- prison or detention centre

The Welfare Support and Visiting Team include visiting officers, employment mentors, and from July 2019 will have two debt workers, and two homelessness liaison officers.

8.3 Discretionary Housing Payments

The Council holds a discretionary funding pot for Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP). DHP is a benefit that pays towards the difference between the amount someone receives in Housing Benefit or Universal Credit and how much their rent is. It can also help towards housing costs, such as the costs of moving home. The amount spent on DHP in 2018/2019 was £725,475.00 and 962 applications were successful.

8.4 Forfutures homeless support service

The Council commissions one organisation, Forfutures, to provide housing related support. People are supported on a short term basis until they have gained the skills needed to maintain their own home. Referrals are made directly from Housing Options Forfutures help the Council improve outcomes for people either seeking accommodation, who are already accommodated, or who are living a street lifestyle.

People with short term needs are catered for with specific services such as:

- Advice and Information Hubs
- Visiting floating support service
- Mediation
- Services for young people
- Services for those with complex needs

- Low level mental health support
- Support for homeless applicants in temporary accommodation
- Street outreach service for rough sleepers
- Direct access beds with 24 hr support
- SWEPE delivery
- Daytime training and activities

Within the contract there are 512 units of support.

Service	Minimum number of units
Floating Support	164
16-25 years (includes support to TA)	127
Over 25 years (includes support to TA)	117
Homelessness	66
Direct access	18
Complex Needs	20
Total units of support	512

The contract requires forfutures to ensure a range of supported accommodation options are available to suit the needs of different customers. This includes private and social housing and different delivery models of hostel type provision to dispersed units. These units include a mix of fixed, short term accommodation where a customer when ready will move on into their own permanent accommodation and units which have been identified in partnership with the service user, where they can receive support and will remain their own home when the support is no longer required.

Forfutures currently manage 193 units of short term fixed accommodation providing both the support and some of the landlord functions. This includes 41 units of temporary accommodation. Support can range from on-site provision 24 hours a day to low level visiting support.

Landlord	Size and type	Client group	Number of units
Muir	13 self contained flats	TA	13
Muir	5 x 1 bed dispersed units	TA	5
Muir	6 x rooms shared house	Addiction recovery	6
Muir	13 rooms shared	Single Homeless	13
Muir	8 x shared house	TA	8
Home Group	12 rooms Shared facilities	Direct access	12
Sanctuary	6 X 1 bed	Single Homeless	6
Sanctuary	Flat 3 x shared rooms	Single Homeless	4
Sanctuary	Flat 2 x shared rooms	Single Homeless	2
NEW			4
			Chester 73
Riverside	12 x 1 bed flats	Single Homeless	13
CWAC	7 flats	TA	7

CWAC	5 x 2 bed shared + 2 x 1 bed flats	Single Homeless Couples	12
Private Landlord	2 x 4 bed shared houses + 1 x 5 bed shared house	Single homeless move on direct access	12
Private Landlord	13 x flats	Single homeless + 2 flats for couples	12
NEW			3
Ellesmere Port			59
Muir	30 beds hostel	Single Homeless + Direct access x 4	34
CWAC	8 self contained units	TA	8
NEW			4
Northwich			46
CWAC	2 x 2 bed shared house + 2 x 1 bed flats	Single Homeless/Couples	6
NEW			9
Winsford			15
Total support units			193

On 15 May 2019 there were 198 people on the waiting list for supported accommodation. This equates to 444 referrals as most people were on at least two or three waiting lists and some were on up to six waiting lists, depending on their support needs.

It is acknowledged that there is a shortage of supported accommodation demonstrated by the waiting lists for the units currently available, the number of households in bed and breakfast accommodation and the number of people sleeping rough. However increasing the range of supported accommodation is only part of the solution and needs to be progressed alongside work to increase homelessness prevention and the move-on options available to those in supported accommodation to improve throughput.

8.5 Rapid Rehousing Pathway for rough sleepers

In February 2019 the Council was awarded £470,000 to deliver a Rapid Rehousing Pathway. This funding has been used to set up and staff an Assessment Hub at Hamilton in Chester and employ three Navigator support staff. Hamilton House opened in April and is being delivered on behalf of the Council by Forfutures as part of the existing homeless support service contract. Any rough sleeper can be referred to Hamilton House where they can have access to shower and toilet facilities, food and drink, clean clothes and help and advice. Hamilton House is a triage-style assessment hub staffed by housing and support specialists 24 hours a day, seven days a week, who can engage with and assess the needs of each individual. A small number of rough sleepers are offered a short stay giving staff more time to look at the best support and accommodation for that individual. This hub is an integral part of the Council's structured pathway of housing and support and is supported by a number of charities, voluntary groups, faith groups, and local businesses.

Cheshire West and Chester Council have received a further £45,000 from the second round of the Government's Rapid Rehousing Pathway scheme. The purpose of the scheme is to pilot the option of providing landlords with a full housing management service and to identify the opportunity to deliver this service over the long-term.

8.6 Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) Funding for specialist staff

The Council has been successful in a bid to the MHCLG for specialist workers for rough sleepers. The grant of £185,000 will fund two specialist intensive Housing First support workers to cover 10 (additional) properties, one specialist substance misuse

worker and one specialist mental health worker. The new workers will be hosted by Forfutures, Westminster Drugs Project (WDP) and the Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (CWP). They should all be in post by autumn 2019.

8.7 Women's Housing Action Group (WHAG)

The Council commissions WHAG to provide a service for people who are experiencing domestic abuse. Women and men can be referred to short term accommodation in either a refuge or a dispersed property. Men will only be offered a place in a dispersed property. The refuge is staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Support workers will work with clients to look at their options and offer practical and emotional support for making and implementing decisions about the future (sorting out benefits, schools, GPs/health visitors, contacting legal services, liaising with housing departments). Resettlement support is also available for clients as they move on.

8.8 Cheshire Without Abuse (CWA)

Cheshire Without Abuse is a non-commissioned refuge service offering advice, support, information and accommodation to individuals and their families.

