

**NOTICE OF DELEGATION OF DECISION TO CABINET MEMBER BY STRONG LEADER**

Section 15(4) of the Local Government Act 2000, the senior executive member may discharge any of the functions that are the responsibility of the Cabinet or may arrange for them to be discharged by another member of the Cabinet or Officer. On 1<sup>st</sup> December 2010, the Council adopted the Strong Leader Model for Corporate Governance 2011 as required under Part 3 of The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (The 2007 Act).

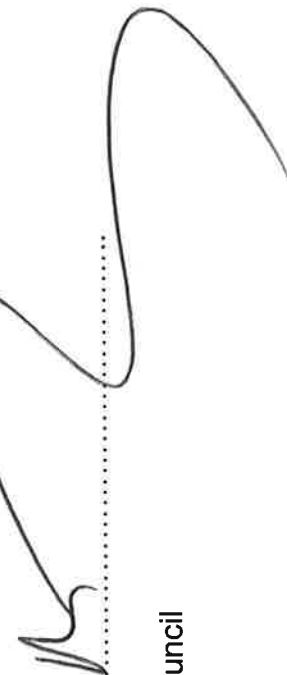
I, Marcus Hart, as Strong Leader, delegate the decision to approve the Interim Worcestershire Homelessness Strategy Action Plan to the Cabinet Member detailed below:

Cabinet Member- Councillor Chris Rogers

Dated:

14<sup>th</sup> April, 2017.

Signed: .....



Leader of the Council

**NOTICE OF DECISION OF CABINET MEMBER**

Pursuant Section 15(4) of the Local Government Act 2000, as amended by section 63 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, the senior executive member may discharge any of the functions that are the responsibility of the Cabinet or may arrange for them to be discharged by another member of the Cabinet or Officer. On 1<sup>st</sup> December 2010, the Council adopted the Strong Leader Model for Corporate Governance 2011 as required under Part 3 of The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (The 2007 Act).

In accordance with the authority delegated to me by the Leader, I have made the following decision:

Subject	Decision	Reason for decision	Date for Decision to be taken
Interim Worcestershire Homeless Strategy Action Plan	To approve the countywide action plan for one year (until March 2018).	The current five year Worcestershire Homeless Strategy ends in March 2017. The Interim Worcestershire Homeless Strategy Action Plan has therefore been developed to meet our legal requirement to have a homeless strategy. It is only an interim document whilst we await the Homelessness reduction bill to become legislation and at that point we will commence working on a full update to the Worcestershire Homeless Strategy.	14.3.17.

**I confirm that the appropriate statutory officer consultation has taken place with regard to this decision.**

Dated:

Signed:

  
 Chris Rogers  
 Cabinet Member

Councillor:

Cabinet Member

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**Strong Leader Report**

**Interim Worcestershire Homelessness Strategy Action Plan**

<b>OPEN</b>	
<b>DIRECTOR:</b>	Mike Parker
<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>	Kate Bailey
<b>APPENDICES:</b>	1. Action Plan 2. Homeless Review

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This report will consider the Interim Worcestershire Homelessness Strategy Action Plan, which replaces the current Worcestershire Homelessness Strategy on a short term basis, whilst we await the new Homelessness Reduction Bill to become legislation.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

The Cabinet Member for Health, Wellbeing and Housing is asked to decide that:

- 2.1 The draft Interim Worcestershire Homelessness Strategy Action Plan be approved.

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 made it a legal requirement for Local Housing Authorities (LHA) to undertake a regular review of homelessness within their geographical boundary and to develop a homeless strategy to tackle the issues identified through the review. In particular the review, and consequent strategy, must cover the following areas;
- 3.1.1 The levels of current and future levels of homelessness (all forms of homelessness not just statutory homeless)
  - 3.1.2 The activities carried out in district to prevent homelessness, secure accommodation and providing support to those homeless people who need support to prevent them becoming homeless again
  - 3.1.3 The resources available to LHA and other relevant organisations for carrying out these functions
- 3.2 The current Worcestershire Homelessness Strategy will expire in March 2017 and so a small officer group was formed (representative of all the LHAs) to undertake a Homeless Review (please see Appendix Two). This work has been concluded and the next step would normally be to develop a Homeless Strategy in consultation with partners but the timing of the Homelessness Reduction Bill has meant we need to delay this piece of work and the dCLG Specialist Homelessness Advisors have recommended putting the development of the full strategy on hold temporarily. The officers have therefore developed the interim action plan to commence (once approved) and to run until March 2018.
- 3.3 The Homelessness Reduction Bill is anticipated to be enacted in April 2018 which will leave a short timescales for officers to develop and consult on a Worcestershire Homeless Strategy.
- 3.4 The previous Worcestershire Homelessness Strategy had four overarching priorities;

- Providing a pathway to a housing solution for everyone that accesses our services.
- Creating strong partnerships to tackle homelessness.
- Taking effective action to prevent anyone new to the streets, having to sleep out for more than one night.
- Tackling financial deprivation of those affected by benefit reform, welfare reform and worklessness.

3.5 The majority of actions have been implemented including developing No Second Night Out to tackle rough sleeping, developing rent bond schemes for single people, closer working with health professionals, developing pathways and protocols for various client groups and developing action plans to address welfare reform. However not all actions have been achieved and this is due in part to public sector austerity and ongoing cuts to frontline services.

#### **4. KEY ISSUES**

- 4.1 The Homelessness Review has identified a number of significant changes to homelessness since the last review was undertaken including an increase in the number of statutory homeless approaches and acceptances and a reduction in the number of housing options available to households due to structural changes in housing supply, welfare reform and the loss of Supporting People funding.
- 4.2 Increasingly social and private landlords are reluctant to re-house the most vulnerable in society where they perceive the tenancies are more likely to fail, be harder to manage and lead to higher costs being incurred. This is compounded by a shortage of housing supply, making home ownership less affordable and out of the reach of low income households.
- 4.3 There appears to be a shift in types of households becoming homeless and in the complexity of homeless cases. Whilst some of the data is limited in certain districts there appears to be a greater number of homeless acceptances from single people as a proportion of total acceptances and an increase of length of stay in Bed and Breakfast – indicating that it is getting harder to house certain groups of applicant.
- 4.4 The reasons for homelessness in Worcestershire reflect the national trends around family and friends no longer willing to accommodate, end of an assured shorthold tenancy and relationship breakdown (violent and non-violent). In Wyre Forest violent relationship breakdown is rising rapidly and is now the second highest cause of homelessness.
- 4.5 Around 80% of the total approaches have their homelessness prevented in Wyre Forest which is the highest in the county but may be due, in part, to good data collection methods. Wyre Forest achieves homeless prevention through focusing on debt advice, housing benefit resolution and crisis intervention.
- 4.6 Rough Sleeping levels have reduced across the county since the highest point in 2012 but are still higher than 2010. The greatest cause of homelessness in the rough sleeping population is the end of a tenancy in the private rented sector.
- 4.7 The Homelessness Review also captures some information from service users around accessing services, with 82% of homeless people stating they found it easy or very easy to access housing options services. However 17% of households still approached as homeless on the day in Wyre Forest, making prevention almost impossible.
- 4.8 The Homelessness Review also captures some information from partner organisations around gaps in services, accommodation issues and early prevention. The issue of the homeless services not adequately meeting the needs of families and single people with complex needs was flagged up. A further audit of services also identifies some gaps in service provision in parts of the county.

- 4.9 The interim action plan (please see appendix one) seeks to address the key issues identified in the review and has four key priorities;
- 4.9.1 Adopt an early prevention and intervention approach with a focus on single people and childless couples
- 4.9.2 Address the housing and support needs of homeless people with complex needs
- 4.9.3 Improve access to affordable, settled housing with a focus on those in temporary or “move on” accommodation
- 4.9.4 Improve customers’ resilience to prevent homelessness occurring throughout their lifetime

## **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The actions will be delivered within existing financial resources.

## **6. LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 It is a legal requirement for all local Housing Authorities to conduct a Homelessness Review and have a Homelessness Strategy. Due to the imminent introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Bill the LHAs in Worcestershire have undertaken a Homelessness Review but elected to only develop an interim Action Plan until March 2018 when the position around the new legislation will be clearer..
- 6.2 The Homelessness Reduction Bill will prompt the development of a new strategy and action plan as more information and timescales become known.

## **7. EQUALITY IMPACT NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1 An EIA screening tool will need to be completed once the final Homelessness Strategy is agreed to understand impact.

## **8. RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 8.1 It is a legal requirement to undertake a Homeless Review and have a Homelessness Strategy in place. The LHAs in Worcestershire have met this obligation through conducting a review and developing an Interim Worcestershire Homelessness Strategy Action Plan.

## **9. CONCLUSION**

- 9.1 The LHAs have developed an interim action plans that seeks to address key issues identified in the Homelessness Review. The Homelessness review addresses the required elements of a review including considering the current and future levels of homelessness, the activities carried out in the district to prevent homelessness, secure accommodation and providing support to those homeless people and the resources available to LHA and other relevant organisations for carrying out these functions.

## **10. CONSULTEES**

- 10.1 .The Homeless Review was developed following consultation with a number of partners and service users from across the county.

## **11. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 11.1 None.

## Interim Worcestershire Homelessness Strategy Action Plan January 2017 – March 2018

This one year *Interim* Homelessness Strategy Action Plan (2017-18) has been developed in recognition of the fact that the current Worcestershire Homelessness Strategy (2012-17) is out of date. It also takes into account that the Worcestershire Housing Partnership Plan has not yet received formal sign off and as such the high level homelessness actions coming out of that document are yet to be fully defined. It is also likely that the Homelessness Reduction Bill will become law in 2017, and as such it would be unwise to develop homeless strategy beyond the next 12 months as there will be implications from this legislation.

This document has been written based on the conclusions and recommendations within the Worcestershire Homelessness Review 2016, which has recently been finalised, and will direct Worcestershire Local Housing Authority homelessness policy objectives for the next 12 months. Views of customers and partner organisations were collected and analysed as part of the review and have fed into the development of this action plan. This will continue so that all stakeholders have the opportunity to inform future strategy action plans and high level homelessness actions within the Housing Partnership Plan.

