

Homelessness Review

Introduction

This Review outlines the current picture on homelessness in Solihull and how the Council and its partners are working to prevent it and help those who have become homeless or who are threatened with it.

The review flags up issues for the new Homelessness Strategy to address, including those raised by partners and stakeholders through joint working and consultation

Various strands of work on developing our understanding of homelessness and its implications will continue throughout 2019 as the new homelessness strategy is implemented and preparations are made for the development of Solihull's first Rough Sleeping and Homelessness Strategy in 2019/20.

In particular, a joint study will run through spring and summer with the aim of filling gaps in knowledge, improving analysis and forecasting. This will be supported by the Solihull Observatory.

Homelessness in Solihull – snapshot at the end of 2018

At the end of 2018 there were about 800 households (families and single people) in Solihull for whom homelessness was an actual or potential issue in their lives

Situation	Number	Source
Rough sleepers	4	Rough sleeper estimate 29 November
In refuge	11	BSWA
In TA sourced by SCH	128	SCH, 5 December
In self – sourced TA	110	SCH, 5 December
In supported accommodation	81	St Basils, Fry Accord, Bromford
In budget hotels	3	SCH, 5 Dec
Total Homeless	337	
at risk of homelessness	500 approx	caseloads of SCH, St Basils, SIAS

In all over 330 households could be considered homeless at the time, most of which were in temporary accommodation (TA) and others in various supported accommodation. The number in TA has increased during 2018 following the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act and households are tending to stay in TA for longer periods. This has led to an increased short – term use of budget hotels.

The Autumn 2018 Rough Sleeping statistics recorded 4 individuals on the one -night snapshot. This figure derives from evidence-based estimates from local agencies rather than a visual count. The total compares to 2 in 2017 and 6 in 2016. Regular monitoring by our outreach service shows that there are between 2 and 4 over the year. Other than two men who stay out by choice rough sleepers have accepted accommodation or have moved on so it is a changing population.

Reasons for Homelessness

The reasons why households became homeless remained broadly the same as the previous years with the exceptions shown below

Reason for loss of settled accommodation	Percentage of Cases in 2017/18	Notes
Parents / relatives / friends no longer willing / able to accommodate	22	4% down on 2014/15
Domestic violence / abuse	23	
Loss of assured shorthold	23	5% up on 2014/15
Other loss of tenancy	13	
Relationship breakdown	9	
Other	10	

Source – P1e and h-clic returns

Homelessness due to ‘personal’ reasons including relationships and sharing arrangements breaking down accounted for over half of cases last year, but loss of Assured Shorthold tenancy continues to increase as a proportion of cases.

Underlying the ‘personal’ causes are ‘structural’ issues which make finding and keeping suitable affordable home so difficult for many households, leading to more sharing arrangements, some of which then break down before one of the sharing households can secure a home of its own.

In particular there is an underlying shortage of affordable accommodation in Solihull for rent or ownership and whilst the growth of the private rented sector has provided many opportunities for households to obtain a tenancy, the subsequent loss of a private tenancy has emerged as a main reason several years ago. We are still seeing more households losing an AST year on year so may expect that this will continue.

This has in part been a product of the increase in the number of homes in Solihull’s PRS, but, compared to other tenures, the sector still generates more homelessness on a home-for-home basis. To an extent this is inherent in the current tenancy regime which is based on shorter tenancies which can be brought to an end through no fault of the tenant.

However worsening affordability in the sector is an underlying problem, as rents increase and the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) falls further behind to leave a gap between rent and Benefit payments. Where this leads to rent arrears it is reasonable to assume that is at least partly driving the termination of private tenancies.

The gap also makes it more difficult for households to source alternative accommodation in the private rental sector which will increase homelessness approaches and the need for relief. It is also a concern that the roll out of Universal Credit may serve to reduce landlord confidence and readiness to let to households which are 'on benefits'.

In Solihull, single people face a number of particular barriers to finding suitable and affordable housing solutions, with a lack of shared accommodation options Reduced access to housing association tenancies and reduced opportunity on the private rental market due to benefit restrictions.