8.9 Cotswold House

Cotswold House is a supported housing project provided by Weaver Vale Housing Trust in Winsford. It provides private bedrooms with access to communal facilities for 9 women aged 16+ with 3 larger bedrooms that can house mum and one baby up to the age of 2. The objectives of Cotswold House are:

- To explore and support the development of the life and social skills needed to meet the requirements for taking on a tenancy of choice.
- To explore options for training, education or employment through referrals to local services.
- To offer a safe and non-judgemental environment to understand deeper issues and access the appropriate support. Where there are dependants, encourage engagement with services and local community groups.
- Through positive links within local community and charitable donations, offer a range of recreational opportunities that may be not affordable or accessible.
- To promote a healthy lifestyle, both physical and emotional.

Cotswold House is a female only service, embracing and celebrating the unique issues that women face.

8.10 Forum Housing

Forum Housing Association offer support and accommodation in Ellesmere Port for single people aged 16+ who are homeless and seeking independence. The Lock project offers eight self contained flats for single, young people aged 16 to 25 with staff on site 24 hours a day. The Quays project provides eight self contained flats for single, young people aged 18 + moving to the next stage of independence who may have spent a period of time in The Lock project or been referred from other providers. Forum Housing also provide nine houses situated within the community in easy reach of the town centre in Ellesmere Port and Little Sutton, these are house shares, offering more independent living in the community but with additional management being in place to offer support if required. All accommodation provided by Forum is furnished and ready to occupy once allocated to a suitable person.

8.11 Citizen's Advice Cheshire West

Citizen's Advice can provide advice on housing issues, rights and responsibilities, including advice on handling problems with your landlord and help to avoid losing your home. You can get advice from the Citizen's Advice website or locally at one of the four offices in Chester, Ellesmere Port, Northwich and Winsford.

8.12 Bridge Foyer

Bridge Foyer in Chester offers a safe environment that provides young people age 16-25 with accommodation and gives them the chance to access training and employment opportunities all under one roof. It consists of 28 self contained flats and 3 studio flats all with private bathroom and kitchen. The scheme also has a communal lounge, laundry and life skills room, virtual gym and landscaped gardens for residents. It is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and there are many events and activities to get involved with. Staff provide support around independent living, life skills, employment and move on. Residents not working or attending a college course must attend the in-house training programmes.

8.13 Chester Aid to the Homeless (CATH)

CATH is a Chester city centre charity for homeless people offering support, encouragement and a safety net to those in crisis. The Harold Tomlins Centre is open five mornings a week and provides support and assistance for those in crisis including shower and laundry facilities, free clothing store, medical services, benefit and accommodation information, advice and guidance, volunteering opportunities. CATH also has five properties across the city for accommodating homeless people.

8.14 St Werburgh's Medical Practise for the homeless

St Werburgh's Medical Practice for the Homeless in Chester is a general practice for homeless patients with two GPs, a mental health worker, counsellor, and a specialist nurse practitioner for the homeless. A high number of patients experience poor mental health and are alcohol and drug dependent and St Werburgh's help them to engage with primary medical and mental health services.

8.15 SWEP

For winter 2018/19 the Council worked with partners and local churches in Chester to provide a night shelter model developed by the charity Housing Justice. We asked churches to provide a room or hall to host a night shelter (with access to a kitchen and toilet facilities) one day a week for up to 12 people. Forfutures managed the access into the shelters and provided staff overnight. A large number of volunteers assisted with providing an evening meal, breakfast and hospitality. The following churches supported the project:

- Holy Trinity, Blacon
- Christ Church
- Wesley Church
- Northgate Church
- St Mary's Centre (CWAC building)

The Council funded the equipment (beds, sleeping bags, pillows) and staffing to run the shelters which moved each day to a different location (also referred to as a 'pop up' model). The new model provides a good quality, inclusive service and gives Forfutures and volunteers opportunity to fully engage with individuals, with an aim to get them into direct access and then supported accommodation throughout the

winter months. Funding was available from central government to cover most of the costs up to £26,000 however this has not been confirmed for future years.

The newly adopted 'pop up' model for 2018/19 would not have been possible without the support of a number of organisations and individuals. What developed was a positive joined up partnership approach to tackling rough sleeping in the area, led by Forfutures and key members of Outside In including: Soul Kitchen, CATH, SHARE, Cheshire Police, the Community Safety Team, Turning Point, Forum Housing, and lots of individuals from voluntary, faith and community sectors. SHARE provided a space for the partners to meet, and food at the venues, alongside volunteers from churches like Vineyard 53, The Wesley Centre, Christ Church and Northgate Church who also provided the 'hospitality' element.

8.17 Mid Cheshire and West Cheshire Foodbanks

Up to three-day emergency food supplies can be given to local people in crisis at the two local foodbanks. You can see what service they offer and how to contact them by accessing their website.

8.16 Outside In

Outside In is a partnership that meets monthly in Chester made up of voluntary, community and faith sector organisations, local businesses, CH1 BID, education institutions, health organisations, forfutures, Cheshire West and Chester Council and the police. The aim of the group is to work together to find solutions to homelessness. Outside In produced the attached leaflet which details where to go for help and support in Chester if you are homeless or supporting someone who is homeless. It includes information on services as well as support provided by voluntary, community and faith groups in the area.

Mental health & wellbeing support

St Werburgh's Medical Practice for the Homeless, 2A George Street, Chester CH1 3EQ.
Open Monday to Friday 8.30am – 5pm (closed 1pm – 2pm). Tel 01244 665834
GP/Nurse Practitioner available - also available at Harold Tomlins Centre (CATH) on a Tuesday and Friday morning 9.30am – 10.30am.

