

## Watford Borough Council - Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-25 – Refreshed Action Plan 2023-25

This refreshed Action Plan is linked to Watford Borough Council's [Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-25](#). The Action Plan is in two parts:

- **Part A**, which contains measures (actions) under each of the Key Priorities that are already happening but significant improvement in their delivery is wanted.
- **Part B**, containing new initiatives under each of the Key Priorities.

Part A: Initiatives that will continue with improved delivery

Key Priority 1: Preventing homelessness

<i>Objective 1: Tackling the causes of homelessness and rough sleeping and improving the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act</i>						
<i>Action No.</i>	<i>Action Description</i>	<i>Who is leading on this action?</i>	<i>Who and what resources are needed to achieve this action</i>	<i>How will success be measured?</i>	<i>By when success will be achieved?</i>	<i>Comments</i>
<b>Action 1</b>	Review and update the Council's housing web pages annually to ensure they are accessible and provide up to date information and advice.	Watford Borough Council (WBC)	WBC Housing and Web Team	Housing options and homelessness information web pages on the council's website are up to date	September 2023	First update to be completed following the customer journey mapping
<b>Action 2</b>	Review and simplify the online Housing Advice Form (HAF) to make it easier for potentially homeless households to access advice and support they need.	WBC	Housing Solutions Team	A simplified, online housing and homelessness advice form is available.	June 2023	High priority
<b>Action 3</b>	Work with key partners to develop a prison release protocol to prevent homelessness and deliver training for staff and partners.	WBC	WBC Housing Solutions Probation Service Prison Service	100% prison discharges are planned  Partner awareness and training has taken place	December 2023  January 2024	
<b>Action 4</b>	Continue housing and homelessness education work in schools through the Home Truths programme.	Herts Young Homeless	Herts Young Homeless	Quarterly monitoring meetings are held with HYH.	Each quarter or at least twice yearly.	Meetings to be set up to review funding, number of students, colleges targeted and outcomes.
<b>Action 5</b>	Establish website for Watford Strategic Homelessness Forum to share information between Forum members.	WBC Housing Web Team with input from partners	Housing Strategy Officer Communications and Engagement Manager	A Watford Strategy Homelessness Forum website is set up	March 2024	To be used to store minutes, papers and annual reports of partners and other information.
<b>Action 6</b>	Embed the Single Homeless Pathway by: 1. Scoping a shared IT system for information sharing (e.g. Inform) 2. Review how person-centred the pathway is and produce a summary for the WSHF. 3. Define criteria for the levels of support need for each level of accommodation.	Watford Strategic Homelessness Forum	Single Homeless Pathway Co-ordinator Single Homeless Pathway Strategy Group	1. A singular IT system for the SHP is scoped. 2. Review complete and summary provided to WSHF identifying any actions / training needed. 3. Criteria defined and communicated to partners.	1. March 2024 2. September 2023 3. December 23 4. Jan-March 2024 5. September 2024	