Trends and Forecasting

The future levels of homelessness will depend on the interplay of a wide range of factors both structural – legislative, policy, housing market – and personal.

It is too soon after the introduction of the HRA to draw conclusions on which reliable forecasts on future demand may be made, however the early signs, combined with the familiar reasons why settled accommodation is lost suggests no lessening of demand.

An underlying difficulty is that Solihull's housing market is characterised by relatively high prices compared to other districts, a buoyant private rented sector which has grown over recent years, but which is still relatively small, and a limited social housing offer both in terms of number and variety.

Whilst many households find and retain a good home in Solihull, it remains relatively unaffordable and prospects for those who cannot afford home ownership are limited.

Whilst the HRA has had an immediate impact on approaches, consideration of the main causes of homelessness suggests that it is the personal factors which will play the greater role in determining future demand.

The new h-clic system is starting to provide more detailed information than its predecessor and will in time give us insights on customer histories and the effectiveness of interventions

There is a strong case for expanding our intelligence and understanding in other ways, and a project with the SIIG group backed by Solihull Observatory will run during spring / summer 2019 to

- Identify gaps in data and other intelligence and how these can be filled
- Consider how we might measure the impact of homelessness on services such as health, children's services and adult social care, and the additional costs which it can generate
- Consider and recommend what role social value can play in expressing the impact of homelessness prevention and relief and the support of vulnerable people

We also need to be more informed by customers because of the value of their 'lived experience' and will be looking for ways in which partners can help us to access customer views

Recommendations for the Strategy

- Build on our good connections with private landlords to develop a better understanding of the drivers for loss of tenancies to inform potential policy responses
- Develop cross-agency plans to respond to each of the main causes of homelessness and focus resources on agreed solutions
- The understanding of homelessness and its implications, including forecasting, to be addressed through planned cross-agency work with SIIG/ Solihull Observatory during 2019

Homelessness Services in Solihull

SMBC has commissioned three services to deliver a homelessness service encompassing prevention, relief and support

- Solihull Community Housing –Homelessness and Housing Options Service
- St Basils - Solihull Youth Hub (16-25 without dependants), supported accommodation
- SIAS - homelessness outreach service to engage with those who are, or are at risk of, rough sleeping

Others contribute significantly through provision of information and advice, including:

- Solihull Connect, community hubs, Age UK and CASB – advice services
- Solihull Churches Action on Homelessness (SCAH) – various practical assistance
- SMBC Income and Awards – provision of Discretionary Housing Payments and other assistance with housing costs and Service Level Agreement for the provision of direct Financial Inclusion Homeless Reduction Support to the Housing Options Team, including a co-located officer

Solihull also benefits from a number of organisations which provide or manage accommodation which is available to homeless households temporarily or as settled accommodation:

- SCH – which manages the Council’s housing stock which provides temporary accommodation to homeless persons as well as settled accommodation through the Solihull Home Options choice-based allocations system
- St Basils – manages two supported housing schemes for singles aged up to 25 and Nightstop and also has joint working arrangements in place with a number of private registered providers to meet the needs of homeless young people
- SIAS – finds single people over 25 accommodation in the private sector in Solihull or Bham
- Bromford – manages accommodation for young families and floating support
- Fry Accord – provides and manages accommodation for ex-offenders
- Private landlords – who have leased accommodation to SCH which is used for TA and who work with SCH through the Solihome private rented sector access scheme

Number of Approaches

The three main providers of homelessness service and accommodation in Solihull – SCH, St Basils and SIAS – reported approximately 500 households on their books at the end of 2018. These families and single people will have approached the agency for advice and assistance regarding actual or potential homelessness. Where it is accepted that they are homeless or may become homeless within 56 days they are owed the prevention or relief duties by SCH or St Basils (if they are single and 25 or under)

Available data suggests that there has been an increase in demand for the homelessness service since the introduction of the HRA changes.. During the first nine months operation of the new arrangements, the number of 'approaches' because of actual or potential homelessness totalled 1690. The closest available comparison for the corresponding period of the previous year Solihull Community Housing had carried out 956 homelessness interviews.