### Priority 1: Adopt an early prevention and intervention approach with a focus on single people and childless couples

Action	Task/milestones	Lead responsibility	Timescale	Resource implication/VFM	Target/outcome
<b>Prepare for the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Bill</b>	Develop an action plan to deliver on the new duties	Worcestershire Strategic Housing Officers Group (WSHOG) Worcestershire Strategic Housing Partnership (WSHP)	Early 2017	New burdens funding?	All Worcestershire LA's and key partners are ready for implementation from Autumn 2017
<b>Protect and increase good quality, cost effective, support services</b>	Extend the current No Second Night Out provision to become No First Night Out (NFNO)  Deliver on proposals outlined in Homelessness Prevention Programme bid e.g. NFNO workers, support for private landlords	Single Homeless Pathways Officer, W'shire Housing Partnership Officer	April 2017	Homeless Prevention Programme – Rough Sleepers Funding	A reduction in the number of new rough sleepers.  NFNO implemented.
<b>Achieve the Gold Standard for Local Authority homelessness services</b>	Carry out benchmarking exercise to measure the cost effectiveness of homeless services	WSHOG	2017/18	Existing funding/resource, NPSS	Services achieve the Gold Standard and that services are VFM.  The cost effectiveness of homelessness

							prevention is demonstrated vs. statutory homelessness
Improve data collection and analysis to understand need, commission services based on “what works”, demonstrate cost effectiveness and to improve communications	Commission Homeless Journey Mapping Consider carrying out Young Persons Snapshot survey	WSHOG, WSHP	2017/8	Existing funding/resource	Need is understood and evidenced. Appropriate services are commissioned; existing services are maintained or reconfigured where appropriate.		
Upscale communications to improve the likelihood of preventing homelessness.	Review current communication and consider new ways to communicate, making use of social media and online tools.	Housing Advice Managers	2017/18	No new resource	Reduction in the amount of people approaching LA’s as “homeless on the day” People know to ask for advice at the earliest opportunity.		

**Priority 2: Address the housing and support needs of homeless people with complex needs**

Action	Task/milestones	Lead responsibility	Timescale	Resource implication/value for money	Target/outcome
Develop a different and more integrated approach (pathways) to meet the needs of families and single people with complex needs.	Further detail to come out of the Housing Partnership Plan once agreed and also the Homelessness Reduction Bill action plan	WSHP, WSHOG	2017/18		
Address the current gap in provision for continuing and entrenched rough sleepers	Extend SWEP so that it operates if 0 or below for one night.  Investigate ways to fund and commission outreach support for rough sleepers.  Bid for funding from the Controlling Migration Fund	Single Homeless Pathways Officer  As above  Working group to be set up	January 2017  2017/18  April 2017	Existing LA cold weather provision funding  Lottery funding – outcome of bid not yet known	SWEP extended and in operation.  Outreach support in operation.  Support to reconnect rough sleepers strengthened. Action against rogue landlords – overcrowding, dangerous conditions

<p><b>Work with County Council to address identified gaps in provision for Care Leavers (Ofsted, Corporate Parenting Board, Care Leavers Strategy)</b></p>	<p>Set up working group to (i) explore opportunities to increase housing provision for care leavers with complex needs (ii) improve processes to avoid care leavers being placed into B&amp;B accommodation (iii) ensure care leavers are tenancy ready and in work where possible (iv) carry out joint working/training across teams so that housing expectations are realistic</p>	<p>Working group (WCC and districts, RP's)</p>	<p>2017/18</p>	<p>Relevant recommendations from the Corporate Parenting Board, Care Leavers Strategy jointly achieved.</p> <p>Reduction/elimination of care leavers placed into B&amp;B accommodation.</p> <p>Reduction/elimination of care leavers approaching LA's as homeless.</p> <p>Increase in housing provision for care leavers with complex needs.</p>
<p><b>Prepare for the Government's future funding model for supported housing once announced (currently out for consultation)</b></p>	<p>Further detail to come out of the Housing Partnership Plan once agreed. Some schemes may become unviable, new development may be hindered.</p>	<p>WSHP, WSHOG, WCC Registered Providers</p>	<p>2017/18</p>	

**Priority 3: Improve access to affordable, settled housing with a focus on those in temporary or "move on" accommodation**

Action	Task/milestones	Lead responsibility	Timescale	Resource implication/value for money	Target/outcome
<p><b>Improve Local Authority emergency and interim accommodation arrangements</b></p>	<p>Undertake a review of emergency and interim accommodation arrangements. Investigate ways to expand provision.</p>	<p>WSHOG, LA Temporary Accommodation Officers</p>	<p>2017</p>		<p>The number of households in unsuitable emergency accommodation is decreased. Customers are moved more quickly into settled, affordable accommodation</p>
<p><b>Tackle barriers to moving on from temporary and "move on" accommodation</b></p>	<p>Further detail to come out of the Housing Partnership Plan once agreed.</p>	<p>WSHP</p>	<p>2017/8</p>		



<p><b>Improve access to accommodation for Under 35's and large families who are acutely affected by welfare reform</b></p>	<p>Deliver new models of accommodation, particular for under 35's, in partnership with registered providers and private landlords.</p> <p>Deliver new models of accommodation for large families or those whose housing options are limited due to affordability or poor tenancy history.</p>	<p>NFNO Officers, Single Homeless Pathways Officer, WSHP</p>	<p>2017/18</p>	<p>Homelessness Prevention Programme funding</p>	<p>LA's can meet requirements of Homelessness Reduction Bill Increase in homelessness prevention amongst Under 35's.</p>
<p><b>Improve access to private rented accommodation</b></p>	<p>Increase the use of tenancy ready schemes and tenancy support to improve access to the PRS, sustain accommodation and to prevent homelessness.</p>	<p>LA's</p>	<p>2017/18</p>		<p>Reduction in homelessness occurring from private rented accommodation Increase in number of properties offered through LA bond schemes</p>

**Priority 4: Improve customers' resilience to prevent homelessness occurring throughout their lifetime**

Action	Task/milestones	Lead responsibility	Timescale	Resource implication/value for money	Target/outcome
<p><b>Prepare for the impact of future Legislation and National Policy;</b></p>	<p>Ensure customers are prepared for/coping with the impact of welfare reform</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- targeted provision of information</li> <li>-they know how to get housing advice and the earliest possible opportunity</li> </ul>	<p>Housing Advice Teams, Revenues and Benefits Teams</p>	<p>On-going</p>	<p>No new resource</p>	<p>There is no increase in homelessness due to unaffordability/rent arrears/intentionality</p>

<p><b>Improve economic resilience</b></p>	<p>Work with partners/current resources with an aim to getting people into work</p> <p>Ensure customers are aware of debt advice services/have financial management skills/are maximising their benefit entitlement</p>		<p>On-going</p>		<p>As above.</p>
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# WORCESTERSHIRE HOMELESSNESS REVIEW 2016

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## Introduction

This homelessness review has been carried out to inform future homelessness services. In accordance with the Homelessness Act 2002, the comprehensive assessment of the nature and extent of homelessness across the County will enable the six Worcestershire districts to develop and deliver services in partnership with the aim of preventing and managing homelessness.

The purpose of the review is to:-

- Establish the extent of homelessness in the County
- Assess its likely extent in the future
- Identify what is currently being done, by whom
- Identify what level of resources are available, to prevent and tackle homelessness.

The Review gives an overview of data available on homelessness in Worcestershire, including details of applications made to the Council by homeless households and those threatened with homelessness. It draws on additional sources of information to explore the specific risks to households and gives an overview of the housing market and how this impacts on access to affordable housing and levels of homelessness.

We also consider the impact of different services and actions taken to prevent or relieve homelessness, including rough sleeping.

## 1 Impact of Legislation and National and Local Policy

### 1.1 National Policy

#### 1.1.1 The Localism Act

The Localism Act brought many opportunities for local authorities giving them greater control over their allocation policies. Changes that have been made by Worcestershire include amending the Home Choice Plus allocation policy. This has been done to restrict who can join the list, limiting it to households with a reasonable preference as defined by legislation, and those who meet the qualification criteria in respect of homelessness, residency and employment or other characteristic. Households with no housing need are no longer able to join the list unless they meet one of the exceptions such as requiring sheltered housing or being an existing social housing tenant. A reduced preference banding means that households with housing related debt over £500 and previous bad behaviour or large financial resources where they might be able to resolve their own housing need will have their preferences reduced, and those who are contributing to their community or unable to do so due to caring responsibilities or disability, are given additional preference on the waiting list.

This has had an effect on reducing households from the waiting list, however those removed would be either those with no connection to the five councils in Worcestershire or no housing need that stood no reasonable prospect of being rehoused. As such the impact upon households in the five council's area is negligible.

The introduction of reduced preference has meant that households with a reduced preference due to housing related debts do not stand a realistic prospect of being rehoused until they address the reasons for their debt such as paying off rent arrears. This means that private sector housing may be the only option for some households who are deemed homeless but have significant housing related debts in order to avoid lengthy stays in temporary accommodation. Looking at the length of time that households have spent in temporary accommodation, there does not seem to have been a rise in the length of time households spend and that would indicate that access to the private sector is currently providing a solution for these households however, access to this sector is becoming more challenging and this is highlighted later in the document.

Redditch Borough Council has reviewed its allocations policy following the 'Transformation' of its services with a view to ensuring that those in highest housing needs are offered the most suitable and sustainable property to meet those needs.

### **1.1.2 Fixed tenancies**

The Localism Act introduced a requirement for Local Authorities to provide a Tenancy Strategy and housing providers to provide a Tenancy Policy. This led to a number of Registered Providers introducing flexible tenancies to certain tenancy types or households. Under the Housing and Planning Act 2016 local authorities will be required to give fixed term tenancies to tenants. This will impact on Redditch as it is the only Local Authority in Worcestershire which has retained its housing stock. There has been no short term impact; however it could lead to an increase in homelessness households if their fixed term tenancies are not renewed if their family size decreases and the property is under occupied. In practice, Registered Providers are working with households to find suitable alternative accommodation and preventing homelessness wherever possible.