Chester Plus, No 1, The Mount, Boughton CH3 5UD. Peer support Breakfast Club every Monday 10am – 12pm. Open to over 18s. Tel 01244 343489
There are a number of other member activities each week, just get in touch to join up.

forfutures Allotment Project, Chester. Mondays from 2pm. Contact Danny Sadler 07712 691694 0151 355 0222 or email Upstream@forumhousing.co.uk

forfutures Football, Northgate Arena, Chester. Every Thursday 12pm – 1pm.
Contact Levi Lloyd 07712 691701

Fallen Angels Dance Theatre, Storyhouse, Hunter St. For dance, performance and creativity to support recovery from addiction and mental health conditions. Mondays 12pm – 2pm.
Tel Claire: 07801 478 548

Relaxation classes, Wesley Church, St. John St. Drop in sessions offering mindfulness based stress reduction. Wednesdays at 3pm – 4pm. Call 01244 323037

Guitar group (beginners), Fridays at 11am – 12pm. Call Zoe 07922 670521

Rethink wellbeing reading group, Chester Library at Storyhouse, Hunter St. Read, relax and enjoy short stories and poems. No home reading required. Fridays at 2pm.

Other useful contacts

Citizens Advice Bureau, Blaeocot Square, Upper Northgate Street.
For advice on problems with employment, benefits, housing and debt. Monday to Friday daytime.

Samaritans, Upper Northgate Street. For someone to talk to for any problems you might be dealing with, big or small. The branch is open 10am – 6pm Monday to Friday and 10am – 1pm on weekends.
The phone line operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Call 116 123.

Upstream Homeless Prevention Service in CWAC work with individuals to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping. Call 0151 355 0222 or email Upstream@forumhousing.co.uk

CWAC Sexual Health, 0300 247 0020

This booklet is for those who find themselves homeless in Chester and for those who want to support those who are homeless in Chester.

Each section has a list of numbers and people for you to contact either if you are homeless or supporting someone who is.

If in doubt please contact forfutures for overall direction and support.

forfutures
urban-homes.co.uk

Food

Clothes

Advice

Food

Clothes

Advice

Bringing people Outside In

Support and services for homeless people in Chester

Developed by Outside In – a partnership of voluntary, community and faith sector organisations, local businesses, CH1 BID, education institutions, health organisations, forfutures, the council and the police. We are working together to find solutions to homelessness in Chester.

OUTSIDE IN

While care has been taken to ensure that information contained in this leaflet is correct at the time of publication, changes in circumstances after the time of publication may impact on the accuracy of this information. Published May 2019

OUTSIDE IN

Places to go for help and support in Chester

Monday	9am – 11am	Harold Tomlins Centre (CATH), Grosvenor St. For practical support, food, medical services and help with accommodation. Benefits guidance and advice from DWP: 9.30am – 11am.
	10am – 3pm*	Chester Plus, 1 The Mount, Boughton. For mental health support *10am-3pm with the third Monday of each month opening 10am - 8pm.
	11am – 1pm	Share, Hamilton House Hub for food, clothes, advice and support.
	10am – 5pm	WDP, Aqua House, 51 Boughton, Chester, CH3 5AF. A confidential recovery and wellbeing service. Monday 10am-5pm. The drop in for adult service users, runs Monday to Friday between 1pm-3pm. Out-of-hours support is available 24/7 – 0300 303 4549

Tuesday	9am – 11am	Harold Tomlins Centre (CATH), Grosvenor St. For practical support, food, medical services and help with accommodation. St.Werburgh's satellite surgery, 9.30am – 10.30am. Women's wellbeing group, 11am – 1.30pm.
	11am – 1pm 6pm – 8pm	Share, Hamilton House Hub For food, clothes, advice and support.
	10am – 7pm	WDP, Aqua House, 51 Boughton, Chester, CH3 5AF. A confidential recovery and wellbeing service. Tuesday 10am-7pm. The drop in for adult service users, runs Monday to Friday between 1pm-3pm. Out-of-hours support is available 24/7 – 0300 303 4549

Wednesday	9am – 10am	Harold Tomlins Centre (CATH), Grosvenor St. For practical support, food, medical services and help with accommodation.
	11am – 1pm	Share, Hamilton House Hub For food, clothes, advice and support.
	1pm – 5pm	WDP, Aqua House, 51 Boughton, Chester, CH3 5AF. A confidential recovery and wellbeing service. Wednesday 1-5pm. The drop in for adult service users, runs Monday to Friday between 1pm-3pm. Out-of-hours support is available 24/7 – 0300 303 4549


Thursday	10am – 1pm	Chester City Mission, Hunter St. For a hot meal, clothes, showers, art and spiritual guidance. Benefits guidance and advice from DWP: 11am – 1pm.
	9am – 11am	Harold Tomlins Centre (CATH), Grosvenor St. For practical advice, food, medical services and help with accommodation.
	11am – 1pm 6pm – 8pm	Share, Hamilton House Hub for food, clothes, advice and support.
	10am – 5pm	WDP, Aqua House, 51 Boughton, Chester, CH3 5AF. A confidential recovery and wellbeing service. Thursday 10am-5pm. The drop in for adult service users, runs Monday to Friday between 1pm-3pm. Out-of-hours support is available 24/7 – 0300 303 4549

Friday	9am – 12noon	Harold Tomlins Centre (CATH), Grosvenor St. For practical support, food, medical services and help with accommodation, 9am – 11am. Drug counselling from WDP: 9.30am – 10.30am. St.Werburgh's Satellite Surgery between 9.30am – 10.30am. Dance, performance and creativity to support recovery from addiction and mental health conditions from Fallen Angels Dance Theatre, 11am – 12pm.
	11am – 1pm	Share, Hamilton House Hub for food, clothes, advice and support.
	1pm – 3pm	WDP, Aqua House, 51 Boughton, Chester, CH3 5AF. A confidential recovery and wellbeing service. Friday 1pm – 3pm. The drop in for adult service users, runs Monday to Friday between 1pm – 3pm. Out-of-hours support is available 24/7 – 0300 303 4549

Saturday	9am – 11am	Campbell Community Hall, Boughton. For hot food, clothes, showers and support.
	5pm – 7pm	Soul Kitchen at Campbell Community Hall, Boughton. For hot food, drinks, clothes, showers and support.

