

Sandwell's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022 to 2025

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**Author: Neville Rowe – Housing Strategy &
Research Manager**

**Contact: Karl Robinson at
karl_robinson@sandwell.gov.uk**

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1. INTRODUCTION & PURPOSE

Welcome to Sandwell's Homeless and Rough Sleeper Strategy. Our Strategy sets out how we aim to prevent homelessness and to ensure that support and accommodation will be available for people who are either at risk of losing their home or have lost their home.

The causes of homelessness are often connected to a wider set of more complex circumstances. Homelessness can affect physical and mental health wellbeing, educational achievement, the ability to gain and sustain employment, together with increased pressure on personal and family relationships. These effects, especially on children, can be life long and can cause repeated homelessness of a generational nature.

Our strategic approach is clear in that we recognise no single organisation can prevent homelessness alone. Together, the Sandwell Homelessness Partnership acknowledges that we must be proactive in working together to enable early intervention particularly in a framework of increasing pressure on household and sector budgets, housing market pressures and the legacy of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Sandwell has been an active partner within the West Midlands Combined Authority Homelessness Taskforce on the Members Advisory Group, Homelessness Taskforce Steering Group, Rough Sleeping Task Group and Housing First Steering Group. The collective experience of these groups over the last 4 years has helped shape how we work and has allowed the sharing of best practice across the borough and wider West Midlands region.

COVID-19 created a lot of pressures for services and our communities, however, there was one clear positive that came from our joint response to the pandemic. The need to respond quickly and to protect the most vulnerable in our communities, including those at risk of homelessness; already homeless and those rough sleeping meant that key partners worked much more closely and tried and tested new and innovative ways of working. Within the homelessness sector the pandemic saw us work much more collaboratively and broke down barriers and blockages that had slowed down our response and impact over previous years. A great number of changes were made during 2020 and 2021 that helped improve the support for people and we want to build on this in this new and revised Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

Under the Homelessness Act 2002, local authorities are required to produce on a maximum five-year cycle a homelessness review and a homelessness strategy that sets out the strategic direction that the local authority will take to tackle homelessness. In accordance with legislation, our strategy sets out how we will:

- prevent and relieve homelessness

- ensuring that a range of suitable, sustainable accommodation options are available for people who are or may become homeless
- understand our customers and the real problems to solve around homelessness
- provide robust holistic support for people who are or may become homeless, or who need support to prevent them becoming homeless again
- ensure that no one in Sandwell has to sleep rough

Our strategic objectives are detailed in Section Four.

2. HOMELESSNESS IN SANDWELL

2.1 Population, health and economy

Population: At mid-2020 with an estimated 330,000 residents¹, Sandwell has the third largest population in the West Midlands Combined Authority area. Its population is predicted to grow faster than the West Midlands and the national average. Sandwell has a young and diverse population with more than 40% of residents under the age of 30, compared to around 30% across the UK². Almost 40% of residents are from an ethnic minority, making the population more diverse than the regional and UK average of 18.8% and 14% respectively³.

Health: The health of people in Sandwell does not on the whole compare with England averages. Sandwell is one of the 20% most deprived districts/unitary authorities in England and about 26% (18,500) children live in low income families. Life expectancy for both men and women is lower than the England average, 76.9 (male) and 81.1 (female) compared to 79.6 and 83.2 nationally. Life expectancy inequality also exists within Sandwell and is 8.6 years lower for men and 8.0 years lower for women in the most deprived areas of the borough than in the least deprived areas⁴.

Economy: In 2021 78.3% of the working age population were described as economically active and this is very comparable to the national average and slightly higher than the regional⁵. However, gross weekly incomes are below the national average, with the Sandwell median average being £536 per week compared to a national average of £613 (15% lower). Of note, the median average gross weekly income rises to £557 per week by 'place of work' indicating that the higher paid jobs are disproportionately filled by persons who travel in to the borough. 7.6% of the working population are

¹ Office National Statistics

² Sandwell Plan, 2020 – 2025, www.sandwell.gov.uk

³ *ibid*

⁴ Public Health England, Local Authority Health Profile, 03.03.20

⁵ Nomis Labour Market Statistics, www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/

classed as 'out of work' with 18% of households classed as 'workless' where households that have at least one person aged 16 to 64⁶.