### **1.1.3 The benefit cap**

The negative impact of the previous benefit cap has to some extent been mitigated through the use of discretionary housing payments, budgeting advice and local welfare assistance. Some larger families have become homeless and resolving this is incredibly challenging due to the issue of extensive housing related debts meaning social housing may not be accessible. Debt and homelessness are significant issues which will inevitably lead to demand on family support and social care services. Whether cases have increased or not and are now impacting on Children's Services would be hard to evidence as there are always many factors involved.

Many households have been able to cope by reducing expenditure, entering employment, applying for exceptions (such as households where a member is disabled) and the use of discretionary housing payments whilst they sought work or explored exemptions.



### **1.1.4 The spare room subsidy**

The spare room subsidy, put in place for households under occupying their accommodation has not yet resulted in high numbers of evictions, though rent arrears may have increased. Many people have managed to find the shortfall, or been assisted by their family. It may also have encouraged families to stay together longer and had a positive impact on the number of young people presenting to services.

## **1.2 Future/on-going changes to National Policy & Legislation**

### **1.2.1 Homelessness Inquiry**

In December 2015, the Department of Communities and Local Government launched an inquiry into homelessness in light of evidence that homelessness is increasing throughout the UK. The report concluded that a demonstrable increase in homelessness, driven by the cost and availability of housing, has pushed the problem to such a level that a renewed Government-wide strategy is needed.

The report was published in August 2016 and a number of recommendations were made including;

- A change in homelessness legislation based on changes made in Wales which abolish priority need categories (subject to the results of the review) and support for the Homelessness Reduction Bill which looks to put a duty of prevention upon local authorities to ensure every homeless person receives the support they need.
- Better data collection to ensure that figures capture homelessness trends more accurately
- Enhanced monitoring of local authorities' homelessness reduction work and the statutory code of practice.
- A review of the definition of affordable housing to prevent the focus on home ownership disadvantaging households who are not able to afford low cost ownership
- In areas where there is a clear local need, homes for affordable rent must be built.
- Action plans and resources targeted to assist vulnerable groups and people with multiple complex needs.
- Look at providing a grace period for 18-21 year olds so that they do not immediately become ineligible to the housing element portion of Universal Credit when losing work which would increase the chances of them being unable to sustain accommodation, those in receipt of housing support having the option of direct payments upfront

### **1.2.2 The Homelessness Reduction Bill**

On 28<sup>th</sup> October 2016 the Homelessness Reduction Bill was voted through to the next stage in Parliament, winning unanimous support from MP's across political parties. The private members bill is now one step closer to becoming law. It places a duty on Council's to prevent homelessness at a much earlier stage and expands the categories of people eligible for support. This will have a big impact on Local Authorities and will require a local mobilisation plan for implementation.

### **1.2.3 Housing and Planning Act 2016 – effect on investment in social rented properties**

This Act will have a number of effects on the provision of affordable housing which has for a long time provided a housing option to both prevent households becoming homeless and as an option for households if they become homeless. In consideration of the decreasing use of the private rented sector as a tool of prevention and an inability to use it to discharge homeless duties, any reductions in the availability of affordable housing will have a detrimental impact upon homelessness.

One such change is the inclusion of ‘Starter Homes’ as affordable housing. Traditionally, when a developer builds a certain number of properties they need to provide a proportion as affordable housing. Many developers can be reluctant to do so believing it will make the development less economically viable if there are social properties mixed in. As Starter Homes count as affordable properties for the purpose of developments and section 106 agreements it is likely that developers will offer a greater proportion of properties for sale as Starter Homes leading to a decrease in the supply of other forms of affordable housing.

Supply of affordable housing would further be reduced by the roll out of the Right to Buy to housing association properties. Even though Right to Buy is being rolled out on a voluntary basis, from a practical point of view as housing associations will need to ensure that households are assisted to own properties, there may be little option but to adopt the Right to Buy. Although housing association tenants currently have a Right to Acquire, this is generally much less generous than the Right to Buy that tenants of local authority dwellings enjoy. As properties are purchased under Right to Buy there is an expectation that they will be replaced on a one for one basis with receipts from the sales recycled towards the cost of this. However, it may be difficult to achieve this and ultimately it is anticipated that the amount of properties in the social rented sector will reduce.

Redditch is the only local authority in Worcestershire with its own stock; as such the requirement to sell high value stock will only affect Redditch Borough Council. The Housing and Planning Act has so far given little substantive details regarding the level of grant to be given to housing associations for losses from Right to Buy and whether this will be sufficient to replace on a like for like basis, or a one for one basis, and even if this is the case many areas will face difficulties with identifying suitable land to build alternative properties in a timely manner.

The planning difficulties outlined above may be in some way mitigated by the Permission in Principles for housing lead developments, aimed to be provided at earlier stages in the development process to provide greater certainty of consent for housing lead developments as well as a requirement for local authority to keep registers of brownfield sites to better target developments for regeneration.

### **1.2.4 Social rents limited to LHA rate**

Local Housing Allowance policy for general needs accommodation will be aligned with the implementation of supported housing payments and implemented in 2019. It will apply to tenants in receipt of housing benefit who have signed new or re-let tenancies from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 where their social sector rent is higher than the local housing allowance. Those on Housing Benefit who took their tenancy before April 2016 will not be affected. For Universal Credit, Local Housing Allowance will apply to all new and existing tenants, where their social rent is higher than the relevant local housing allowance.

For the vast majority of households there will be a small effect as the majority of social rents are lower than the LHA rate. For one bedroom properties, ignoring sheltered, 15% of properties were over the LHA rate with an average top up of £26.19 a week, for two bedrooms only 2% were over the LHA rate, for three only 0.6% were and four beds none were over the LHA rate.

However, there will be a profound impact for two different household groups;

- a. Those who require supported or sheltered housing. This is because, currently, there has been no indication that sheltered housing will be exempted from the LHA rate. 96% of sheltered properties are over the LHA rate for one bedroom rates with an average top up of £29. Supported accommodation such as refuges and hostels are also far above both the one bed rate and shared room rate. However, the impact of the housing benefit cap on sheltered housing has been delayed a year for the government to assess the full effects. The uncertainty about what is going to happen could affect investment in supported schemes in the short term, the long term effects will not be apparent until the government report their findings following consultation some time during 2017.
- b. Single households, in particular those aged under 35, as these households are only entitled to the shared room rate the vast majority of properties (92% of general needs) will be over the LHA rate with an average top up of £29 per week.

Some Registered Providers have adopted policies around not letting to under 35's on benefits and some are offering short term tenancies. Many Registered Providers have trained officers to carry out pre tenancy financial assessments to ascertain whether a property is affordable for the household and the outcome of these informs lettings decisions. New models of accommodation are being considered such as Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO's). Some authorities such as Brighton Housing Trust have explored options through low cost schemes such as shipping containers.

A reduction in supported housing such as sheltered and hostel units as well as a reduction in women's refuges has already begun due to severe cuts in Housing Related Support. However it is anticipated that when the changes are implemented under 35's on benefits will struggle to meet their rental top ups and are more likely to fall into arrears and in addition sheltered and other forms of supported accommodation such as Foyers will cease to be available if they are not considered exempt. This could further lead to an increase in evictions of households who will be difficult to rehouse as they will have housing related debt and no other housing option.

### **1.2.5 Benefit cap changes**

Work is currently being undertaken to identify how many additional households will be affected by the reduction in the benefit cap from £26,000 to £20,000.

Due to the level of rents the benefit cap is expected to have a more pronounced impact on larger households, those with three or more children who are not in a sufficient amount of work to be exempt and do not have a disabled member of the household. This will require work to continue to identify the households likely to be affected and for contact to be made.

Many households from the last benefit cap were able to cope by better budgeting or support with Discretionary Housing Payments, whilst other households were assisted to find employment, or advised of certain exceptions that could be claimed. Work will need to be undertaken with these households to identify their circumstances, whether they will be able to cope with the reduction through budgeting and assistance provided to help households find work so that they would not be subject to the cap or advising households of rights and supporting them to claim for exceptions if there are disabled members of the household. Ultimately, it is anticipated that larger households will find it difficult to manage and will be more likely to fall into rent arrears. It is possible that in some cases

intentional homeless decisions will be reached around these households and that they will be left with no options in the social rented sector and the private sector will be unaffordable. There are concerns that the burden of this situation will fall on Children's Services.

### **1.2.6 Youth obligation / removal of automatic entitlement for 18-21 year olds to housing element of Universal Credit**

The effects of this upon the homeless population are unknown as it is not clear what exceptions there will be to this rule. However it could lead to an increase in youth homelessness if households are not able to claim housing benefits. At the moment, one of the primary methods of preventing homelessness is either arranging accommodation with friends or relatives, or looking at supported accommodation. If young people are unable to receive housing benefits for supported accommodation this would frustrate aims to prevent homelessness.

### **1.2.7 ESA work related components aligned with Job Seekers Allowance (JSA)**

This will have an effect upon households suffering from disabilities that make it difficult to work. It will have a more pronounced impact on childless households than those with children. By bringing ESA in line with JSA it will reduce their income and as such, for households in the private rented sector who utilise the additional money from ESA to top up their rent, there is a possibility they could suffer from an increase in rent arrears and this could in turn lead to an increase in evictions from private rented properties. It also has potential to lead to an increase in rent arrears in the social sector when Housing Benefit is capped to the LHA rate.

### **1.2.8 Working benefits frozen for four years**

This will affect all claimant households and will make housing benefit claimants more unappealing towards private sector landlords. It could lead to an increase in evictions from the private sector as although benefits are only increasing by 1% a year, rents are increasing in the West Midlands between 4% and 5% a year. The impact of the 1% increase in benefit rates rather than it being linked to the CPI index is slightly mitigated by low levels of inflation currently being suffered in the UK, however could serve as a further disincentive towards private landlords to consider tenants in receipt of housing benefits.

### **1.2.9 1% rent reductions**

The 1% rent reduction for all social rents, including affordable lets, could have an affect on the supply of affordable housing and could also make housing associations more risk averse to considering more complex cases.

Over the years, looking at the CORE Data for housing returns, there appears to be a reduction in the amount of allocations going to tenants in receipt of housing benefits as well as homeless cases. This could be because they are seen as riskier tenants and as such a 1% rent reduction year on year could lead to housing associations adopting stricter allocation guidelines which in turn would render it more difficult to house homeless households. However, this could also be attributed to a reduction in the number of households claiming Housing Benefit, and would warrant further investigation.