Sunday	3pm – 5pm	Christ Church, Gloucester St. For a drop-in café.
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For further help and advice



Cheshire West and Chester
CWAC Housing Options can help you if you are homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days.
 Tel: 0300 123 2442, Option 2 (Mon, Tue, Thur, Fri 9am – 5pm, Weds 1pm – 5pm)
 or email: housingoptions@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

for futures
 advice - home opportunities
for futures Advice and Information HUB, The Exchange, St John Street, Chester. For advice and information about your housing situation. Drop in and see us Monday to Friday between 10am – 4pm.
for futures HUB @ Chester Job Centre, Chantry Road, Chester. Drop in sessions offering advice and support every Tuesday 10am – 4pm.
 Additional support – call 0300 123 2442 for housing support, advice and information.

Hamilton House (Somewhere Safe to Stay HUB) Open 24/7.
 If you are homeless or worried about losing your home, visit Hamilton House / Share.

Share operate from Hamilton House Monday - Friday 11am – 1pm and from 6pm – 8pm on a Tuesday and a Thursday providing support, food and clothes.

9. Review of activities that contribute towards securing accommodation

9.1 Private sector accommodation

There are currently around 20,178 private rented properties in Cheshire West and Chester and demand for this tenure remains high.

Some landlords are unwilling to accommodate people who have experienced homelessness. This is due to a number of factors, including local housing allowance rates falling below average market rents, concerns about housing costs being paid directly to people claiming Universal Credit. People under the age of 35 have particular issues trying to secure private rented housing as do rough sleepers.

Housing Options can assist those who are homeless to access private rented accommodation and work with landlords to prevent homelessness. Cheshire West and Chester Council has a Private Landlord Service which coordinates a range of incentives to encourage private landlords to offer accommodation to homeless households. The Service provides advice and assistance to landlords and tenants including: grants; bond guarantee; free tenant finding service; a biannual landlord forum; landlord training opportunities and; tenancy sign up services. Over 310 landlords are signed up to the Private Landlord Service and 221 tenancies have been set up with 160 tenancies being sustained for 12 months or more.

Currently the Council is not making use of a power to bring the main homelessness duty to an end by making an offer of suitable private rented sector accommodation. Adopting the use of this power will increase the housing options available to a person in TA, meaning people will be able to move into settled accommodation more quickly. It also enables people to move to areas where social housing is in short supply and releases units of temporary accommodation more quickly increasing the availability of temporary accommodation and reducing the need to use bed and breakfast.

The Council also has a Landlord Accreditation Scheme which to date has accredited 450 landlords.

As a Council we also recognise that there are times when we need to provide an enforcement role particularly to those landlords who choose to house their tenants in sub-standard accommodation. Since the publication of the last Homelessness Strategy, 1,831 property inspections have been completed with 491 properties brought up to the decent homes standard. A Better Renting Campaign run jointly with West Cheshire Citizens Advice has helped to tackle poor housing conditions and housing management standards, supporting landlords and tenants.

A pilot housing management service will be introduced later in 2019 for private landlords to increase the housing options for rough sleepers. The service will be delivered by ForViva and cover everything from repairs and maintenance through to day to day tenancy management. During the pilot the long-term sustainability will be considered and expanding the service to include other client groups.

9.2 Social housing

Social housing in Cheshire West and Chester is advertised, allocated and let via a Choice Based Lettings (CBL) system known as West Cheshire Homes. There were over 2600 properties advertised through CBL during 2018/19 and over 80,000 bids received.

A high percentage of lettings go to those assessed as being in a statutory 'Reasonable Preference' housing need group (the Government's legal term to determine housing need). Since 1 April 2018, 1390 lettings have been made to

applicants in the statutory reasonable preference Bands A, B, and C with only 84 lettings to Band E applicants. This means 94% of general needs lettings are to applicants owed a statutory reasonable preference (this excludes lettings to Band D over 55 housing).

The number of households on the housing register for social housing was 9603 in May 2019. This is an increase of 186% since 2014. The table below shows the number of properties advertised over the last five years, the number of bids and the number of properties actually let - which in 2018/19 was 1228 (all property types).

Description	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017-18	2018/19
Housing register applications	2791	3109	4299	5913	7976
Properties advertised	1529	1661	2459	2624	2538
Bids received	33764	33778	61697	82946	81775
Number of lets	1162	980	1027	1175	1228

When the number of lets is then analysed against the number of people on the register we can see that demand for social housing can never be met by the supply advertised through choice based lettings.

Applicants on the register split by band and bedroom requirements June 2019					
Band	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	5 bed
A	60	23	11	2	1
B	637	382	121	39	18
C	2080	631	250	112	22
D	942	61	6	1	0
E	1348	1402	598	124	20
Totals	5067	2499	986	278	61

2018/19 Properties advertised by type	
Bungalow	478
Flat	1581
House	675
Maisonette	35
Other	13
Total	2543

The Council is reviewing the Housing Allocation Policy which is expected to go out for consultation in autumn 2019.

10. The resources available for tackling homelessness

10.1 Housing Options

The Council's statutory homelessness duties, including prevention and relief, are carried out by the Housing Options triage and case management teams based in Ellesmere Port. The two teams are made up of 25.5 staff. The housing register is separate to Housing Options and is administered by a team of seven staff including a team leader. All three teams are managed by the West Cheshire Homes Manager (and Deputy Manager) and come under Strategic Housing and Commissioning.

During 2018/19 the Council received government grants of £249,072, £4,259 and £26,412 to go towards homelessness costs. During 2018/19 there was additional income for the service from housing benefit recovery, Public Health, and CBL charges, of around £1million. The actual costs of the service (excluding the homeless support contract, detailed below) during 2018/19 were £1,769,000.

In 2019/20 the Council received a Flexible Homelessness Grant of £472,000 and a New Burdens Grant of £52,000 towards homelessness services.

10.2 Forfutures

On 1 April 2018, ForViva was appointed by the Council to deliver one holistic homeless support service across the borough over the next nine years.. The Homeless Support Service improves outcomes for people either seeking accommodation, who are already accommodated, or who are living a street lifestyle. Forfutures help the Council to deliver these outcomes through a range of ways, including advice hubs, mediation, floating support, and support to people in accommodation, including temporary accommodation. Forfutures also provide direct access emergency beds and outreach support for rough sleepers, services for young people and some customers with complex needs. The Council spent £2,356,892 on the Forfutures contract during 2018/19.