This suggests a significant increase but it is not a like – for – like comparison as enquiries by customers which now count as 'approaches' had not been recorded previously by SCH, though they had been by St Basils and SIAS. Recording of all stages of the homelessness process and its outcomes for customers is now carried out comprehensively to meet the requirements of the new government h-clic recording system.

Outcomes

A household is considered statutorily homeless when it has no accommodation which is available to them or which would be reasonable for them to remain occupying. When a household is eligible for assistance and homeless or threatened with homelessness and approaches one of the agencies in Solihull which can provide advice or assistance there are three potential outcomes:

Prevention - When a household is threatened with homelessness the local authority has a duty to prevent homelessness. This lasts for 56 days but may be extended.

Relief - When a household is already homeless or when homelessness cannot be prevented the local authority will owe it a relief duty – help to find settled accommodation – duty lasts for 56 days

Main housing duty – Once prevention and relief duties have ended, if the household remains unintentionally homeless, is in priority need, and has a local connection to the area, the authority has a duty to make available suitable accommodation until the longer term housing needs are resolved.

During the first 9 months of the operation of the HRA, April – December 2018, the volume of activity can be described by the following headline data

- There were 1690 approaches to providers
- 293 decisions (on whether the applicant is homeless, in priority need and not intentional) were made, of which 198 were accepted as homeless and in priority need
- The prevention duty ended for 178 cases of which 105 (59%) were successful preventions
- The relief duty ended for 302 cases of which 166 (55%) were successful reliefs
- The main housing duty was owed to 112 households
- 165 accepted homeless cases were rehoused in settled accommodation by SCH
- there were a further 98 homeless applicants where the main duty had been accepted but were still in TA awaiting a settled offer

Information, Advice and Assistance

The three main providers work with the Council and others to ensure that information, advice and assistance is freely available to those who may need it. For those who may have housing issues and are not yet threatened with homelessness this covers:

- Publication of information, in print and online, which may help people whose housing problem may develop into a homelessness issue

- Provision of info on specific issue on request
- Provision of P2P information on request
- Advice to people on housing issues
- Assistance with a housing problem which may lead to homelessness

The support of other agencies is vital in seeking to provide this universal service, notably:

- The Income and Awards team within the Council's Resources directorate plays a critical role in supporting tenants through award of Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP), and the management of a Homelessness Prevention Fund, supported by 1 FTE co-located with the housing options team to provide financial assistance to customers who are homeless or threatened with homelessness
- Age UK - The commissioned arrangements for the provision of advice services in Solihull changed in early 2019 and these saw the main contract awarded to Age UK
- CASB - continues to be a source of advice particularly given that the agency has the local contract with DWP for providing advice on the the Universal Credit roll-out
- Solihull Churches Action on Homelessness - SCAH have contributed to the wellbeing of homeless people in Solihull for 25 years and is continually looking for new ways in which it can assist the Council to meet needs. SCAH is responsive and flexible so can provide assistance at short notice.

Recommendations for the Strategy

- Review the scope, consistency and quality of available information
- Develop relationships with new advice agencies
- provide clear and consistent messages to the public and the media about homelessness and how the Council and partners are working to limit and reduce it
- consider the economic and social implications of homelessness

Approaches and Referrals

Customers can approach SCH or St Basils direct or partner agencies can refer customers where they believe they may be homeless or threatened with homelessness, and will have a duty to do so if they are one of the organisations specified in the Homelessness Reduction Act. SCH will refer cases on to St Basils or SIAS where they are best placed to respond

Sightings of rough sleepers may be reported to Streetlink by the public or agencies and these are picked up by SIAS Outreach who will follow-up the report within 24 hours, carrying out an outreach visit to make contact with the individual where possible.

Where there is a reason to believe that the applicant may be homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days SCH or St Basils are under a duty to investigate

Homelessness Prevention Duty

Where SCH or StBasils were satisfied that the applicant is eligible for assistance and threatened with homelessness within 56 days the prevention duty arises. This requires reasonable steps to be taken to help the applicant keep accommodation

During April to December 2018 a total of 105 households (families / singles) were prevented from becoming homeless through the intervention of SCH, St Basils, SIAS or another agency. (This will include cases where an application was made prior to April)

The three organisations employ a range of prevention approaches according to the circumstances presented by the customer. In terms of the main causes for loss of settled accommodation the most used approaches are:

- Mediation – with parents, family / friends
- Money advice – for renters and owners
- Solihome prevents homelessness by sustaining PRS tenancies and has enjoyed 2 successes through mediation between tenant and landlord.