The lack of supply would also mean it would be more difficult to accommodate households into the socially rented sector.

This could also affect supported accommodation schemes such as hostels and refuges although as this has been delayed a year whilst the government conducts an impact assessment it is not known whether or not this change will affect these groups.

#### **1.2.10 Universal Credit**

Universal Credit encompasses a number of welfare reforms. One change that will occur is changes to the working element. Previous changes announced to Working Tax Credits, where in the income threshold for tax credits dropping from £6420 to £3850 and the taper rate increasing from 41% to 48%. This will mostly affect single working households. This will leave less money to top up rents in the private rented sector and could lead to an increase in homelessness from the private rented sector or greater difficulty in using the private rented sector to prevent or house homeless households. This will have a greater effect on low income working parents.

Universal Credit will also have an impact on providers of short term stay accommodation such as hostels, and in particular local authorities that utilise emergency accommodation such as guest houses. This is because rental payments will not traditionally be paid until a month and a half after someone stays and if the household moves out within the first month or part way through a month the provider will suffer severe losses as the housing element will not be paid. Some hostels will be exempt from the Housing Benefit element of Universal Credit being paid to the claimant and will be able to have the Housing Benefit element paid directly.

As rent is paid direct this could also lead to an increase in rent arrears. In pilot areas this led to an increase in rent arrears of 9% falling to 5% as time went on. However, recent reports on Universal Credit estimate that alternative payment arrangements will be of similar levels to housing benefit as such this may be mitigated if things progress as estimated by the government. It is important to note that it is likely that alternative payment arrangements will only be considered for the short term and that the ultimate aim is that everyone is expected to learn how to budget and pay their own rent.

These impacts will be particularly felt by hostel accommodation providers and local authorities that need to use guest house accommodation to assist homeless households. Especially as rents will be limited to the LHA rate unless a property is deemed to be exempt or specified.

The delayed method of payment and the direct payments will also act as a large disincentive for landlords to consider households on Universal Credit. There are already a limited number of landlords willing to work with claimants on housing benefits and this number is likely to decrease even further. This will be particularly difficult for local authorities operating bond schemes which are already seeing decreasing numbers of landlords coming forward and less households being prevented into the private rented sector. The impact of universal credit could make it even more difficult to prevent households becoming homeless through assisting them to access the private rented sector under the current models of working.

#### **1.2.11 The Governments Housing White Paper – Fixing our Broken Housing Market was launched in parliament on 7th February 2017.**

The new announcements contained within the paper are:

- Consulting on the principle of a standardised way of calculating housing demand, with each local authority mandated to produce a realistic plan and review it every five years
- An expectation for councils to use land more efficiently by building at higher density and taller
- Allowing councils to issue “completion notices” demanding developers start building within two years rather than three, and “greater transparency” from builders about the pace of developments
- A ‘de facto’ presumption in favour of housing on suitable brownfield land
- A consultation on measures to tackle unfair abuses of leasehold residential properties
- A Lifetime ISA, which pays a 25% bonus on savings of up to £4,000 per year redeemable when the saver buys a house or hits 60
- To make Starter Homes, which will cost up to £450,000 in London and £250,000 outside, only available to buyers with an income of less than £80,000 or £90,000 in London

Communities Secretary Sajid Javid said: “...we are setting out ambitious proposals to help fix the housing market so that more ordinary working people from across the country can have the security of a decent place to live.”

## 1.3 Legislation and Case Law

### 1.3.1 Hotak, Kanu and Johnson

Over the past decade, homelessness law has remained relatively static with only a few major changes over the past few years. The most dynamic change is the case of Hotak, Kanu and Johnson in 2015 which changed the long standing test of vulnerability, so that households were compared to the ordinary person rather than the ordinary homeless person.

The perceived effects of this were that there would be more single households being accepted as homeless. However, looking at the homelessness acceptance statistics throughout Worcestershire, Wyre Forest and Wychavon have seen an increase in the proportion of single households being accepted, with Bromsgrove having a slight increase, whilst Malvern and Worcester saw a decrease in the proportion of single households compared to previous years.

All districts have seen an increase in the number of single homeless households being accepted since their 2010 levels. However, it is doubtful that this is due to the change in the law and may be attributable to other reasons such as reductions in support for single households, the cumulative effect of welfare reforms having a disproportionate impact on single households and a lack of housing options for single households compared to family households. This is because although the number of single homeless being accepted has increased since 2010, the number of single homelessness has decreased in the past couple of years, as such the rise in acceptance happened years before the change in case law.

### 1.3.2 Westminster v Nzoemso

This case law was in relation to the considerations for placing households out of the area. The impact of this within Worcestershire is small as unlike larger metropolitan authorities we do not make placements large distances outside of the area. The major impact has been training of officers to ensure that they consider the correct matters when making homeless decisions.

## 1.4 Local Policy

### 1.4.1 Worcestershire Homelessness Strategy 2012-17

The implementation of the Worcestershire Homelessness Strategy 2012-17 led to a number of key local homelessness prevention policy objectives being achieved;

- Countywide single homelessness forum (SASH Partnership) established to implement No Second Night Out (NSNO) and develop “move on” accommodation for single homeless people with lower level needs.
- Worcestershire No Second Night Out Standard and Protocol developed and implemented to ensure that new rough sleepers do not spend a second night on the street.
- Funding secured through the Homes And Communities Agency for housing development.
- Heenan’s Court “move on” accommodation for single homeless people with low level needs developed (based in Worcester City but a county wide resource) and NSNO accommodation developed in Wyre Forest.
- Personalised approach for entrenched rough sleepers (to include those with no recourse to public funds) introduced through funding awarded from a successful bid to the Homeless Transition Fund Round 2 funding, and also district level funding.
- Successful bid to the Governments Help for Single Homelessness funding programme enabled the recruitment of a Single Homeless Pathways Officer to map out local single homeless services and implement a Prison Pathways Worker and a Hospital Pathways Worker service to prevent people rough sleeping as a result of being released or discharged from prison or hospital.
- Development of a Reconnection Policy for Worcestershire to enable rough sleepers to be reconnected to the area or country where they can access support networks and services.
- Development of crisis accommodation models - NSNO emergency accommodation to provide crisis accommodation to divert people away from the streets immediately where they can receive the help they need to find a solution to their homelessness in safety, and also emergency “crash pads” for young people.
- Severe Weather Emergency Protocol strengthened to provide emergency shelter during extreme cold weather. Also now contains provisions for severe hot weather.
- Domestic abuse funding achieved at district level to strengthen and extend Domestic Abuse support services, protect refuge accommodation and carry out Survivor and Freedom programmes.
- Housing and support pathway for 16/17 year olds reviewed as part of the development of the revised Worcestershire Joint Protocol for Young Homeless People.
- Young People’s Pathway Workers introduced within housing advice teams. District councils and Children’s Services jointly commission a housing support model, known as the Positive Pathway, to prevent young people from becoming homeless. Young Persons Pathway workers

provide an integrated advice, mediation, referral and assessment service in conjunction with Children's Services. The model also includes supported accommodation for 16 to 17 year olds, young families and 18-23 year olds and a floating support service.

- Worcestershire Young People Snapshot Survey completed undertaken and published - to establish true number of young people accessing services, overlaps and collect their views
- Worcestershire Joint Protocol for Accommodation Placements developed to ensure we understand the use of temporary accommodation across the County and that Rent Deposit Schemes across the County compliment each other and do not compete for landlords.
- Enhanced Housing Options modules have been introduced and are providing one set of generic information about homelessness prevention with local elements for the majority of districts.
- Agreements and working arrangements developed with Registered Providers to ensure that their response to flexible tenancies and affordable rent schemes does not increase homelessness.
- Closer working arrangements with Clinical Commissioning Groups and Health and Wellbeing boards developed to influence commissioning of appropriate services. Homeless Health Hub and health provision for rough sleepers developed in Worcester City.
- Mental Health and Housing Protocol developed.
- Housing Benefit and Strategic Housing protocols developed across the County to define and improve practice and procedure across departments.
- Multi agency welfare reform action plans developed across the County to identify and mitigate the affect of welfare reform locally.
- Discretionary welfare schemes in operation across the County.
- County Training Group provided a range of staff training - preventing homelessness regardless of priority need, health chats, mental health first aid and welfare benefits.
- There was also an action from the strategy to consider achieving the Government's Gold Standard for homelessness services. Some districts are now revisiting this action.

Current policy objectives that the County is working in partnership to deliver;

- Homelessness Prevention Programme – Worcestershire districts were recently successful in achieving rough sleepers funding via a bid to the Governments Homelessness Prevention Programme. This will be used to implement No First Night Out in the County and prevent potential rough sleepers from spending any time on the streets. It will focus on preventing homelessness from a much earlier opportunity and will divert people away from homelessness before it ever occurs. Part of this funding will also be used to develop shared accommodation models for under 35's.
- A bid for Domestic Abuse funding has been submitted to protect and extend domestic abuse services, including the provision of safe houses in Malvern and Evesham.



- Connecting Families is an approach that brings together agencies across Worcestershire to break down the system barriers that stop us providing effective support for families. This approach has been running in Redditch since January 2015 and has seen staff join together from agencies including social care, early help, police, health and the Department of Work and Pensions.
- Both Bromsgrove and Redditch Councils are exploring the merits of creating a housing company to unlock the potential to develop Council owned land for all tenure types and the provision and management of any private rented stock.
- Some districts are investigating the feasibility of developing models of accommodation to meet the needs of those households who have very limited housing options due to affordability or poor tenancy history e.g. developing and managing units to let at market rent to subsidise rent on other units.
- In 2016 Bromsgrove Members carried out a review of homelessness through a specialist task group and proposed (1) An investigation into the introduction of a local authority lettings scheme (2) Commitment to the use of all homelessness grant for the purposes of homeless support and (3) That homelessness grant be prioritised for funding offender rehabilitation and emergency accommodation for young people.
- Some districts are developing debt advice drop in services based within housing teams.
- Some districts are reviewing their temporary accommodation and bed & breakfast accommodation to extend and improve provision, especially in consideration of the forthcoming Homelessness Reduction Bill.
- A countywide bid to the Controlling Migration fund is currently being considered. Wychavon has a large proportion of EU nationals living in HMO (Houses of Multiple Occupation) accommodation, which is often overcrowded. In some circumstances, landlords are prioritising letting to working EU nationals and converting accommodation into HMO's which is impacting the availability of self contained accommodation.