10.3 Rapid Rehousing Pathway funding

In February 2019 the Council was awarded £470,000 to deliver a Rapid Rehousing Pathway. This included the funding to set up and staff an Assessment Hub and employ three Navigator support staff. Hamilton House opened in April and is being delivered on behalf of the Council by Forfutures as part of the existing homeless support service contract. The Council received a further £45,000 from the second round of the Government's Rapid Rehousing Pathway scheme to provide landlords with a full housing management service. This funding will run until March 2021.

10.4 Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) Funding for specialist staff









The Council has been successful in a bid to the MHCLG for specialist workers for rough sleepers. The grant of £185,000 will fund two specialist intensive Housing First support workers to cover 10 (additional) properties, one specialist substance misuse worker and one specialist mental health worker. The new workers will be hosted by Forfutures, Westminster Drugs Project (WDP) and the Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (CWP). They should all be in post by autumn 2019.

11. Consultation findings

Consultation was carried out with service users, stakeholders and the general public to gather data on people's attitudes, opinions and experience of homelessness in Cheshire West and Chester. The consultation lasted 5 weeks from 24 May to 30 June 2019.








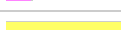






11.1 Homelessness Review Customer Survey

The homelessness review customer survey sought the views of those that had experienced homelessness. The survey was emailed to a distribution list of known clients who had accessed the Housing Options service in the past or who were currently in touch with the service. Other customers without email or who had not been through Housing Options were also able to access the survey through support workers or volunteers, or by completing a paper survey at a number of venues. Service users were also able to complete a postcard survey. In total, 186 responses were received, although not all respondents answered every question.

1. How would you describe your current situation? Please select all that apply				
			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Sleeping rough (homeless and sleeping in doorways, car parks etc.)		7.14%	13
2	Sofa surfing (staying temporarily with various friends and relatives)		26.92%	49
3	Living with friends or family		8.79%	16
4	Living in Council temporary accommodation or bed and breakfast		3.85%	7
5	Living in a hostel or supported housing		6.59%	12
6	Living in a refuge		1.65%	3
7	Previously homeless		34.07%	62
8	Other (specified below):		24.73%	45
			answered	182
			skipped	4
Other reasons given:				
Private rented (including students) 23 (12.6%)	Social housing tenant 9 (4.9%)	Shared ownership or owner occupier 3 (1.6%)	Refuge 1	
At risk of homelessness 3	Tent 1	Caravan 1		

Of those that completed the survey 34% had been homeless. Nearly 27% described their situation as sofa surfing (staying temporarily with various friends and relatives). Just over 12% were living in private rented accommodation and had been asked to leave by their landlord. Just over 7% of the customers completing the surveys described themselves as sleeping rough.

2. There are a number of things that can lead someone to becoming homeless. What led you to becoming homeless or needing advice on your housing situation? Please select all that apply

			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Eviction by parents		17.39%	32
2	Violence or abuse		22.83%	42
3	Eviction from social housing		4.89%	9
4	Leaving prison		2.72%	5
5	Leaving HM forces		1.63%	3
6	Eviction by relatives or friends		7.07%	13
7	Harassment		6.52%	12
8	Eviction by private landlord		26.09%	48
9	Discharge from hospital		1.63%	3
10	Relationship breakdown from partner		32.07%	59
11	Mortgage repossession		3.80%	7
12	Emergency, e.g. fire		1.09%	2
13	Leaving institution/care		2.17%	4
14	Other (specified below):		17.93%	33
			answered	184
			skipped	2

Other reasons given:

Moved to the area 1	Mental or physical health 6 (3.3%)	Landlord evicted 7 (3.8%)	Prison 1
Domestic abuse 1	Affordability 6 (3.3%)	Alcohol 1	Occupation Order 1
Unsuitable property 1	House unmanageable 1	Parent died 1	Did not feel safe there 1





Most people that completed the survey were homeless due to a relationship breakdown (32%) followed by eviction by a private landlord (29.8% including those in 'other'). The other two main reasons were violence or abuse and eviction by parents.

3. There are often underlying issues that lead to someone becoming homeless. This can include someone's health, employment or family circumstances for example. Thinking about your situation, what do you think were the key factors that led to you becoming homeless? Please comment in the box below




151 customers answered a question about what the underlying issues were that led them to becoming homeless. The main issues highlighted from the answers were:

- Relationship breakdown
- Mental health issues
- Evicted by private landlord
- Financial issues
- Domestic abuse
- No longer able to stay with friends/family
- Unemployment/redundancy

- Physical health issues

4. When you need advice on homelessness where do you go for help? Please select all that apply				
			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Council's Housing Options		68.31%	125
2	Forfutures (including Outreach)		21.31%	39
3	Citizens Advice		33.33%	61
4	Other Council service		6.01%	11
5	Voluntary or faith group		2.73%	5
6	Charity		9.84%	18
7	Housing association (e.g. Forum Housing, Sanctuary)		25.14%	46
8	Family and friends		29.51%	54
9	Other (specified below):		11.48%	21
			answered	183
			skipped	3
Other reasons given:				
Cheshire Without Abuse/Refuge 2	Justin Madders MP 3 (1.6%)	Shelter 4 (2.2%)	Housing Options 1	
Deafness Support Network 1	Forfutures 2	Internet 2	Housing Officer 3	

Most people (68%) would approach Housing Options for advice on homelessness. A large number of people would go to Citizen's Advice (33%) and housing associations (25%). A lot of people still rely on family and friends for advice on homelessness (29%).

5. How many times have you found yourself in a homeless situation in the last 10 years? Please select one option				
			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Once		60.22%	109
2	Twice		19.89%	36
3	Three or more times		19.89%	36
			answered	181
			skipped	5

The majority of people had only found themselves homeless once (60%) but nearly 20% had been homeless three or more times.