Objective 1: Tackling the causes of homelessness and rough sleeping and improving the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act						
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	4. Create and carry out an implementation plan for embedding the HRA within the SHP to include training and support for partner agencies 5. Embed the role of the HRA within the SHP. 6. Review SHP governance arrangements and level of meetings			4. Implementation plan created and carried out. Process guide produced. 5. HRA embedded 6. Review of governance taken place	6. June 2024	
<b>Action 7</b>	Work with partners to develop the concept of an integrated single homelessness service.  Carry out a feasibility study looking at demand, costs, site options, etc.	WBC	Housing Watford Strategic Homelessness Forum members	Feasibility study completed and report with recommendations considered by Forum.	June 2024	
<b>Action 8</b>	Develop a Communications plan, promoting the Council's homeless prevention service and early intervention approach.  Implement the Plan using all channels of communication including press releases and social media.	WBC	Housing Strategy Officer Housing Solutions Manager Communications & Engagement Manager	A communications plan is developed and approved including an implementation plan.  The Communications Plan is implemented, and regular monitoring is put in place.	December 2023	
<b>Action 9</b>	Together with internal and external stakeholders, including other local authorities, identify and develop timely responses to housing situations that may lead to homelessness, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>cuckooing,</li> <li>gangs,</li> <li>domestic violence</li> <li>modern slavery</li> <li>tackling illegal evictions</li> </ul>	Watford Strategic Homelessness Forum	WBC: Housing Department; Community Safety Team; Legal Team Watford Strategic Homelessness Forum Watford Police Hertfordshire Las Watford Citizens Advice	Pathways are formalised for responding to cuckooing, gang-related incidents, domestic violence, and modern slavery.  Resources for challenging and tackling illegal evictions are identified	October 2023	
<b>Action 10</b>	Identify avenues of preventing homelessness upstream working with stakeholders on information provision.  Carry out research with homeless households to identify factors which indicate how homelessness could have been prevented at an earlier stage, including floating support and apply the lessons learned	WBC	Housing Solutions Team Revenues & Benefits  Watford homeless support providers CAB	Information on likely indicators of homelessness and avenues of information on potentially homeless households established.  Research carried out and report provided.	September 2023  September 2023	

<i>Objective 1: Tackling the causes of homelessness and rough sleeping and improving the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act</i>						
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			GPs, health services, Revenues & Benefits, JobCentre+, Prisons			
<b>Action 11</b>	Capture and report on the extent to which upstream homelessness prevention activities delivers: a) savings to health, community protection and other services b) promotes individual and family well-being including improved health and educational attainment	WBC	Housing Strategy Officer	Project developed and initial research started.  Cost savings established and reported on.	March 2024  December 2024	
<b>Action 12</b>	Integrate the activities of local stakeholders in preventing homelessness through secondment, training and shared learning, or working in each other's offices	Watford Strategic Homelessness Forum		Programme of training, secondment and shared learning opportunities developed and agreed by Homelessness forum.  Implementation and training delivered.	September 2023  March 2024	
<b>Action 13</b>	Research what schemes are in place in other areas that deliver online homeless prevention training, which prioritises education, training, and employment, how to access the private rented sector, knowing where to find help, etc. and implement a scheme in Watford	WBC	Housing Solutions Housing Property Teams	Research completed and reported with key findings and recommendations.  Online training course developed and made available on the council's website	June 2024  December 2024	

<i>Objective 2: Improving access to affordable and sustainable housing options</i>						
<i>Action No.</i>	<i>Action Description</i>	<i>Who is leading on this action?</i>	<i>Who and what resources are needed to achieve this action</i>	<i>How will success be measured?</i>	<i>By when success will be achieved?</i>	<i>Comments</i>
<b>Action 14</b>	HomeLet – review the council's financial assistance scheme to enable homeless households to access private rented homes	WBC	Housing Property Manager and Team Leader Housing Strategy Officer	A revised HomeLet policy and procedure and updated website information are in place	March 2024	A new procedure could be promoted through the Landlord forum.
<b>Action 15</b>	Review and update the Councils Nominations (Allocations) Policy	WBC	Housing Strategy Officer	New Nominations Policy adopted by Cabinet.	June 2023	

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Objective 2: Improving access to affordable and sustainable housing options						
Action No.	Action Description	Who is leading on this action?	Who and what resources are needed to achieve this action	How will success be measured?	By when success will be achieved?	Comments
				Housing Register reviewed and all applications re-banded according to new policy.	September 2023	
<b>Action 16</b>	Enable Affordable Homes delivery: 1. WBC Strategic Affordable Homes group to lead on delivery of affordable homes by WBC and partner RPs 2. Meet quarterly with WCH to review the number, type and size of new affordable homes focussing on the need for larger social rented homes for benefit capped households. 3. Meet annually with other housing association partners in the borough to discuss WBC’s affordable housing needs and opportunities for delivery. 4. Review and report annually numbers in the Affordable housing pipeline split by Shared ownership/ Affordable and social rented for all RPs to CMB and Portfolio Holders.	WBC	Property Team Housing Strategy Planning (Policy and Development Control) WCH RPs	1. New social rented homes are delivered 2. Quarterly meetings in place with WCH 3. Annual meeting with other RPs held. 4. Annual report to CMB and Portfolio Holders	1. March 2026 2. First quarterly meeting by end July 2023 3. First annual meeting by end March 2024 4. First annual report by end June 2024	
<b>Action 17</b>	Review the effectiveness of and knowledge about the Watford Credit Union to ensure WBC Housing Team and partners are aware of it and enable clients to make use of it.	WBC	Housing Solutions Manager Housing Property Manager/Team Leader	Review has taken place with Watford Credit Union and a summary report prepared with actions	December 23	