The main reasons for people presenting at risk of homelessness in Sandwell can be found below (using 2019/20 data as this was the last year not impacted by COVID and reflective of previous years):

Reason for homelessness risk	Percentage
Family or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate	40%
End of private rented tenancy - assured shorthold	24%
Domestic abuse	6%
Non-violent relationship breakdown with partner	9%
End of social rented tenancy	3%
Eviction from supported housing	2%
End of private rented tenancy - not assured shorthold	1%
Other violence or harassment	1%
Left institution with no accommodation available	1%
Required to leave accommodation provided by Home Office as asylum support	5%
Other reasons / not known ⁶	9%

The main reason for people presenting as at risk of homelessness was where family and friends are no longer willing to continue to accommodate. This predominantly affects under 30s and is usually as a result of relationship breakdown or overcrowding.

A quarter of all cases are people who have received a notice to leave a private rented property, with the majority due to a section 21 (no fault eviction) notice being served.

The main reasons for people presenting who are already homeless in Sandwell can be found below (using 2019/20 data as this was the last year not impacted by COVID and reflective of previous years):

Reason for homelessness risk	Percentage
Family or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate	17%
End of private rented tenancy - assured shorthold	22%
Domestic abuse	25%
Non-violent relationship breakdown with partner	5%
End of social rented tenancy	3%
Eviction from supported housing	1%
End of private rented tenancy - not assured shorthold	1%
Other violence or harassment	2%
Left institution with no accommodation available	0%
Required to leave accommodation provided by Home Office as asylum support	11%
Other reasons / not known ⁶	13%

⁶ Nomis Labour Market Statistics, www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports

When we look at the main reason a person presents as already homeless the highest proportion is by people who are fleeing domestic abuse at 25%. This is followed closely by people who have lost a private rented sector property at 22%.

2.2 Housing Market overview

Sandwell's housing market has changed significantly over the last decade and continues to evolve. In recent years the private rental market has expanded greatly whilst the local authority sector, once the numerically highest sector, continues to decline in number. Property values remain low compared to the wider West Midlands region but remain outside the reach of many living locally.

As at March 2020 there were 133,085 residential units in Sandwell of which 21% are council-owned, 5% are registered provider owned and 74% privately owned. Out of the latter, roughly 22% are privately rented. Its most notable characteristics are:

- The private rented sector share of the of the housing stock continues to grow from 4.6% (5,345 units) in 2001 to 12% (14,580 units) in 2011 to 22% (21,000 units) in 2020. The BRE Study in 2018 recorded 4,300 HMO's located in Sandwell, with particular concentrations in the south part of the borough⁷.
- A significant and above national average benefit-supported private rented sector operates in Sandwell. Data available from the Department of Work & Pensions indicates that in May 2020, 47% of households in the private rented sector were either in receipt of Housing Benefit or were receiving the Housing Element of Universal Credit. This compares to a regional and national figure of 39 and 40 percent respectively and approximately 62% in the Council tenure.
- Affordability remains an issue in Sandwell. The 2021 Black Country Strategic Housing Market Assessment estimates that household incomes of £17.8k, £22k, £25.6k and £32k are required to access an entry level private rented sector one, two, three or four bedroom property (respectively). In 2020 the lower quartile income in Sandwell was £15,115 with the median rising to £26,711.
- Housing Associations provide an additional 7,750 units of affordable housing, 5,733 of which are classed as 'general needs' housing.

2.3 Preventing and Relieving Homelessness

The introduction of the Homeless Reduction Act (HRA) in April 2018 represented a significant change to the way local authorities tackled

⁷ house in multiple occupation (HMO) is a property rented out by 3 or more people in 2 or more households (e.g. a family) but share facilities such as the bathroom and kitchen.