6. What do you think needs to happen to help people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless in the area?

There were 152 comments on what people thought needed to happen to help homeless people in the area. The key messages from this question were:

- More support needed from the Council, particularly mental health support
- Provide a dedicated team of advice specialists that treat you with respect and dignity
- Provide more affordable housing options, particularly social housing
- Help people who ask for it
- Offer more temporary and emergency accommodation
- Reduce the waiting time on the register
- Better communication
- Use empty properties

7. What kind of advice did you receive from Housing Options? Please select all that apply

			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Applying for social housing via the housing register		60.48%	75
2	Preventing homelessness		15.32%	19
3	Making a homeless application		41.94%	52
4	Your housing rights		26.61%	33
5	Money and benefits		16.13%	20
6	Finding a hostel or supported housing		25.81%	32
7	Finding my own accommodation in the private rented sector		36.29%	45
8	Other (specified below):		8.06%	10
			answered	124
			skipped	62

Other reasons given:





They did not help me	Clear my debts	Look on Rightmove	Helped to find a refuge
2	1	1	1

The majority of customers (68%) had received advice from Housing Options and of those most people received advice about applying for social housing (60%), making a homeless application (42%) and finding accommodation in the private rented sector (36%).

8. Thinking about the contact you had with Housing Options, overall how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the service you received? Please select one option

			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Very satisfied		22.40%	28

8. Thinking about the contact you had with Housing Options, overall how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the service you received? Please select one option



			Response Percent	Response Total
2	Fairly satisfied		15.20%	19
3	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied		18.40%	23
4	Fairly dissatisfied		16.00%	20
5	Very dissatisfied		28.00%	35
			answered	125
			skipped	61

38% of customers were very satisfied or fairly satisfied with the service they received from Housing Options. For those that were fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied the main reasons given were around staff not being as helpful or supportive as expected, slow processes and poor communication.

9. What, if anything, do you think we could do to improve the Housing Options service?

Suggestions for improving the service were provided by 87 people and the main themes included specialist training for better communication, quicker processes and better outcomes.

10. Were you placed in bed and breakfast accommodation by the Council? Please select one option

			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		15.05%	28
2	No		84.95%	158
			answered	186
			skipped	0



Of the 186 respondents 28 (15%) had been placed in bed and breakfast and 27 people responded to the question on bed and breakfast. Most people overall were satisfied with cost, size, location, security, and staff helpfulness. For those that were dissatisfied the reasons given for this were mainly around not having any cooking facilities and cleanliness.

52% of people received the support they needed whilst in bed and breakfast. Of those that said they did not the reasons given were a lack of help and poor communication.

11. Were you placed in temporary accommodation by the Council? Please select one option

			Response Percent	Response Total
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11. Were you placed in temporary accommodation by the Council? Please select one option

			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		13.98%	26
2	No		86.02%	160
			answered	186
			skipped	0



Of the 186 respondents 26 (14%) said that they had been placed in temporary accommodation by the Council although 6 people said it had been bed and breakfast and a further 4 people gave a supported housing address (this shows a misunderstanding of the term temporary accommodation and the question should have made it clearer). It will need further work to analyse the results of those that were genuinely in what we refer to as temporary accommodation.

12. Have you lived in supported housing? Please select one option

			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		11.83%	22
2	No		88.17%	164
			answered	186
			skipped	0

Of the 186 respondents 22 (12%) said that they had lived in supported accommodation which included forfutures direct access accommodation in Chester and Northwich and the rest was with other providers. Only 4 people gave reasons for being dissatisfied which were that it was too expensive, too small, people were taking drugs there and advice from staff was poor.

13. Have you been rehoused into permanent accommodation? Please select one option

			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		36.02%	67
2	No		63.98%	119
			answered	186
			skipped	0

67 people (36%) had been rehoused into permanent accommodation.

14. Please say how important or unimportant you think the following housing options are to help tackle homelessness		
	Average score	Response Total
24hr assessment hub for people who are sleeping rough	9.0 (141)	184
Bed and breakfast	8.3 (105)	183
Access to private rented housing	8.2 (114)	183
Direct access to hostels	8.0 (108)	184
Housing with support available onsite	8.4 (113)	182
Social housing through the housing register	8.8 (135)	184
	answered	184
	skipped	2

184 people gave their opinions on how important different housing options are for tackling homelessness. A score of 10 was awarded where it was felt that it was extremely important. The housing option that scored the highest overall was a 24hr assessment hub for people who are sleeping rough followed by social housing through the housing register.

15. Please say how important or unimportant you think the following types of advice, support and treatment are to help tackle homelessness		
	Average	Response Total
Outreach support services for people who are rough sleeping	8.9 (134)	182
Regular support worker visits	8.3 (102)	182
Debt, money and benefits advice	8.7 (121)	183
Employment and careers advice	8.5 (113)	181
Life skills training (such as managing money, looking after a home)	8.4 (108)	182
Therapeutic activities such as art therapy, singing etc.	6.4 (63)	182
Alcohol and drug advice/treatment	8.5 (113)	182
Mental health support and counselling	9.1 (138)	182
Physical health and wellbeing advice	8.8 (119)	181

15. Please say how important or unimportant you think the following types of advice, support and treatment are to help tackle homelessness		
	Average	Response Total
Mediation to help rebuild relationships	7.5 (78)	181
Support provided in partnership with the voluntary, faith and charity sectors	7.1 (74)	182
Specialist support for people leaving prison	7.3 (79)	182
Specialist support for care leavers	8.2 (96)	180
Specialist support for armed force discharge	8.6 (114)	182
	answered	183
	skipped	3

183 people gave their opinions on how important different types of advice, support and treatment were to help tackle homelessness. A score of 10 was awarded where it was felt that it was extremely important. The area that scored the highest was mental health support. The top 8 interventions were:

- Mental health support and counselling
- Outreach support services for people who are rough sleeping
- Debt, money and benefits advice
- Physical health and wellbeing advice
- Specialist support for armed force discharge
- Employment and careers advice
- Alcohol and drug advice/treatment
- Life skills training (such as managing money, looking after a home)
- Regular support worker visits