## Key Priority 2: Providing services to homeless households and homeless vulnerable adults relevant to their needs

Objective 1: Preventing and responding to rough sleeping						
Action No.	Action Descriptions	Who is leading on this action?	Who and what resources are needed to achieve this action	How will success be measured?	By when success will be achieved?	Comments
Action 18	Work with Hertfordshire County Council on best use of housing-related support funding via the prospectus for support for single homeless, review options for floating support.	WBC	Housing Strategy Officer	Officers engaged in tendering to ensure WBC secures sufficient funding to provide support to people at risk of rough sleeping.	March 2024	
Action 19	Achieve and maintain zero rough sleepers on the streets of Watford by carrying out regular monitoring of numbers on the streets.	WBC	Single Homeless Pathway Co-ordinator New Hope Street Outreach Service	Official annual count completed.  Bi-monthly RSI counts Street Outreach Service recorded and reported-.	November 2023 November 2024  Bi-monthly	

Objective 2: Providing individualised support for families with children and vulnerable adults						
Action No.	Action Description	Who is leading on this action?	Who and what resources are needed to achieve this action	How will success be measured?	By when success will be achieved?	Comments
<b>Action 20</b>	<p>Ensure the duties of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 are carried out to their fullest extent including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Work towards ensuring council interview facilities meet psychologically informed environment (PIE) principles.</li> <li>2. Complete staff training to embed person centred motivational and coaching interview techniques.</li> <li>3. Develop a programme of learning and training opportunities with internal and external partners.</li> </ol>	WBC	Housing Solutions Manager Head of Customer Services	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Interview facilities meeting Psychologically Informed Environment (PIE) principles are in place.</li> <li>2. Motivational and coaching interview training completed by all officers in Housing Solutions, Caseworkers and Housing Property Teams</li> <li>3. Programme developed with internal and external partners</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. March 2024</li> <li>2. March 2024</li> <li>3. September 2023</li> </ol>	
<b>Action 21</b>	<p>Ensure households access all benefits they are entitled to including using Discretionary Housing Payments</p> <p>Establish a working group to review best use of DHP in relation to homeless prevention, including potential for a local emergency grant system to top up benefits for benefit capped families.</p> <p>Carry out the Review and report back findings and recommendations.</p>	WBC	Housing Revs and Benefits	<p>Working Group established</p> <p>Review of current use of DHP is completed and report completed with recommendations.</p>	<p>September 23</p> <p>March 2024</p>	WBC Housing are given part of the DHP pot so completing a review will need the agreement of Revs & Bens
<b>Action 22</b>	<p>Carry out information sharing on early prevention of homelessness through shadowing, attending team meetings, etc with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children's and families team</li> <li>• Women's services</li> <li>• Health services</li> <li>• JobCentre+</li> <li>• Community protection</li> <li>• Justice services</li> </ul>	WBC	Housing Solutions Manager	<p>Programme of information sharing agreed and shared with partners.</p> <p>Caseworkers are regularly based at key organisations within the town to provide face to face support on homelessness</p>	<p>September 23</p> <p>By December 23</p>	
<b>Action 23</b>	Review the Intentionally homeless families protocol in place with Families First Homeless Prevention Team at HCC	WBC	Housing Solutions Mgr HCC's Families First Homeless Prevention Team	Review meeting held, review completed and learning shared	December 2023	