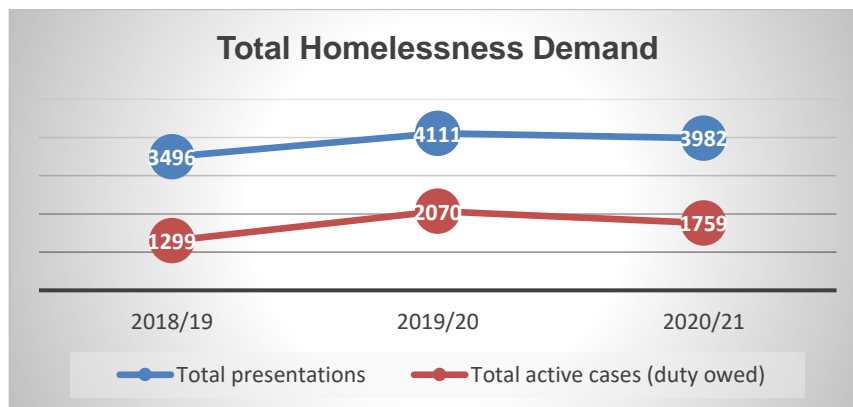
homelessness with far greater emphasis on the prevention of homelessness, early intervention and for the first time a clear responsibility on the part of those affected to take appropriate actions to help resolve their own homelessness.

For many years Sandwell has had a strong focus on prevention and was therefore well placed to make the adjustments brought about by the HRA and during 2020/21 carried out a systemic review of how the council prevents and relieves homelessness. The learning from this review and the subsequent testing of a new operating model has built upon the act and will ensure that our design is driven by early intervention and prevention.

2.4 Homelessness and rough sleeping in numbers

Between 2016 and 2020 the homelessness services within Sandwell Council had seen an increasing number of households presenting as homeless and in crisis, with a clear lean to a higher proportion presenting at crisis stage.

The chart below shows the number of presentations and the number of cases progressing to a duty (prevention, relief or main duty) for each year from 2018/19 to 2020/21:



The chart shows that between 2018/19 and 2019/20 there was an 18% increase in presentations and a 59.3% increase in people being accepted for a statutory duty beyond that of advice and information only. This trend was predicted to continue in to 2020/21 but the emergence of the pandemic saw the number of presentations from people losing private rented sector tenancies reduce significantly.

Since 2018 the second highest reason for homelessness presentations each year was due to people losing their private rented sector accommodation, predominantly due to being served a section 21 notice. As a result of the changes to the sector, driven by the pandemic response, there were periods of 2020/21 when evictions could not go ahead or saw significantly longer notice periods being required. It is expected that demand will increase again in 2021/22 as evictions from the PRS recommence and this has started to show within the service.

For those households presenting as at risk of or already homeless and rough sleeping the service has demonstrably improved since the commencement of the last strategy in 2018 with some significant achievements:



Responding 35% quicker to people presenting as homeless



Introduced Call Before You Serve which provides support to landlords to prevent evictions – prevented 109 evictions since launch



Reduced the use of temporary accommodation and bed and breakfast by 70% at its best position during 2021



Developed and launched new incentive & support model to increase housing options within the private rented sector – created over 60 tenancies to date



Launched new self-service portal for customers to allow us to focus on understanding the real issues and not admin



Secured £144k of additional grant/ bid funding for the service in 2020/21 and £170k in 2021/22



Introduced an arrears prevention fund with £180,000 allocated to support PRS arrears and £85,000 for council arrears



Increased staff capacity by 20 across the councils Housing Solutions service



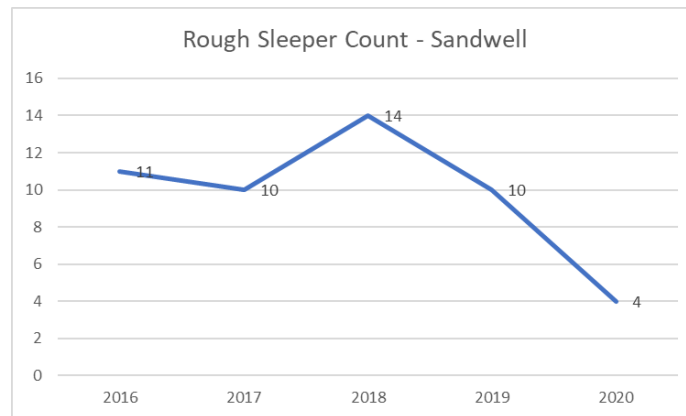
81 Council homes built and a further 146 purchased and added to the Council tenure in 2020/21. In addition, 167 Private Registered Provider homes were built also offering affordable rent. ⁸

⁸ www.gov.uk/affordablehousingsupply/Live Table 1011

2.5 Rough Sleeping

Conversely with the increasing demand in homelessness presentations, we have seen continued reductions in the number of people reported to be sleeping rough in Sandwell on a single night (based on annual count figures).