Whatever the type of household there are clear benefits in earlier engagement so that chances of prevention are maximised. However, SCH and St Basils report a sustained increase in ‘homeless today’ approaches – 467 over the 9 months, averaging 52 per month but peaking at 80 in October and November 2018. This is clearly a cause for concern as there is no opportunity to prevent homelessness and eligible cases go straight to the relief stage

Recommendations for the Strategy

- Work with other agencies to jointly identify opportunities for earlier ‘upstream’ intervention
- Work with partner agencies to identify the causes of the increase in ‘homeless today’ approaches and agree any joint responses which may reduce their number
- Develop a clear understanding of which prevention methods are the most successful
- Develop a clear understanding of the causes of repeat homelessness and consider policy responses to it

Homelessness Relief Duty

Where an applicant is eligible and homeless when they approach the service, or where they have previously approached but prevention has not been possible, the Relief Duty will arise. This requires reasonable steps to help the applicant find accommodation and relief occurs when the applicant has access to secure accommodation that will be available for at least 6 months.

During the period April to December 2018, 166 households had their homelessness relieved through the intervention of SCH, St Basils or SIAS through the applicant accepting an offer of accommodation in the public or private sector, some of which also provides support.

SCH’s Solihome assists applicants to find a PRS home and sustain it through provision of a first month rent deposit and further assistance through DHP/ HP Fund where required. This has resulted in 25 successful reliefs in the first 8 months of operation

Main Housing Duty

Once prevention and relief duties have ended, if the household remains unintentionally homeless, is in priority need, and has a local connection to the area, the authority has a duty to make available suitable accommodation until the longer term housing needs are resolved.

This is usually achieved by the offer of settled accommodation through the Housing Allocations Scheme (‘Solihull Home Options’), which is managed by SCH.

During the period April to December 2018 there were 612 lets of social housing, 519 by SCH and 93 by housing associations. Of the SCH lets 29% were to homeless households and 18% of RSL lets. No lettings were made in the private rental sector to end the main housing duty. Most lets to homeless households were of flats with only 34 allocated houses.

Recommendations for Strategy

- The review of the Council's Housing Allocations Scheme to consider whether sufficient preference is given to homeless applicants and to recommend any changes to the Scheme arising from this analysis
- SCH to consider scope for ending the main housing duty in the private rental sector for selected cases
- Develop joint approaches to identifying people who may have a housing issue to provide an opportunity for upstream intervention and reduce the number of 'homeless today' cases

Temporary Accommodation (TA)

Where homelessness cannot be prevented it may be necessary for households to enter temporary accommodation. This may be before a statutory decision to allow investigations to be concluded, or where they are owed the full rehousing duty but must wait for a suitable home.

The number of properties which are designated TA by SCH has varied with demand but stood at 143 at the end of 2018. Most are flats from within the rented stock which SCH manages for the Council

Sourced by SCH	Number at end 2018	Number at 31.3.18	change	Notes
HRA self - contained	77	70	7	All are flats
HRA Ipswich Hse	21 places	21		
PSL self – contained	25	24	1	Houses – 6 Flats - 19
PSL grouped	20	20		
TOTAL	143	135	8	

During the nine months between implementation of the HRA in April 2018 and the end of the year, a total of 333 households had been placed in TA compared to 257 in the corresponding period of 2017, an increase of 29.5%.