<i>Objective 2: Providing individualised support for families with children and vulnerable adults</i>						
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<b>Action 24</b>	Carry out an annual review of the Temporary Accommodation Strategy to ensure it is a proactive service, that the agreed principles are followed and that the right mix and number of TA properties is available	WBC	Housing Property Team Property Team Planning (Policy & Development Control) Commuted Sums Capital sums	Annual review completed and report on findings delivered to CMB and Portfolio Holders.	First refresh: September 2023 Second refresh: September 2024	
<b>Action 25</b>	Consider the housing needs of young people under 35, whose housing options are extremely limited through exploring co-housing or similar schemes.	Watford Strategic Homelessness Forum	WSHF Working group / WBC	Options review completed and reported to Watford Strategic Homelessness Forum.	June 2024	
<b>Action 26</b>	Develop an offer for households with pets in temporary or complex needs accommodation.	WBC	Housing Property Manager Team Leader	A scheme to house pets of homeless households is established	March 2024	Could use social media to ask for help
<b>Action 27</b>	Develop a tenant ready training programme for homeless households using learning from elsewhere.	WBC	Housing Property Manager Team Leader Housing Solutions Manager	Research into schemes used elsewhere completed.  A training course for households placed in PRS or in temporary accommodation is established.	March 2024  September 2024	
<b>Action 28</b>	Work with JobCentre+, the Hope Academy, OneYMCA and West Herts College to enable more homeless households, including rough sleepers, to be job ready, and have access to available job vacancies.	WBC	Housing Solutions Mgr Welfare Advice Officer JobCentre+ New Hope West Herts College OYMCA	Review available services for homeless people.  Develop an information leaflet to provide clear accessible information to all households	September 2024  March 2025	
<b>Action 29</b>	Work with Citizen's Advice Bureau and other partners to identify homeless prevention services particularly relating to the cost of living crisis and debt management	WBC	Housing CAB Other partners	Options considered and a plan for future services developed.	March 2023	


## Part B: New activities for the period to March 2025

## Key Priority 1: Preventing homelessness.

Objective 1: Tackling the causes of homelessness and rough sleeping and improving the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act						
Action No.	Action Description	Who is leading on this action?	Who and what resources are needed to achieve this action	How will success be measured?	By when will success be achieved?	Comments
<b>Action 30</b>	Reduce the risk of homelessness for refugees (Afghan, Ukrainian, Sudanese, asylum seekers given right to remain). See Also Objective 2	WBC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Housing Solutions</li> <li>Other Herts LAs housing options teams</li> <li>Housing Property Team</li> <li>HCC's Families First Team</li> </ul>	As few refugee households as possible are placed in TA, and if they are, they spend as little time as possible in it before moving on to settled accommodation	Ongoing	

Objective 2: Improving access to affordable and sustainable housing options						
Action No.	Action Description	Who is leading on this action?	Who and what resources are needed to achieve this action	How will success be measured?	By when will success be achieved?	Comments
<b>Action 31</b>	Enabling access to affordable sustainable housing options for refugees. See also Objective 1	WBC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Housing Property Team</li> <li>WBC Property Team</li> </ul>	Sustainable and affordable homes of various sizes are procured anywhere in England	Ongoing	

## Key Priority 2: Providing services to homeless households and homeless vulnerable adults relevant to their needs

Objective 1: Responding to rough sleeping						
Action No.	Action Description	Who is leading on this action?	Who and what resources are needed to achieve this action	How will success be measured?	By when will success be achieved?	Comments
<b>Action 32</b>	Carry out Ending Rough Sleeping Plan for Year 2 of Rough Sleepers Initiative 5 (RSI5) funding	WBC	Single Homeless Pathway Co-ordinator Single Homeless Pathway Support Officer		March 2024	 Watford Ending Rough Sleeping Plan :