The chart below shows the number of rough sleepers recorded as part of the snapshot count in autumn of each year:



Sandwell Council has been working hard over the last two years to develop a new operating model to help people who are at risk of or already rough sleeping and has supported 80 rough sleepers over the course of 2020/21, many of whom now have their own tenancies.

Sandwell successfully met its Housing First target of 49 people housed by the end of June 2021 (with 57 people now successfully housed) and has taken forward some of the key principles from Housing First as part of the design for our Complex Hub. Sandwell also joined the WMCA Change into Action model in early 2021 (an approach to alternative giving to support rough sleepers) which brings together key partners and is chaired by Sandwell Community Voluntary Organisation. The model has been set up to receive donations from the public to be made available to people and organisations who can bid for funding to support people sleeping rough in Sandwell.

We were able to:



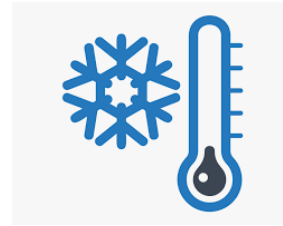
Supported 80 rough sleepers with accommodation and support throughout 2020 and 2021



Housed 57 rough sleepers in secure longer-term accommodation since August 2019



Reduced the prevalence of rough sleepers by 60% between 2019 and 2020



Supported 35 rough sleepers over the 2020 winter period with self-contained emergency accommodation

3. Developments in Service – Partnership, Redesign and Practice

3.1 Our current service

The Council’s Homelessness Service delivers statutory support to households who are at risk of homelessness or already homeless. This service is responsible for preventing and relieving homelessness and making homeless application decisions.

We recently undertook a Build-a-Picture exercise of our service and we established that the service needs to invest in early intervention/prevention work and to shift away from crisis management which is where the majority of current support for the customer is centred. The current operating model by design is largely transactional with high caseloads leading to a service that is restricted in large parts to reacting to crisis demand and solely following the legal duties in a process driven way. In summary, the service was not geared up to effectively conduct homeless prevention work and is currently operating as a crisis management service. The current operating model is too strained to invest in early intervention prevention work and tools that can successfully prevent and relieve homelessness.

From the Build-a-Picture exercise we were also able to establish that looking ahead the main challenges for the service are to:

1. Conduct earlier and more thorough interventions and homeless prevention work
2. Improve access channels and place the expert as close to the customer as possible
3. Meet its statutory duties effectively with increasing service demand pressures
4. Improve the customer journey
5. Improve service culture
6. Reduce the number and time households spend in temporary accommodation (TA)
7. Create sufficient capacity to address housing registration demand
8. Cease the use of Bed and Breakfast and private properties for TA provision
9. Increase access to Private Rented Sector (PRS) properties

10. Reduce the need for social housing
11. Decrease the number of s21 notices issued and in turn the volume of demand caused by PRS evictions and turnover
12. Create sustainable housing solutions for people who need support
13. Develop better partnership working with support services, providers and agencies
14. Build further on the internal partnership arrangements already developed with Adult Social Care and Children's Social Care
15. Reduce the prevalence of rough sleeping in Sandwell and develop effective support models to prevent relapse/ return
16. Ensure that the council meets it's obligations towards gypsies and travelers under section 8 of the Housing Act

3.2 What we want to do

Moving forward we want to adopt a new operating model which has been designed using Systems Thinking Principles/ Method for the Housing Solutions Service that addresses the issues raised in the Build-a-Picture exercise and capitalise on solutions to meet the following five key areas:

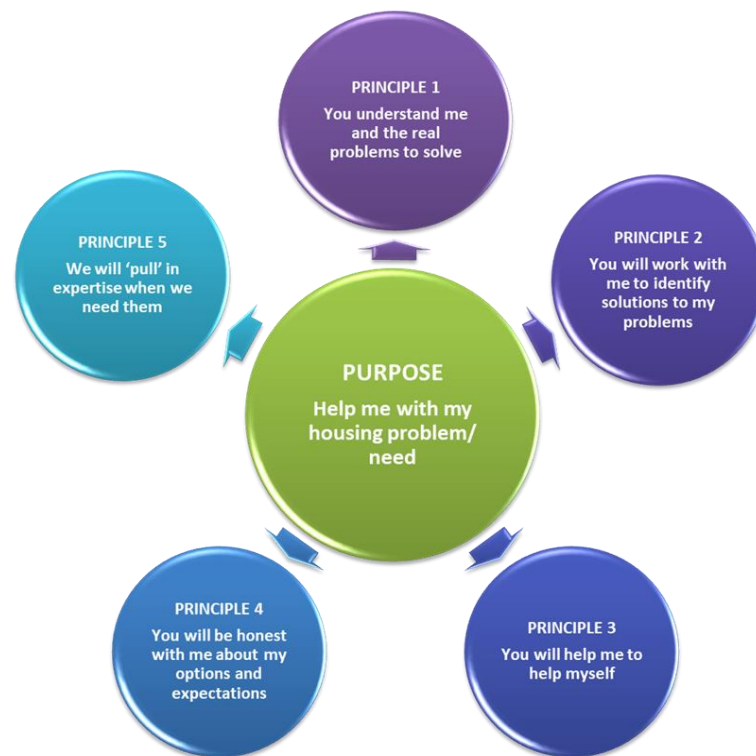
1. Development of an effective prevention model and investment in prevention tools that enables "at risk of homelessness" households to remain in their existing home or secure alternative accommodation before they are homeless.
2. Effective case management to prevent escalation of cases and robust support/ move on plans that are holistic and designed around the customer and the real problems to solve.
3. Provision of suitable Temporary Accommodation (TA) where delivery of robust move on plans ensure households receive the required level of support to sustain a new tenancy and make their stay in TA is as short as possible.
4. Effectively educate and encourage our customers around early prevention, seeking support to maintain sustainable tenancies and to consider all reasonable options when seeking new housing options. We must manage expectations when people are registering for council housing to ensure demand does not overwhelm the system.
5. Improve accessibility and availability of alternative housing solutions including embedding the new PRS Secure and Sustain model and develop relationships with Housing Associations, to successfully sustain tenancies, prevent and relieve homelessness.

Delivering on these areas will help to reduce the number of households who present as homeless, ensure households who are at risk present as early as possible and that the support provided is both timely and addresses the real problems to solve. This approach will not only reduce the need for Temporary Accommodation and repeat homelessness but as the model matures we will

be maximising on key early intervention points for a range of issues beyond immediate housing need.

Our “Understand the Customer” conversation will ensure we understand as much about the household as possible and who else may be needed to provide support. This conversation encompasses the wide range of issues, requests or problems that customers present when accessing services across Housing Solutions.

This new operating model will trigger earlier intervention from a range of other council and partner agencies and in turn generate significant outcomes and efficiencies cross economy. It has been designed around customer demand with a clear purpose in mind, set out on the customers terms and this transformation in service will be delivered by five key operating principles and the underpinning practice will provide the structure of how we will work with our customers without stifling creativity through complex static process flows (whilst ensuring we meet statutory and legal requirements).