16. Are there any other comments that you would like to make?




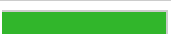



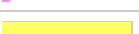




88 comments were made at the end of the survey and a number of people expressed their thanks for the help and support they had received from services. The other comments reflected the following themes:

- Some customers felt more help and support should be available, particularly for those that work
- A small number of customers felt let down by the Council
- A small number of customers were still homeless
- A small number of customers wanted more Housing First properties
- A small number of customers wanted changes to the Allocations Policy

11.2 Homelessness Review Stakeholder Survey

The homelessness review stakeholder survey sought the views of those that work with or support people that are homeless. The survey was emailed to a distribution list of stakeholders, which included third sector groups and individuals working or volunteering with homeless people in the local area. The survey ran for 5 weeks and closed on 30th June 2019. It could be completed online or in hard copy on request. In total, 50 responses were received, although not all respondents answered every question.

The survey was completed by a number of organisations which included housing associations (registered providers), the police, probation, and prison services, charities and voluntary groups, the education service, CWAC commissioned and non-commissioned services, as well as health and the DWP.

1. Thinking about your client group, what do you think are the top three reasons for homelessness?				
			Response Total	
1	Eviction by parents		11	
2	Violence or abuse		12	
3	Eviction from social housing		19	
4	Leaving prison		19	
5	Leaving HM forces		1	
6	Eviction by relatives or friends		16	
7	Harassment		1	
8	Eviction by private landlord		15	
9	Discharge from hospital		0	
10	Relationship breakdown with partner		25	
11	Mortgage repossession		2	
12	Emergency e.g. fire		0	
13	Leaving institution/care		7	
14	Other (specified below):		10	
			answered	49
			skipped	1
Other reasons given:				
Eviction from traveller sites 1	Debt 1	Drug and alcohol issues 3		
Mental health 2	Poor decision making 1	Intentionally homeless 1		

25 stakeholders thought that relationship breakdown was the top reason for homelessness (51%) as well as eviction from social housing (39%) and leaving prison (39%).

2. There are often underlying issues that have led to a crisis building up, leading to homelessness. Thinking about your client group what do you think are the main underlying issues that lead to homelessness?

			Response Total	
1	Bereavement		3	
2	Sexual or physical abuse		17	
3	Debts or low income		29	
4	Losing a job or unemployment		17	
5	Mental health issues		40	
6	Poor physical health or disability		12	
7	Victim of crime		3	
8	Involvement in crime		21	
9	Lack of qualifications		6	
10	Drug or alcohol problems		42	
11	Family breakdown		29	
12	Poor coping or life skills		26	
13	Institutional background		12	
14	Other (specified below):		3	
			answered	49
			skipped	1
Other reasons given:				
Welfare reforms 1		Not enough affordable housing with support 1	Lack of understanding 1	

When asked about the underlying issues that led to homelessness 42 stakeholders thought that the main underlying issues were overwhelmingly drug and alcohol issues (86%) and 40 stakeholders thought that it was mental health (82%). These were followed by debts and low income (59%), family breakdown (59%) and poor coping or life skills (53%).

3. Thinking about the contact your clients have with the Council's Housing Options team, overall how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the service they received? (The Housing Options team provide the Council's statutory services for homelessness prevention, homeless applications and temporary accommodation.)

			Response Total	
1	Very satisfied		4	
2	Fairly satisfied		16	
3	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied		15	
4	Fairly dissatisfied		10	
5	Very dissatisfied		4	
			answered	49

3. Thinking about the contact your clients have with the Council's Housing Options team, overall how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the service they received? (The Housing Options team provide the Council's statutory services for homelessness prevention, homeless applications and temporary accommodation.)

	Response Total
skipped	1

20 stakeholders (41%) felt satisfied with the contact their customers had with the Housing Options team. Of those that felt dissatisfied the main reasons given were:

- Not enough accommodation
- Offenders need more support and housing
- Lack of empathy from staff
- Difficult to access the service
- Timescales/decisions take too long

4. How, if at all, do you think the Housing Options service could be improved?

37 comments were made by stakeholders giving suggestions that could improve the Housing Options service. The top suggestions included:

- Provide more housing including direct access, TA and specifically for young people
- Offer drop-ins, more face to face contact, support with forms, and home visits
- Provide more support for those with literacy issues, mental health and substance misuse issues and offending history
- Better communication with customers and agencies
- Improve data sharing

5. Thinking about your client group, what do you think are the main barriers to them accessing accommodation in Cheshire West and Chester?

47 comments were made by stakeholders highlighting the barriers that their customers face when trying to access accommodation. The main barrier was thought to be a lack of suitable housing in the area followed by affordability (including benefit) issues. The main barriers are listed below:

- Not enough suitable affordable housing in the area
- Affordability/financial issues/low income/benefits
- Lack of tenancy or floating support
- Previous eviction/rent arrears/exclusion policy
- Substance misuse
- Criminal record/CBOs/sexual offending
- Mental health/chaotic lifestyle/coping mechanisms
- Waiting lists
- Not enough support through the process
- No access to IT

6. What other teams, groups, or organisations do you work with that play a key role in preventing homelessness, or supporting those that find themselves homeless, in the area?

The key organisations and groups that were identified by stakeholders were:

- Forfutures
- Voluntary and faith groups including Share Shop, Outside In and Soul Kitchen
- Housing Options
- Shelter/CAB
- CATH
- Social Care
- Foodbanks
- DHP team CWAC
- Police
- Drug and Alcohol teams
- New Leaf
- DWP
- Probation
- Mental Health Team
- Unity House
- St Werburgh's Medical Practise
- Refuges

8. Please say how important or unimportant you think the following housing options are to help tackle homelessness in Cheshire West and Chester.

	Average	Response Total
24hr assessment hub for people who are sleeping rough	8.8	48
Bed and breakfast	7.0	49
Private rented	7.8	47
Direct access to hostels	8.9	49
Housing with support available onsite	9.1	49
Social housing through the housing register	9.0	48
	answered	49
	skipped	1

Most stakeholders gave similar high importance to a 24 hour assessment hub, housing with onsite support, social housing and direct access to hostels. Bed and breakfast and private rented were seen as less important.