Not only are more households entering TA but they are staying longer whilst SCH work with them on the relief duty (the time required being variable according to the case) or whilst waiting for an offer of permanent accommodation (time will depend on what the household needs)

Unfortunately the increased demand for TA has led to more regular placements in hotel accommodation following the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act in April 2018 as shown in the table below

Time period	No.households	Families	SWEP	No. nights ave	% all TA places
2015	90	27	3	25	31% (290 households)
2016	3	1	0	11	0.74% (405 households)
2017	12	1	3	5	2.5% (480 households)
2018 April – Dec	72	23	6	6	16.62% (433 households)

It is clear that since April 2018 hotel use has not been limited to only the ‘exceptional circumstances’ envisioned by the Homelessness Strategy. SCH have been using it on a more frequent basis to deal with short term supply issues whilst more appropriate TA is found. SCH are reviewing the size and composition of the TA portfolio to minimise the use of BB in terms of numbers of households and time spent in in hotels

Recommendations for the Strategy

- Provide clear expectations on the use of budget hotels in the coming year
- ensure prevention resources are focused on larger families to prevent the need to place them in TA which is at considerable cost to SCH and has a negative impact on the well-being of the individuals.
- The review of the housing allocations scheme to also address how Solihull Home Options operates in relation to the relief of homelessness, and in meeting the needs of larger families in temporary accommodation

Support for Vulnerable people

The Council and partners work to support and protect vulnerable people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness regardless of the statutory duty which is owed to them. In this context ‘vulnerable’ applies to many people in many circumstances, including:

- Children
- Young people up to 25
- Single people over 25
- Care leavers
- Young mothers / families
- All those rough sleeping or at risk
- Older people
- People with LD,
- mental health needs,
- drug or alcohol dependency
- People with long term / limiting illness
- Ex-offenders
- Victim or at risk of DA

The type and extent of support will vary according to the needs of the person, their capacity and their situation. Examples of support provided directly or via referral to specialist agency include

- Counselling and coaching
- Specialist / clinical help e.g. on mental health or addictions
- Money advice

- Assistance to live independently – tenancy management etc.

Consultees have raised the value of strengths-based approaches which put an emphasis on building on what the customer can do, and also the importance of sustaining people in their new accommodation once their homelessness is ended.

Where a person has encountered a crisis - homelessness and other problems – they may require a high level of support at first but providers will be looking to reduce this as the individual recovers and is able to retake responsibility.

Some will have complex needs and higher levels of vulnerability and will require support for a more sustained period of time to ensure that once they are found suitable accommodation they are able to maintain their tenancy and avoid repeat homelessness.

Accommodation and Support Services for young singles

An important aspect of local provision is accommodation with support for vulnerable people. These clients may not have formally applied as homeless or had a statutory decision but were nevertheless homeless, at risk and in need of support. At the end of 2018 the main provision was as follows:

Provider	Customer group	Schemes	No. places
St Basils	Single people to age 25	Mildenhall House, Lode Lane	12
St Basils	Single people to age 25	Venture House, Kingshurst	9
St Basils	Single people to age 25	Yardley House, Yardley	5
St Basils	Single people to age 25	Supported lodgings Nightstop	5
Bromford	Young mothers / families	Galeno Place Geraldine Court	16
Bromford	Single people to age 25	Pathways	6
Bromford	Single people to age 25	Floating support	32
St Basils	Single people to age 25	Turnaround	12

During 2017/18 Home Group made the decision to withdraw from this type of provision. They had 3 schemes in management which provided 25 places in total. One (Venture House) has been taken on by St Basils, but neither of the other schemes are available for use for accommodating homeless people so there has been a net loss of 16 places.

Despite St Basils securing the use of 5 places at Yardley House with the agreement of BCC, this has negatively impacted on the Solihull Youth Hub's ability to place customers in suitable accommodation. Many have to be housed outside of the Borough with private registered providers

(commonly in Birmingham) whilst local vacancies become available. The capacity of the St Basils Turnaround scheme has been increased to support young people whilst they are accommodated outside Solihull.

The Solihull Youth Hub now acts as a single point of access for single people up to age 25. Following the 'positive Pathway' model which St Basils have developed, the Hub assisted over 500 customers in its first year of operation, preventing or relieving homelessness for 355 people, which included supporting 167 into accommodation.

All contracts are being extended to March 2020 to allow for preparation of a commissioning strategy for all aspects of the Youth Pathway – the hub, accommodation and support.