### 1.4.2 Local Needs Context

For local needs context, housing mix and health demographics please see Appendix 2, which has been taken from the Worcester Housing Partnership Plan.

## 2 Statistical information

The following sections look at local homelessness statistics. It should be noted that these are not included as a means to compare local authority performance. This is not possible, nor considered fair, for a number of reasons, which is experienced at a national level as well as locally. Different local authorities experience different issues within their districts and to make comparisons would not be comparing like for like e.g. rural areas have different issues to urban areas, in some districts the homelessness service is contracted out to registered providers whilst in others it remains in house, different organisations use different recording mechanisms/tools etc.

There are also some gaps in the following data sets for some districts which should not be interpreted negatively. This occurs because there are also differences in the types and the way some information is collected across organisations and it is often difficult to separate out specific information.

Districts recognise that ways of recording and presenting information varies and that we need to continue to share best practice across Worcestershire to learn about “what works”. The need to improve data collection is also reflected in the final conclusions and recommendations of the review.

## 2.1 Levels of homelessness

Looking at the levels of homeless applications over the past 5 years, from the period of 2010 to 2016 there has been an increase in each of the districts in the level of homelessness applications except for Worcester City which has seen an overall decrease due to an abnormally low level of homeless applications in 2015/16.

For all of the districts, there was a peak in homeless applications between 2012 and 2014 and then homeless applications decreased. However, the level of homeless applications, in all districts except for Worcester City, remained higher than their 2010/11 level.

The overall increase in homelessness is between 15% and 55% with the highest increases in Wyre Forest and Wychavon and the smallest increases in Bromsgrove and Malvern.

The only district that did not see an overall increase was Worcester City which had an 18% decrease in homeless applications from 2010. Although it should be borne in mind, that in the year previously homelessness applications were 15% higher.

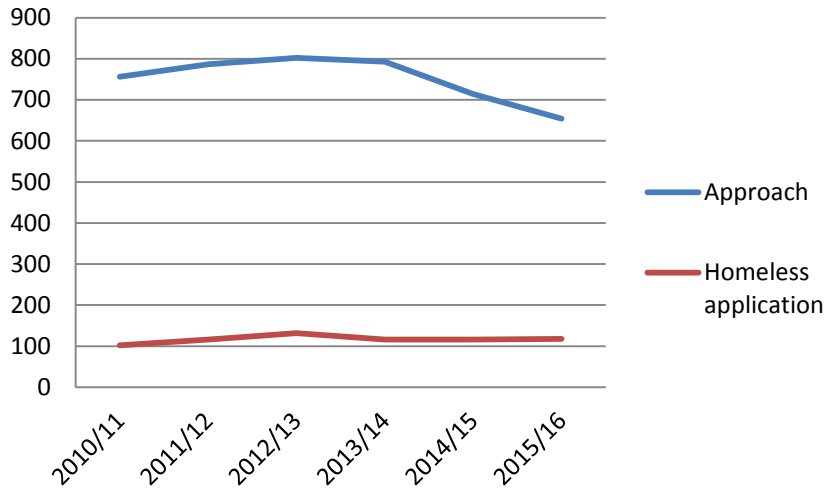
Throughout Worcestershire, the overall increase in homelessness since 2010 is 8.08%.

The Worcestershire authorities have worked hard to develop homelessness prevention services that seek wherever possible to avoid a household becoming homeless and in doing so were able to demonstrate huge reductions in the number of households actually becoming homeless. Even the increases we have recorded since 2010 are still significantly lower than when homelessness services simply involved taking and processing homeless applications. Therefore, when looking at homelessness it is important look beyond the numbers of homeless applications as many cases of potential or threatened homelessness are dealt through housing options services and prevention. In order to determine a more accurate picture of the level of homelessness we have assessed the total number of approaches for homeless assistance through the districts which includes prevention work as well as statutory homeless applications / decisions.

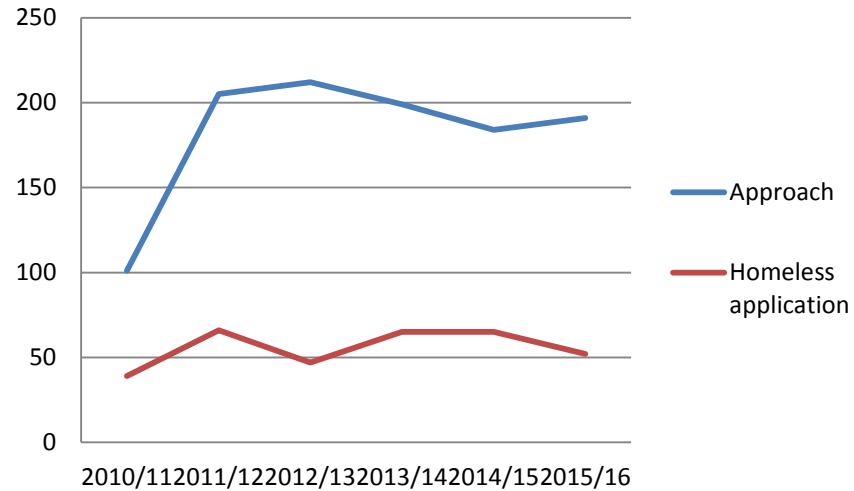
Looking at the approaches for homeless assistance, there is a similar trend with districts reporting a peak of applications between 2012 and 2014 and then a decrease. Levels are still higher than their 2010 levels in all districts aside from Bromsgrove. However, the increase in applications for homeless assistance is larger than the level of homeless applications, an overall increase of between 35% and 110%. The largest increase of 110% was seen in Wyre Forest and then Malvern with 89%. Worcester and Wychavon have seen increases of between 35% and 46% respectively, whilst Bromsgrove has had a decrease of 14%.

From 2011 Redditch homeless decisions have increased by 114% with homeless acceptances increasing by 108%.