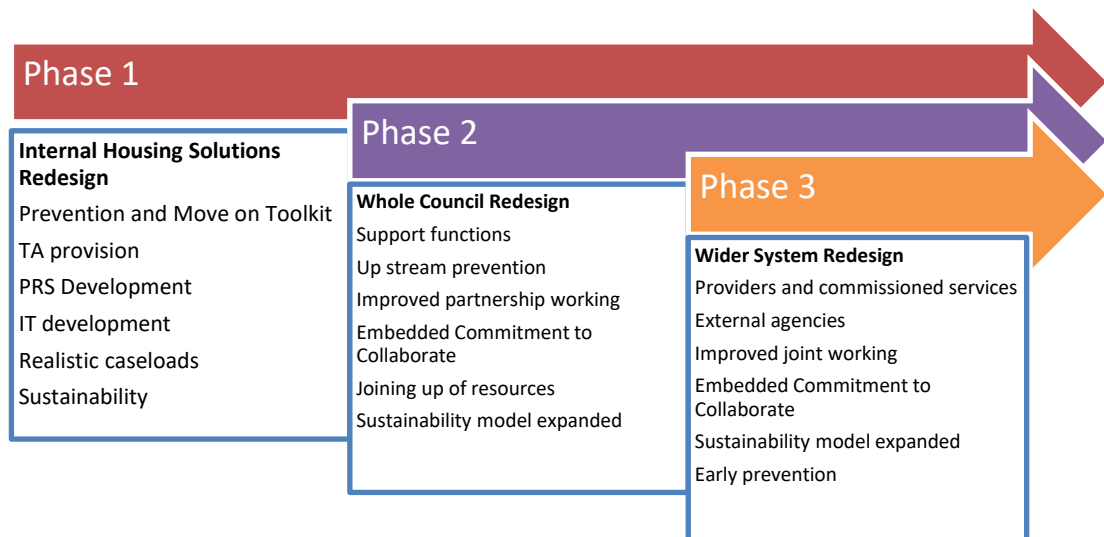


3.3 Next Steps – Systematic Redesign

In the second quarter of 2021 we piloted the new way of working with around 15 staff across the various functions taking the value steps as the starting point and building from there. We used the systemic principles around redesign to design as we learnt, and piloted the emerging model. The Phase 1 operating model will be implemented by January 2022.

Looking ahead, our future strategy is to apply this same method to the wider system and carry out stages two and three outlined in the diagram below:

Our three-phased approach to implementing systemic redesign:



The support of our partners and delivery of this strategy and associated action plan will be critical in effective delivery of the three phases. The action plan for 2021/22 will continue to be built upon and enhanced based on the learning from phase 2 and 3.

4 Sandwell’s Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy – Vision, Purpose and Priorities

Vision

To prevent homelessness and rough sleeping and where people find themselves homeless, ensure that we can resolve their housing need through a range of suitable and sustainable housing options.

Purpose

The purpose of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy is to fully understand the system in which we all operate and to take a whole system view and approach to design. We need to work together to make the best use of our collective resources and to drive earlier intervention and prevention principles, irrelevant of where a person may first present at risk. It is vital that we operate within one system with coordinated holistic advice, help and support based on an understanding of the real problems to solve.

To break the cycle of homelessness and to create sustainable solutions we must move away from quick fixes and solely addressing presenting demand, irrelevant of where it presents within our wider economy/partnership.

Historically, focus has been solely on preventing loss of current accommodation or to source alternative accommodation. Whilst it is important to solve the immediate housing need, we must work to understand the real problems within a household and work to address these causative factors. By understanding and addressing the root cause, we will create more sustainable solutions for our citizens.

We will help customers by ensuring that we:

- Prioritise early intervention/ prevention by supporting those at risk of homelessness to remain in their homes whenever possible or to find a new home without spending a night homeless.
- Improve access to a range of sustainable housing options
- Minimise the use of temporary and emergency accommodation
- Improve access to, and the effectiveness of, support services with a clear coordinator for support plans
- Prevent rough sleeping
- Break the cycle of repeat homelessness and rough sleeping

As a partnership, we will:

- Strengthen how we work as a partnership to better support people in identifying the future risk of homelessness and in addressing the real problems to solve
- Expand and publicise the early intervention and prevention agenda/ model
- Work with all housing sectors to encourage landlords and tenants to contact the Council at an early stage when they may be at risk of homelessness
- Prevent people in need of support from being handed off between different agencies and systems
- Ensure that we operate within psychologically and trauma informed environments when supporting people at risk of or already homeless

Priorities

This strategy sets out the six priorities/ objectives for the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2021- 2024. The priorities have been developed in conjunction with partners and will drive the action and delivery plan for the forthcoming years.

Each priority/ objective is supported by a delivery/action plan, with each thematic area supported by a key partner – with the associated governance arrangements in place.