There is a shortage of move-on accommodation for single people to allow turnover in first-stage supported accommodation which results in it being silted up, denying opportunities to new customers. This means that there is a shortage of second-stage or move-on accommodation where reduced level of support as clients gain capacity and independence.

One way in which the council is seeking to address this is through the reuse of flats at Lakeside, Kingshurst as live/work accommodation for young people who no longer need intensive support and who have secured employment.

Vulnerable adults – Rough Sleepers and Singles Over 25

We recognise that for many single people over 25 homelessness is often one of several issues in their lives so the council has commissioned BSMHFT to provide a specialist service to provide information, advice and assistance including regular surgeries, floating support and rough sleeper outreach. The service is provided by Solihull Integrated Addiction Services (SIAS).

SIAS provides an outreach service for rough sleepers to meet the requirements of the Council's Rough Sleeping Protocol which sets out roles and responsibilities of the various agencies in responding to reports of rough sleepers, supporting individuals on the street and seeking to re-accommodate them.

Solihull operates the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) from 1 November to 31 March. This comes into operation when temperatures drop below freezing or where there are other particularly adverse weather events and guarantees someone who claims to have nowhere to stay a bed for at least one night in Council temporary accommodation or a budget hotel.

Keeping the number of rough sleepers as low as possible during 2018 has required greater input from the outreach and support service. The capacity of the service was therefore increased in 2018 to provide a 7 day, 24 hour response time to reports of rough sleepers and weekend contacts with known rough sleepers during periods when SWEP is activated. This is aimed at ensuring that severe weather provision is available to all who need it and that anyone who is placed under SWEP arrangements receives follow-up support to find suitable longer term accommodation.

We distinguish between rough sleepers and street beggars who have accommodation available to them. Whilst the Council is clear on its strategy to support rough sleepers, it is consulting the police and other local partners on how to address the increase in begging in the town centre and elsewhere in the Borough.

Housing First

Solihull has implemented the new approach to accommodating rough sleepers and those at risk from March 2019 and aims to accommodate 27 individuals by March 2021, with support for individuals continuing as necessary up to 31.03.23.

To enable this a regional funding allocation of £518k has been received for the 3 years. This will pay for a dedicated support worker and will enhance SIAS support service in drugs and alcohol misuse

Our partner providing support will be Fry Accord [tbc] and we will be working with Solihull Community Housing and Registered Providers with stock in Solihull to source the units of accommodation.

The Housing First pilot provides Solihull with the opportunity to test new methods of supporting individuals with complex needs to ensure that they are able to sustain a tenancy and address wider support needs

Alternative Giving

Discussions with local partners including the police and the Solihull Business Improvement Team (Solihull BID) during the past year have shown a consensus that an alternative giving arrangement in Solihull is essential. Whilst there are few regular rough sleepers there has been an increase in the number of beggars and public generosity in donating money directly to people on the street is encouraging this increase.

Solihull is working with the WM Mayors office to introduce 'Change into Action' to Solihull and will set up a steering group with the police, Solihull BID, SIAS and Solihull Churches Action on Homelessness.

The aim is to launch a scheme during the Spring / Summer and refine it through the year so it is fully operational by autumn 2019.

Homeless ex – offenders

Fry Accord provide accommodation and support for single people over 25 who have offended. The majority are homeless or would be homeless were it not for the 35 places which are available at Dormer House and its satellite houses.

The scheme has previously been funded by Supporting People, is supported by probation and is an essential component of local provision for single homeless people.

Rough Sleeping Initiative

Solihull was not entitled to bid to the first round of RSI but, following the publication of the Government's Rough Sleeping Strategy, bidding for the remaining RSI funding of £11 million has been opened up to authorities which are not considered to have high numbers of rough sleepers.

We have submitted a bid to request funding for a rough sleeper co-ordinator to pull together all of the various Council and partner services in response to rough sleeping and to manage the interface with other street activity, notably begging.