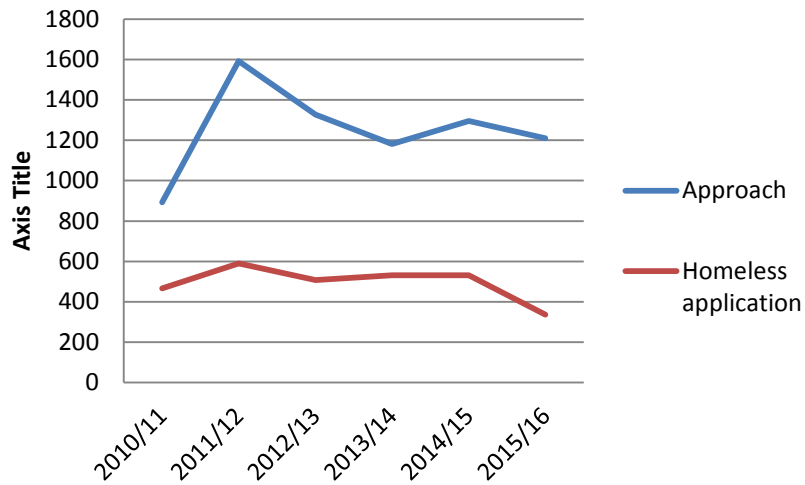
**Trends of Homelessness (Bromsgrove)**



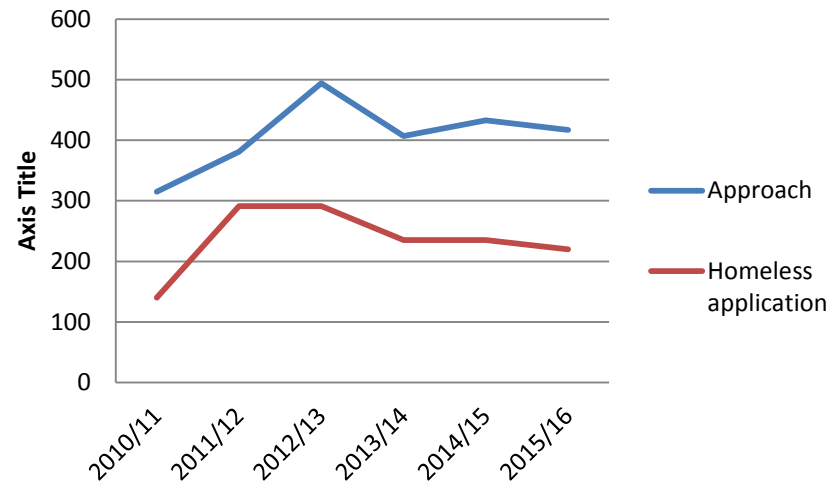
**Trends of Homelessness (Malvern)**

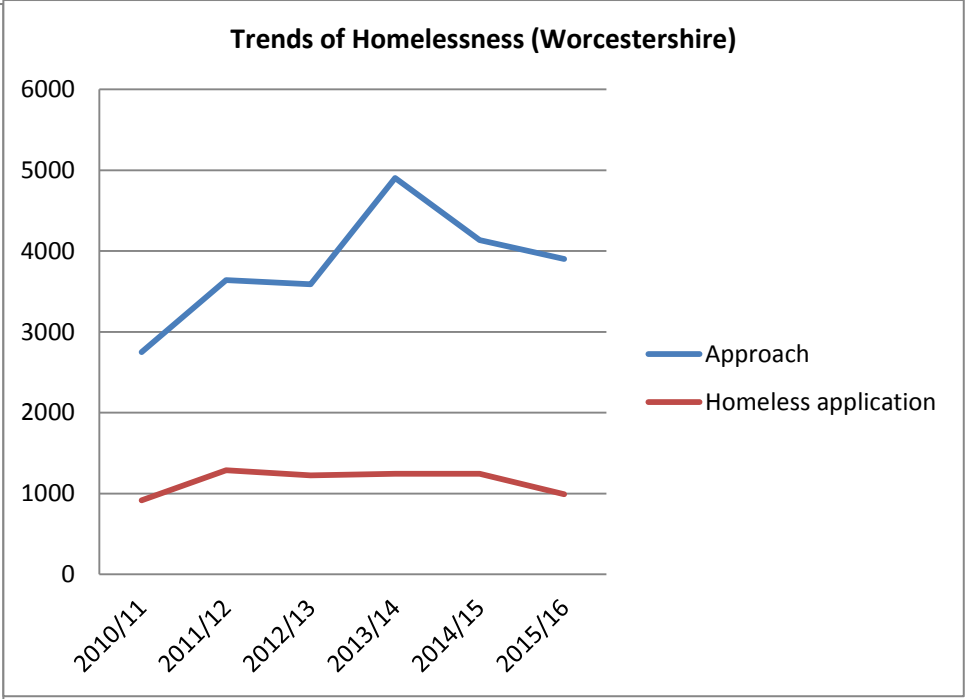
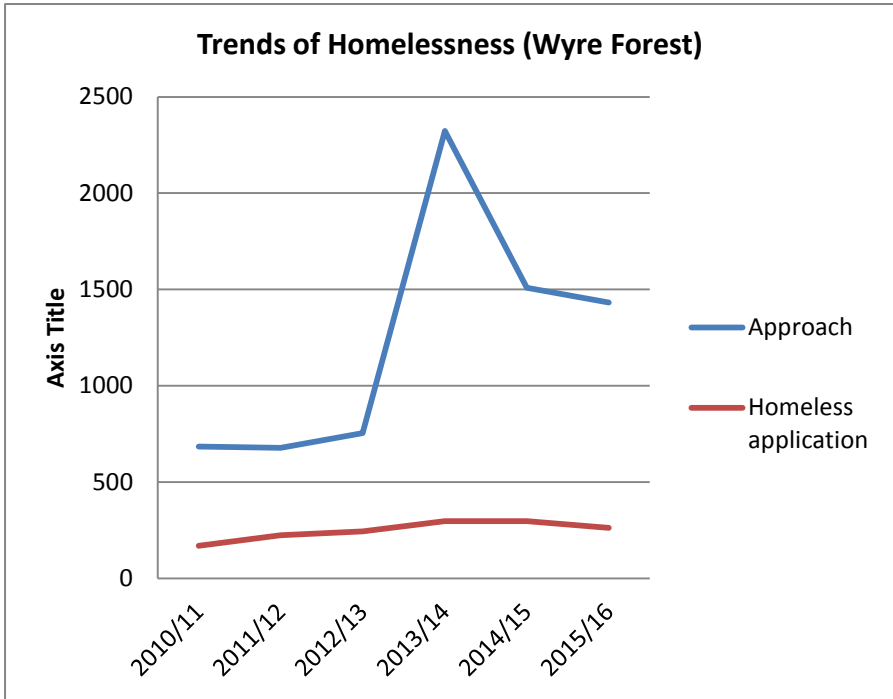


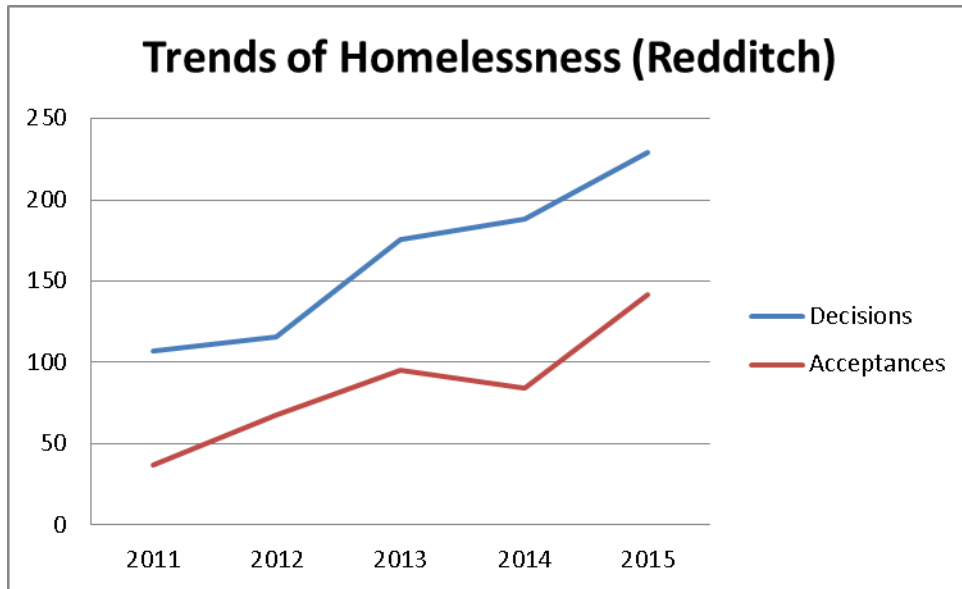
**Trends of Homelessness (Worcester)**



**Trends of Homelessness (Wychavon)**







Please note Redditch Borough Council uses a different system to record homelessness than the other districts, therefore their homelessness trends are not reflected in the overall Worcestershire trends above. The above information for Redditch is taken from P1E statutory statistics. The other countywide information is taken from Home Choice Plus and P1E returns.

## 2.2 Profile of homelessness

### 2.2.1 Household type

We have also analysed the profile of homelessness and whether the nature of those approaching for assistance has changed to determine the different types of households that are approaching and becoming homeless to see if there is any particular type of household or family type with particular needs that are more likely to become homeless than others. For example, over the years there have been a number of reductions for funding for housing related support – previously funded through the Supporting People programme, in particular in relation to single homeless individuals and as such this analysis was done to determine the effect.

In all districts, where data was available, looking at cases as a proportion of total approaches for homeless assistance, there has been a universal increase in the level of single people approaching for housing assistance. In Bromsgrove, Malvern and Worcester the levels of single households approaching for homeless assistance is higher than the levels of family households. Within Bromsgrove, the level of approaches from single households has always been greater than the levels of approaches from family households.

Within Wychavon, the level of approaches from single households has increased as a proportion from 35% to 42%.

It is not known whether the reduction in funding for housing related support has lead to the increase in single homelessness as correlation does not denote causation. However what is clear is that the reduction in funding for housing related support will be more acutely felt by single households due to a reduction in housing options (as supported housing projects close) and support available.

<b>Profile of homelessness</b>						
<b>Bromsgrove</b>	<b>2010/11</b>	<b>2011/12</b>	<b>2012/13</b>	<b>2013/14</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>
Family	42.24%	38.20%	37.67%	41.10%	39.52%	39.34%
Single	57.76%	61.80%	62.33%	58.90%	60.48%	60.66%
<b>Malvern</b>	<b>2010/11</b>	<b>2011/12</b>	<b>2012/13</b>	<b>2013/14</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>
Family	66.34%	56.59%	55.19%	61.31%	54.89%	46.60%
Single	33.66%	43.41%	44.81%	38.69%	45.11%	53.40%
<b>Worcester</b>	<b>2010/11</b>	<b>2011/12</b>	<b>2012/13</b>	<b>2013/14</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>
Family	58.62%	55.51%	55.22%	51.08%	45.03%	42.63%
Single	41.38%	44.49%	44.78%	48.92%	54.97%	57.64%
<b>Wychavon</b>	<b>2010/11</b>	<b>2011/12</b>	<b>2012/13</b>	<b>2013/14</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>
Family	65.27%	72.93%	56.70%	65.86%	65.82%	58.20%
Single	34.73%	27.07%	43.30%	34.14%	34.18%	41.80%

Not possible to break down Wyre Forest or Redditch statistics by family type

Comparing statistics to the Homelessness Review 2011, which uses the P1E statistics, we can see that in 2010/11, 76% of homeless acceptances were from households with either dependant children or whom were pregnant. In 2015/16, 66% were pregnant or had dependant children; this shows that there has been an increase in the proportion of single households, especially considering that P1E statistics for homelessness acceptances will have a bias towards over representation of homelessness demand for families with children or pregnancy as these are automatic priority needs.

Please note it has not been possible to include this data for Wyre Forest DC as data is only collected on household composition for statutorily homeless households and not all approaches.

### 2.2.2 Household needs

Through the districts, and nationally, there has been a reported increase in the complexity of homelessness individuals. That is to say, it has been reported that there is a higher level of households with more complex needs including mental health, physical health and other support needs.

Assessing the veracity of these claims is difficult as such details are not traditionally recorded. In order to assess the needs of homelessness we have assessed the reasons for priority need, to see if there has been an increase in households being accepted as vulnerable for reasons of mental health, physical health, or leaving institutionalised care. It should be borne in mind that those who are accepted as homeless make up a minority of the homeless population and as such the sample size, and veracity of the data is limited - especially as homelessness acceptances only record a primary and secondary reason for priority need, and individuals with multiple complex needs would not have this recorded and other needs such as substance misuse and behavioural problems would also not be recorded.

Looking at the reasons for having a duty accepted as a proportion of all cases, there has been an increase in households being accepted for reasons of mental health and physical health needs across all districts except for Malvern and Worcester. However, given the limited sample size this can not be said to be determinative of the actual increase in complex needs amongst the homeless population. It could be that due to a reduction in support, and more complex needs not being met.

It should be noted in Worcester, that there was a decrease in those accepted as homeless for reasons of mental health, by 6% and an increase in acceptances for physical health needs by 5%.

Another way to determine the needs of clients is to assess what proportion of clients had difficulty being moved on from bed and breakfast accommodation. This has the same draw backs looking at homeless applications, as there is a limited sample size. However, an increase of households taking longer to be moved from guest house accommodation could indicate that there is a higher level of households that can't be moved on due to higher level needs. However, it should be noted here that there are other reasons why it is difficult to move people on from short term accommodation i.e. they have housing related debts or there is a need to ensure that Universal Credit claims are assessed and in place before they move on, the limited availability of properties in general and the time taken to get a property ready before being able to move.

However, this again would not be determinative as it could also be explained by a change of housing stock to move people into. For example, local authorities have a duty to move families on from B&B within 6 weeks and as such will have move on temporary accommodation available for households. It may be that although the level of needs has remained the same, support providers are less willing to provide accommodation due to a lack of support available.