4.1 Preventing Homelessness – how to embed prevention approach and early intervention model across the whole system

What we will do	How we will do it
Continue to build on our platform of early intervention	Ensure the prevention agenda is effectively resourced
	Maintain an understanding of the issues associated with early intervention and respond accordingly with effective triage and priority – not just first in first out
	Work with the PRS to develop communication channels to tell us early of forthcoming tenancies at risk
	Respond to the real problems to solve across the partnership
	Embed the homelessness support model with the Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment & Strategy
Develop Cross- Sector Responsibility for identifying risk	Develop a Duty to Collaborate to avoid blind referrals
	Educate and ensure our partners have a clear understanding of the homelessness prevention support available and the key intervention points
	Embed the keyworker operating model
Reduce the repeat cycle of homelessness	Develop a robust partnership led toolkit for homelessness prevention and intervention

	Embed new operating principles – reducing handovers with support plans wrapped around people
	Develop robust training and development plan (EDIP) for the new delivery model
Switch from a crisis management model to a prevention led models	Invest in capacity at prevention stage of the model
	Develop robust training and development plans to embed the new operating model
	Reduce the need for Temporary Accommodation and ensure rapid move on where it is needed
Develop PRS as a viable option for customers	Continue to build relationships with the Private Rented Sector
	Grow and embed the Private Rented Sector Secure & Sustain model
	Explore the feasibility of a Social Lettings Agency model
	Develop capacity to deal with housing standards issues and work within the sector to improve quality of stock and tenancy management
	Petition national government around affordable LHA rates
Work with Housing Associations & RP's to improve best use of stock	Develop incentive model for providers to enable access to more of their stock
	Develop HARP Panel/Forum to help prevent homelessness and explore totality of stock options
Develop a supported housing offer as part of housing/support cycle	Understand current provision and resources
	Identify gaps based on needs analysis
	Streamline the process for assessment and access
	Develop effective move on pathways from supported housing
Influence stock acquisition and build programme	Feed in housing needs analysis data and intelligence to inform the programme

4.2 **Improve Communication, Education and Engagement** – how we ensure people know what help is available and approach for support sooner

What we will do	How we will do it
Develop a robust communications plan	Develop a Sandwell brand for homelessness and rough sleeping support
	Develop effective communication channels geared around demand i.e. targeted at the top reasons for homelessness specific to Sandwell
	Map our stakeholders and identify the role of partners
	Identify the key messages based on 'real problems to solve'
	Identify the best channels for communicating with our customers
	Capitalise on national and regional events and forums
	Introduce webchat into our front-line delivery service
	Review the Sandwell Council website
Embed the customer voice/lived experience in service design and delivery	Develop a panel of customers with lived experience of homelessness/rough sleeping
	Roll-in the 10/10 satisfaction surveys across Housing Solutions services
	Involve panel representatives in service design phases as set out in objectives 2, 3, 4 and 5
	Ensure panel representation on the Sandwell Homelessness Partnership

4.3 Enhancing Housing Options – how to access the whole housing market and incentivise providers to work with us

What we will do	How we will do it
Understand the housing market and associated needs	Develop a clear understanding of market demand and capacity with associated Gap Analysis
	Develop a future housing needs strategy
Develop Private Rented Sector as a viable option for customers	Continue to build relationships with the Private Rented Sector
	Grow and embed the Secure and Sustain model
	Explore and deliver Social Lettings Agency model

	Develop capacity to deal with housing standards issues and work with sector to improve quality of stock and tenancy management
	Petition national government around affordable LHA rates
Work with Housing Associations & RP's to make best use of stock	Develop an incentive model for providers to enable access to more of their stock
	Develop a Housing Association and Registered Providers Panel/Forum to help prevent homelessness and develop alternative stock options
Develop a supported housing offer as part of the housing/support cycle	Understand current supported housing provision and resources
	Identify gaps based on needs analysis
	Streamline the access process for assessment and access
	Develop effective move on from supported housing
Influence stock acquisition and build programme	Feed in housing data and intelligence to inform the programme

4.4 **Improving partnership collaboration and whole system** – how to work better together, reduce hand offs and design the system around the customer flow

What we will do	How we will do it
Understand the homelessness/housing cycle as an end-to-end system and understand the real problems to solve	Build a picture of the whole system
	Identify options to change the system to address issues and maximise opportunities
	Develop options to improve the system as a partnership body
	Pilot and test new ways of working as a partnership body
	Review pilot outcomes and roll-in any new ways of working
Act on cross-partnership key risk points and intervention points	Implement quick-wins from the Build a Picture phase above
	Identify opportunities to remove/mitigate key risk points
	Test and implement new approaches based on findings
Improve connectivity of support planning cross partnerships	Map out and understand the agencies involved in support for customers

	Engage cross partnership and improve data sharing
	Develop joint customer support plans