9. Please say how important or unimportant you think the following types of advice, support and treatment are to help tackle homelessness in Cheshire West and Chester.

	Average	Response Total
Outreach support services for people who are rough sleeping	9.1	49
Regular support worker visits	8.7	49
Debt, money and benefits advice	8.8	49
Employment and careers advice	7.5	48
Life skills training (such as managing money, looking after a home)	8.1	48
Therapeutic activities such as art therapy, singing etc.	6.4	49
Alcohol and drug advice/treatment	9.4	49
Mental health support and counselling	9.5	49
Physical health and wellbeing advice	8.6	48
Mediation to help rebuild relationships	7.7	49
Support provided in partnership with the voluntary, faith and charity sectors	8.0	48
Specialist support for people leaving prison	8.6	49
Specialist support for care leavers	8.8	49
Specialist support for armed force discharge	8.3	49
	answered	49
	skipped	1

In terms of advice, support and treatment stakeholders gave the highest importance to mental health support, alcohol and drug advice/treatment and outreach support.

10. Thinking about current service provision for homelessness, what else, if anything, do you think that the Council, and other agencies, should be doing to address homelessness issues?

40 further comments were provided by stakeholders on how to address homelessness issues. The main thing mentioned by most was more 24 hour supported housing (which could also accommodate couples and pets) followed by providing or building more homes or using empty homes. All the comments are listed below:

- More 24 hr supported schemes/hostels/house-shares/drop in centre
- Build more affordable housing or use empty properties
- Drug and alcohol services/mental health/wet house/complex needs service
- Early prevention work especially for young people or people leaving prison
- Work better with non-commissioned services/collaborative approach on the streets
- Use enforcement for those that don't engage/involved with criminal activity/ASB
- Provide sleeping bags/food/washing facilities for rough sleepers
- Discourage the public from giving money/tackle begging
- Provide more employment opportunities
- Promote private rented
- Support veterans

- Take services out of Chester
- Provide Housing First
- Integrate services with Forfutures
- Provide more floating support

11. What, if any, future trends or problems do you anticipate may lead to an increase in homelessness for any specific client group? Please provide details in the box below

38 comments identified future trends that may lead to an increase in homelessness. These included:

- Benefit cuts/Universal Credit issues
- Mental health/dual diagnosis
- More offenders leaving prison homeless
- Support from some groups and the public increases rough sleeping
- Homelessness is effecting more young people (excluded pupils, children of addicts)
- Unemployment
- Brexit
- Lack of floating support/supported housing
- Cuts in public services

12. Do you have any other comments? Please comment in the box below

There were 13 additional comments at the end of the survey that echoed the answers to previous questions.

11.3 Public consultation (postcard survey)

For anyone that did not want to complete a survey, or had not experienced homelessness but wanted to share their views, we provided a one-question postcard option which asked 'what do you think would help solve homelessness in Cheshire West and Chester?'

57 postcards were completed. The main themes identified by the public from the postcard survey were about building more social housing, especially 1 bed properties, encouraging downsizing, protecting private tenants, supporting people into work and raising awareness in schools.

12. Key findings

- The number of people presenting as homeless has increased. This is mainly because the HRA17 enables more people to access help earlier. Of 1847 cases opened 726 were already homeless.
- There are more homeless single people. The number of single people (or couples) represents 84% of those already homeless
- The prevention and relief of homelessness can be improved with the right resources. Of the 1847 cases 602 had homelessness prevented or relieved.
- DHP is used well and productively to help prevent homelessness.
- The number of single people owed the full housing duty is much higher than previous years. Being vulnerable due to mental health problems now represents 26% of those owed a full housing duty.
- Relationships with private landlords need developing and more evictions need preventing through tenancy support. The main reason for statutory homelessness is the ending of an assured shorthold tenancy.
- The customer consultation found that relationship breakdown, eviction by private landlords, violence, and eviction by parents were the main reasons for homelessness. Some of the underlying causes were mental health issues and affordability.
- Cuts or changes to benefits and frozen benefit rates continue to lead to increasing debts and homelessness
- Stakeholders are in agreement that drug and alcohol issues, mental health, debts and low income, family breakdown and poor coping skills were the underlying issues that led to homelessness.
- We are seeing high numbers of people in temporary accommodation and expenditure on bed and breakfast needs to be reduced significantly. 220 more households were placed in bed and breakfast during 2018/19 than the previous year. 75% of the households were single people, many with complex needs.
- The number of people in bed and breakfast now represents 59% of all those in temporary accommodation (52 households). Many people are placed outside the area which impacts family support, education, and access to services such as drugs treatment and work coaches.
- Rough sleeping is still an issue in the area. 34 rough sleepers were known to the Outreach service in May 2019. 17 rough sleepers were identified and verified in the last official rough sleeper count in October 2018. Dual diagnosis (mental health and substance misuse issues) are prevalent amongst the rough sleeping community.

- The rough sleeping services funded by the MHCLG Rapid Rehousing Pathway and Rough Sleeping Initiative will end after 12 months unless additional funding is sourced.
- Providing more emergency bed spaces can help alleviate rough sleeping only if there are clear and achievable pathways into alternative accommodation with support.
- People are waiting longer for supported housing and those in supported housing are not able to move into independent housing due to a shortage of permanent housing options especially shared accommodation and 1 and 2 bed properties.
- More accommodation needs to be sourced from social and private landlords to enable move on and initiatives such as Housing First.
- The number of hidden homeless or those sofa surfing is increasing and people are waiting longer to get rehoused.
- Mental health support is seen as a priority by customers and stakeholders
- Frontline staff need to be trained to a high standard to help improve the customer journey.

13. Next Steps

In order to ensure that the information within the review is an accurate picture of homelessness within the borough, the review will be made available to partners and stakeholders for comments.

Any comments can be made to: housingstrategy@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Following this review the Council will produce and publish a Homelessness Strategy.