Through the districts that have returned data on the length of time it takes to get people moved from B&B (Bromsgrove, Worcester, Wychavon and Wyre Forest) there has been an increase in the level of households that have been in B&B for periods longer than 6 weeks. Wychavon has seen a 9% increase in

households, Worcester has seen a 20% increase, Wyre Forest has seen a 13% increase as a proportion of households that have difficulty moving on. The largest increases have been from single households. Bromsgrove reported a 33% increase however the sample size is so small that Bromsgrove figures can not be relied on due to the small amount of households placed in guest house accommodation.

The level of complexity of clients, or the proportion of households whom are difficult to rehouse can also be assessed by the proportion of households that have a reduced preference on Home Choice Plus due to rent arrears. Such households are typically harder to rehouse and will have fallen into rent arrears due to a variety of needs. However, the drawback of this analysis is that there is no historical data and only a current snapshot can be used.

Looking at the waiting list in May 2016, between 15% and 47% of households with a duty accepted had a reduced preference.

The districts with the highest proportion of households with housing related debt were Worcester with 47% and Bromsgrove with 36%, Wychavon had 17%, Wyre Forest and Malvern had very low percentages, 3% and 0% respectively.

A final method to assess the level of complexity of needs of clients is to look at the reasons why households are approaching for assistance. However, there are a small number of approaches for reasons of leaving prison, leaving care and hospital and given the small sample size there are also limitations to this data. As a proportion of total applications for homeless assistance the proportion of individuals approaching for reason of leaving prison has increased in all districts except for Bromsgrove and Wyre Forest, although in Wyre Forest this is due to an unusually high amount of prison leavers in 2010/11 compared to all other years. The proportion of households approaching due to leaving hospital or care has slightly increased for all districts except Bromsgrove.

### **2.2.3 Reasons for homelessness**

When analysing the reasons for homelessness, we have decided not to assess the P1E reasons for homelessness. As advised above, the P1E reasons for homelessness would only cover those whom have had a duty accepted giving a significantly reduced sample size. Furthermore those who have a duty accepted may have different reasons for becoming homelessness than those that don't. As such we have instead analysed, when a household approaches for housing advice, what the reason for approach put in was.

The top 4 reasons for households approaching for housing assistance over the past 5 years have been:-

#### ***Relatives or friends unable or unwilling to accommodate***

Throughout the districts, as a proportion of applications for homeless assistance, the proportion of those approaching due to being evicted by friends or relatives has decreased except for Worcester. However, over the past 5 years it has been erratic with some years increasing and some years decreasing

#### ***Non violent breakdown of relationship with partner***

The level of non violent relationship breakdowns as a proportion of applications for housing assistance has remained relatively stable through the districts with a minimal increase in all districts except for Bromsgrove.



### *Violent relationship of breakdown with partner*

The proportion of individuals approaching as a result of a violent breakdown of a relationship with their partner has remained relatively stable except for Wyre Forest which has seen a large increase over the past 3 years of over 11%.

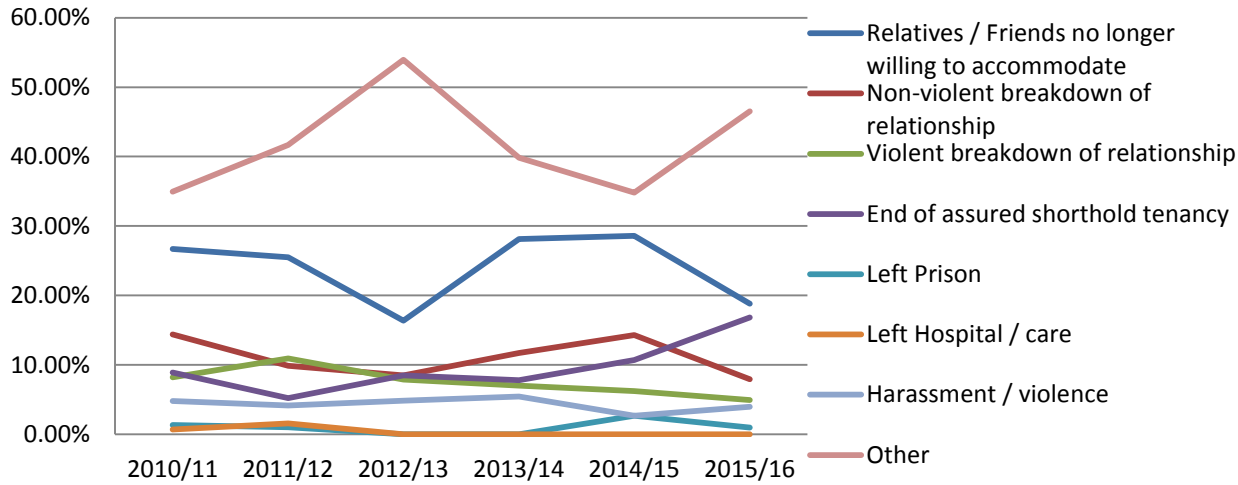
### *End of assured short hold tenancies*

All districts have seen an increase in the proportion of households approaching due to the end of an assured short hold tenancy. For Wyre Forest and Worcester there has been a decrease over the past 2 years although levels are still higher than 2010 levels. For all other districts the increase in applications as a result of assured short hold tenancies coming to an end, has increased.

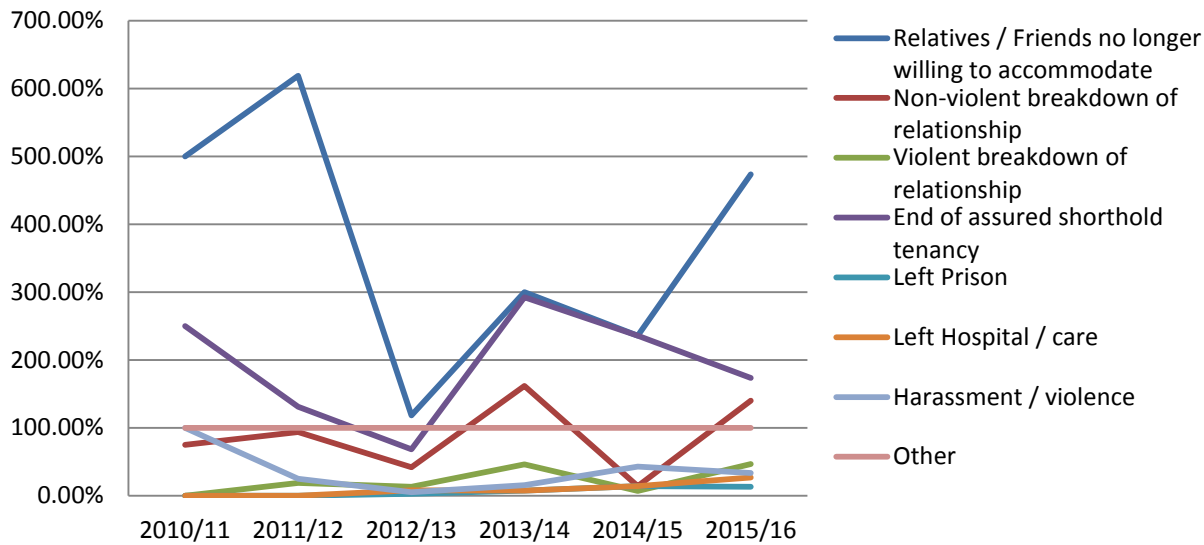
It should be noted that for all districts, a significant proportion of households approached for 'other' reasons which could not be identified into any of the existing reasons for homelessness. In some districts this made up the single largest reason for homelessness whilst in other districts it was between the third and fourth highest reason. Without individual case analysis of these matters it is not possible to determine why these households became homeless and further investigation is needed.

This follows the findings from the Homelessness Review 2012 where breakdown of family relationships, relationship breakdowns and end of assured short hold tenancies were the top three reasons for homelessness, with the end of assured short hold tenancies being the second highest reason.

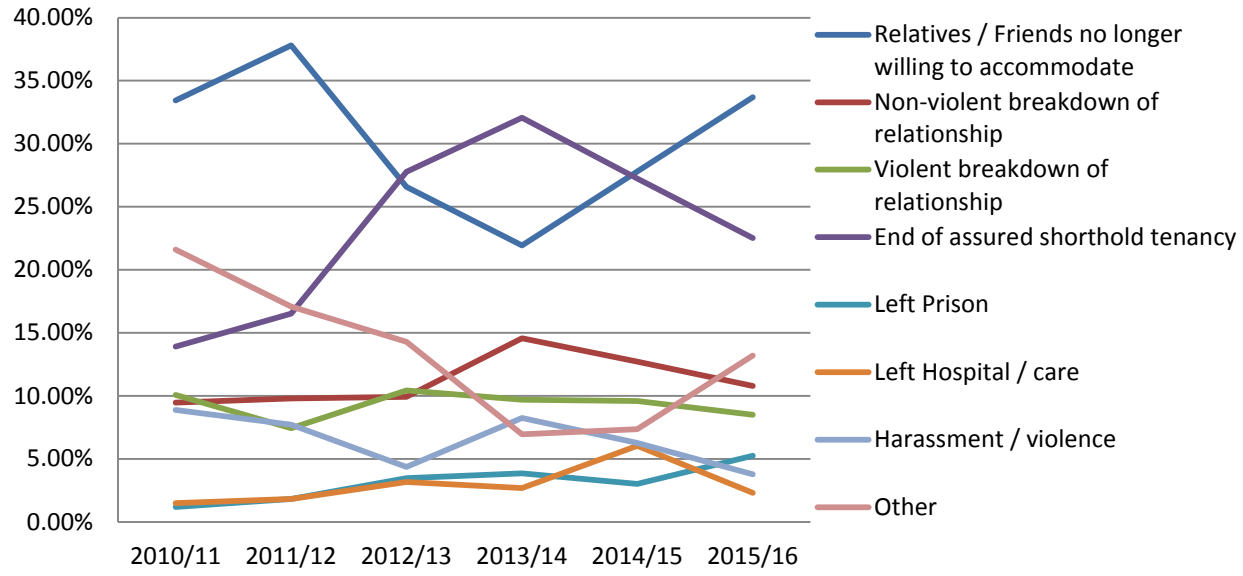
**Reasons for Homelessness (Bromsgrove)**