4.5 Eliminating rough sleeping

What we will do	How we will do it
Enhance the ways in which we are notified and can respond quickly to notifications of rough sleepers	Promote the notification channels and ensure ease of access
	Enhance staff capacity to respond and support at point of contact
	Enhance outreach provision tailored to need
	Develop partnerships to enhance 'outreach capacity'
Establish a clear support pathway for people with NRPF in line with financial regulations	Understand the cross-sector resources that can be utilised
	Map third sector capacity
	Draw up Gap Analysis
	Make best use of capacity and ensure the Care Act duties are utilised where they can be
	Develop partnership pathway for households with NRPF
Embed the new Complex Hub model	Recruit and resource the Complex Case Officer/ support worker capacity
	Train and develop the staffing capacity to meet the needs of the cohort
	Secure an effective support toolkit/ suite of tools to address issues
	Mainstream the prison/probation pilot and provision
	Mainstream the hospital discharge pathway
Ensure the right professionals are in place to support complex cases in addressing the real problems to solve	Identify the problems to solve
	Secure resources - (commissioned, partnerships and collaboration)
	Embed the "pull on expertise" method to access expert support
	Develop and implement joint sign-off of support plans and case outcomes
Ensure adequate emergency and step-down accommodation for complex cases	Develop the complex accommodation provision
	Connect in accommodation provision to needs

	Develop, in a controlled way, the SEA market in Sandwell
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4.6 Making best use of resources – how to make best use of our total whole system resources and reduce any duplication

What we will do	How we will do it
Understand the profile of the Borough making sure we make best use of housing options	See Enhance Housing Options (market needs) theme above
Develop the whole system model to reduce duplications across the economy	See Improve partnerships and whole system theme above
Reduce silo working to make best use of staff capacity	See Improve partnerships and whole system theme above
Capitalise on opportunities for securing additional funding to support the homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and Plan	Develop and embed the new strategy, policy and performance capacity, embedding this as part of the partnership governance arrangements
	Ensure horizon scanning for opportunities and identify opportunities for bids

5 Governance and Regional Approach

The Sandwell Homelessness Partnership

The Sandwell Homelessness Partnership will provide governance and oversight ensuring implementation of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, including monitoring of the delivery plan and delivery against the key objectives. Unless there are major legislative changes or significant service changes this strategy will be reviewed every five years.

The Partnership comprises of representation from Sandwell Council (officers and Councillors), other statutory bodies, third sector and voluntary sector organisations that operate within Sandwell. The role and membership of the Partnership will grow over the life of this strategy and we will be looking to embed the involvement of people with lived experience into the Partnership during 2022.

Involving people with lived experience in both the Partnership and wider service provision will greatly enhance our interventions and we hope to achieve this in part by engaging with people with lived experience by using both our formal and informal networks. We will aim to make it easy and desirable to participate, be clear about our expectations, and demonstrate how we will support people to participate and achieve their ambitions.

Whilst the Partnership is chaired by the Director of Housing, the Partnership seeks to improve collaborative working and develop a coordinated, whole-system approach to preventing and tackling homelessness in Sandwell through the following aims:

- Bringing together service providers, stakeholders, the voluntary sector and other interested parties who want to help identify the factors and causes of homelessness in Sandwell and listen to the views of partners and stakeholders;
- Eradicating rough sleeping in Sandwell;
- Developing approaches with Partnership members to identified issues;
- Sharing good practice amongst Partnership members and seek out external examples;
- Providing a sounding board and working with stakeholders and statutory partners to help develop homelessness strategies and action plans;
- Providing a mechanism for continuous feedback and improvement of homelessness services in Sandwell;
- Promoting joint working amongst members of the Partnership; and
- Celebrating and publicising the Partnership's achievements and successes

WMCA Homelessness Taskforce

The West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Homelessness Taskforce includes Officer and Cabinet Member representation from Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council and the other six constituent local authorities; as well as representation from non-constituent local authorities, key public-sector agencies, voluntary, private and charitable organisations.

Established in 2017, the Taskforce's central objective is to design out homelessness across the region and taskforce members have undertaken a commitment to collaborate across local authority areas, sectors and disciplines to ensure that we are drawing on our collective resources to prevent and relieve homelessness, in all its forms.