This would include

- reviewing Solihull's Rough Sleeper Protocol to meet the aims of the National Rough Sleeper Strategy, co-ordinating partners to share information and agreeing appropriate service responses to known and suspected rough sleepers
- agreeing a suitable process for escalation within each partner organisation so that immediate responses to rough sleepers on the street can be activated at the time required
- and supporting Council departments and wider services to agree approach to enforcement in response to begging, public order offences etc.

Recommendations for the Strategy

- work toward the elimination of rough sleeping in Solihull
- Adopt a Strengths based approach to support
- Promote the Sustainment of customers in new accommodation after homelessness
- Develop a Commissioning strategy for all supported accommodation for homeless people
- Seek to provide more move-on accommodation
- Strengthen and diversify the support network for rough sleepers
- Manage the interface between rough sleeping and street begging
- Introduce an alternative giving scheme

Partnerships

The development and maintenance of partnerships is essential to draw in value and to help and encourage parties to plan and work together on a common understanding and shared objectives.

We need the commitment of colleagues across the Council and partners in other agencies to plan and act together to reduce homelessness

The Multi – Agency Homelessness Forum (MAHF) is a long-standing operational partnership group which is consistently well supported by partner agencies and Council colleagues. It has played an important role in co-ordinating delivery and as a sounding board for new approaches and initiatives

A view was expressed in consultation that there needs to be a strategic group to complement MAHF. This was trialled in early 2019 and it was agreed that it could add value to our joint planning and delivery so the strategy will recommend that this should be a standing group which is linked to the Solihull Together Board (STB) through which the Council plans activity with health, police, etc.

The importance of joint planning and working to address homelessness was recognised by the STB early in 2019 during the strategy consultation and it the Board requested a report on progress later in the year.

The value of partnerships must be manifest in the quality and connectivity of services. In 2018 we worked with partners to produce several tangible improvements in joint working using the new Duty to Refer as the basis for extending and improving arrangements for referrals with a range of agencies, mainly strengthening existing arrangements but also forging some new ones

Under the duty, agencies specified in the Act must notify the housing authority where they have reason to believe a person may be homeless or threatened with homelessness. The specified agencies are -

- Prisons (public and private); Youth offender institutions; Secure training centres; Secure colleges; Youth offending teams; Probation services (community rehabilitation companies and national probation service)
- Accident and emergency services provided in a hospital; Urgent treatment centres and all other providers of community and primary urgent care, including services locally designated as urgent care centres, minor injury units, minor injury services and walk in centres ; Hospitals in their capacity of providing in-patient treatment
- Social service authorities
- Jobcentre Plus
- Secretary of State for Defence (Regular Armed Forces)

In Solihull referrals are made to SCH, St Basils or SIAS according to the age and situation of the person. All relevant agencies were notified prior to introduction, a partner workshop was hosted by SCH and other assistance has been offered.

Agencies use the Alert system within the Housing Jigsaw program (except for DWP who use other means). During October and December 2018 SCH received 31 referrals, some from non-statutory services which we included in the offer because we want to maximise referrals from all informed parties to enable early intervention

This desire to increase opportunities for prevention also underpins our work with partners on developing 'Pathways' for customer groups specified in the Code of Guidance, together with additional groups that we wish to add.

The specified groups are:

- care leavers
- ex-offenders
- people with mental ill-health
- people who have suffered domestic abuse
- people who have served in UK forces,
- people leaving hospital

The strategy will recommend that the following are added:

- rough sleepers (incorporating the current rough sleeper protocol)
- people who have been involved in modern slavery
- people who have been homeless but are now looking for education, training or employment.

The intention is to ensure that these individuals are receiving accurate and consistent information advice and assistance that gives them the best possible opportunity to have homelessness prevented or relieved

SCH has led on the development of pathways thus far and a start has been made on all except mental health and the local additions. Arrangements are now in place for this to commence in 2019/20 along with further development of all the other pathways.

Recommendations for the Strategy

- Develop understanding of demand trends and costs of homelessness through cross-agency work including the SIIG priority projects
- developing insights from those with lived experience of homelessness
- Support the continuation of the Solihull Youth Hub in 2019/20 and in the longer term
- Establish a strategic homelessness group to link with the Solihull Together Board
- Develop Pathways with partners and keep under continual review