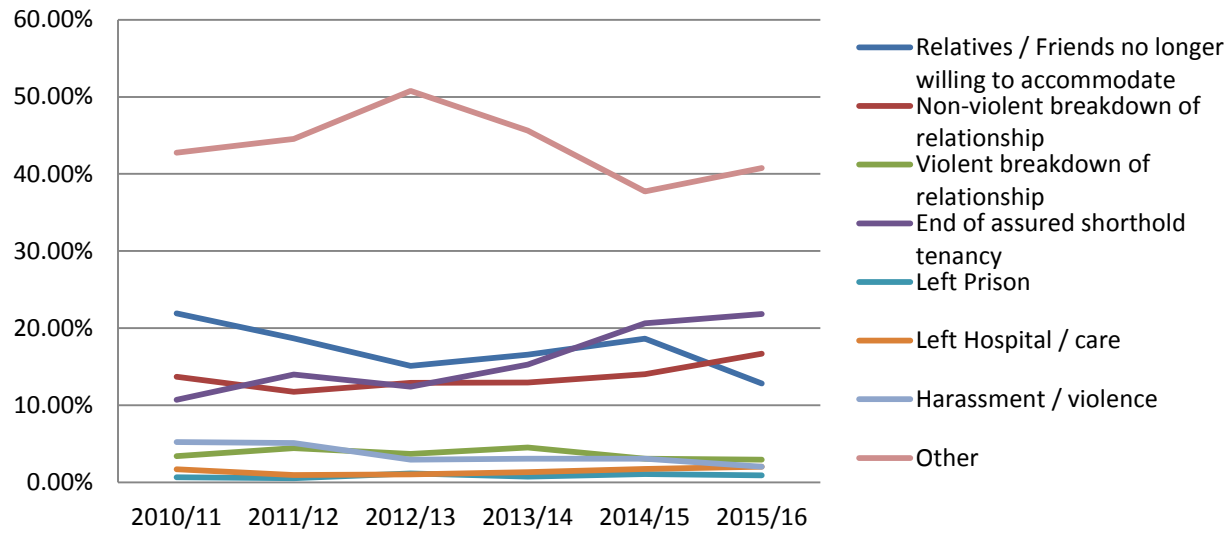
**Reasons for Homelessness (Malvern)**



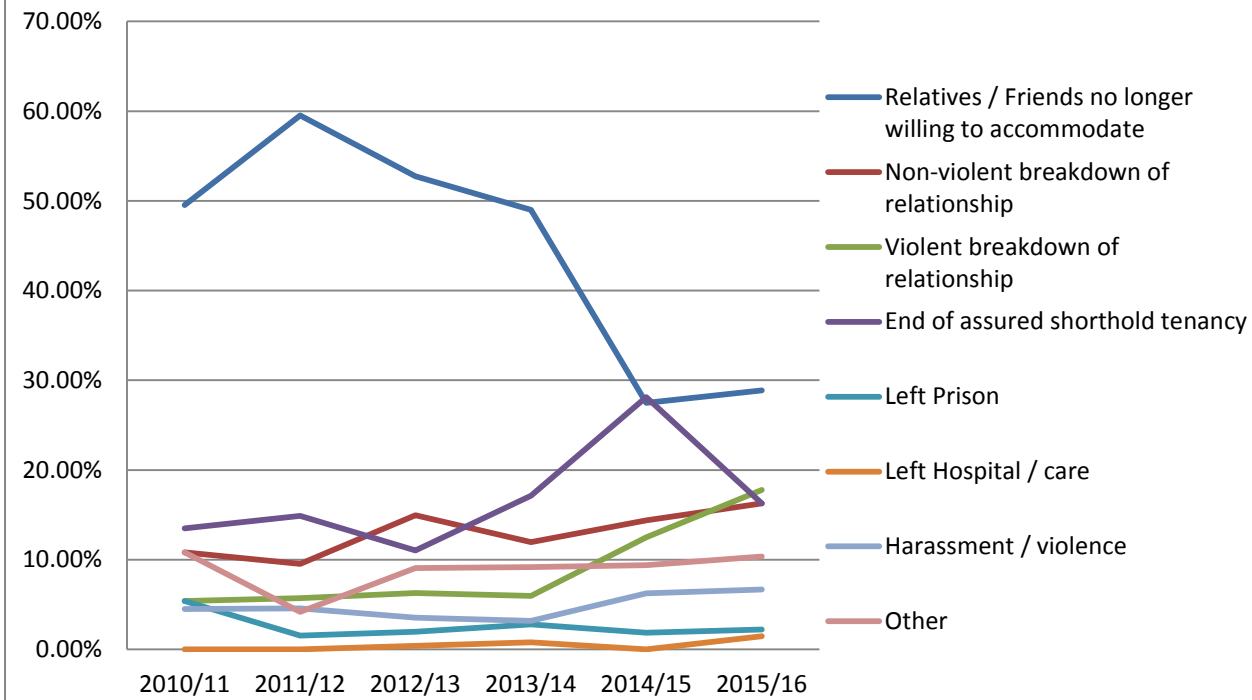
### Reasons for Homelessness (Worcester)

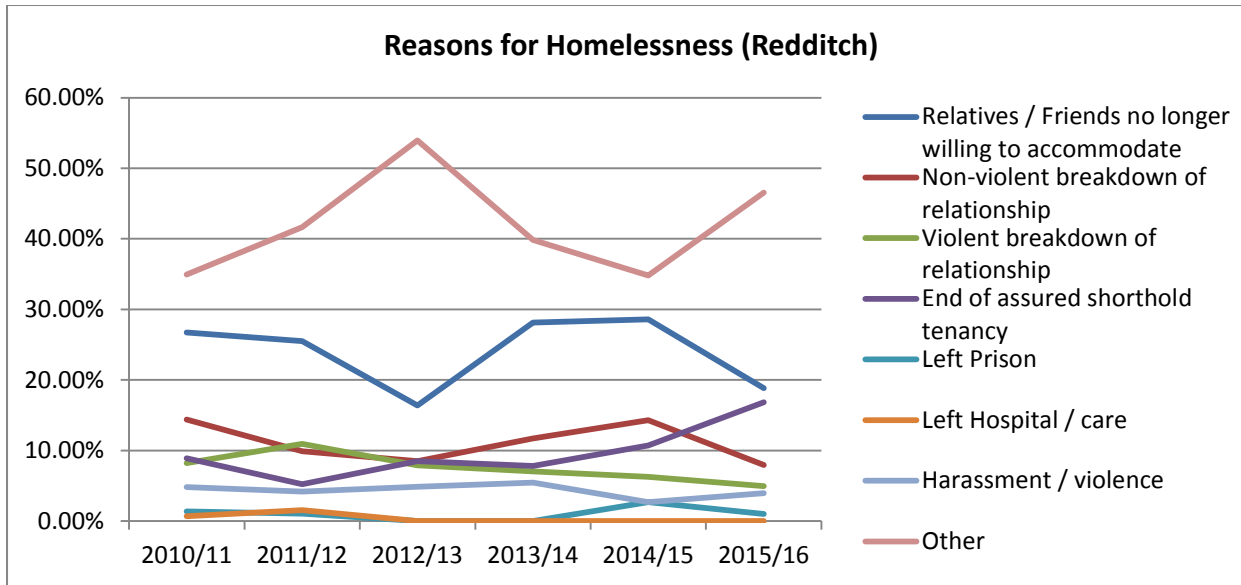


### Reasons for Homelessness (Wychavon)



Reasons for Homelessness (Wyre Forest)





### 2.3 Homelessness Prevention

Each council over the years has prevented homelessness when possible. As such part of this homeless review is assessing how many households are being prevented and what methods of prevention are most successful. As the levels of households approaching for housing assistance have increased as explained above, prevention has been measured as both a proportion of cases prevented and as a total number of cases prevented.

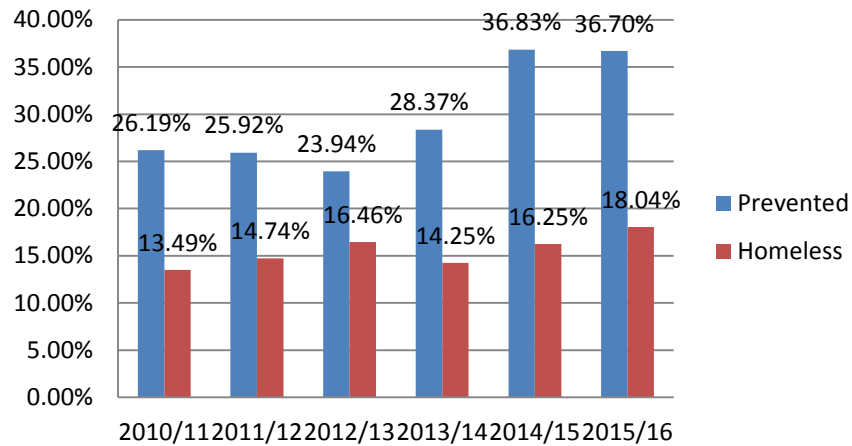
Through the districts there seems to be a general, slight trend for a higher number of cases being prevented from becoming homeless. This is most pronounced in Malvern, Wyre Forest and Bromsgrove which saw an 11%, 6% and 7% increase in the proportion of cases prevented respectively. Other districts have not seen a meaningful increase in the proportion of cases prevented. In Worcester and Wychavon there has only been an increase of 2% and 6% respectively since 2010 levels. The past couple of years have seen a decrease in the proportion of cases being prevented. However, this has to be considered in line with the increased number of applications for homeless assistance requiring housing officers to work with an increasing number of households whilst still maintaining the same or greater levels of service. Further investigation into how homelessness prevention and relief is recorded and outcomes monitored across the county would be beneficial, especially in relation to where the homelessness service is based.

If measuring the preventions as the total number of cases prevented, rather than the proportion of cases that approach for homeless assistance, all authorities have greatly improved numbers of preventions. Bromsgrove prevented 21% more cases than 2010/11, Malvern 124% more, Worcester 41% more, Wychavon 13% more, and Wyre Forest 127% more.

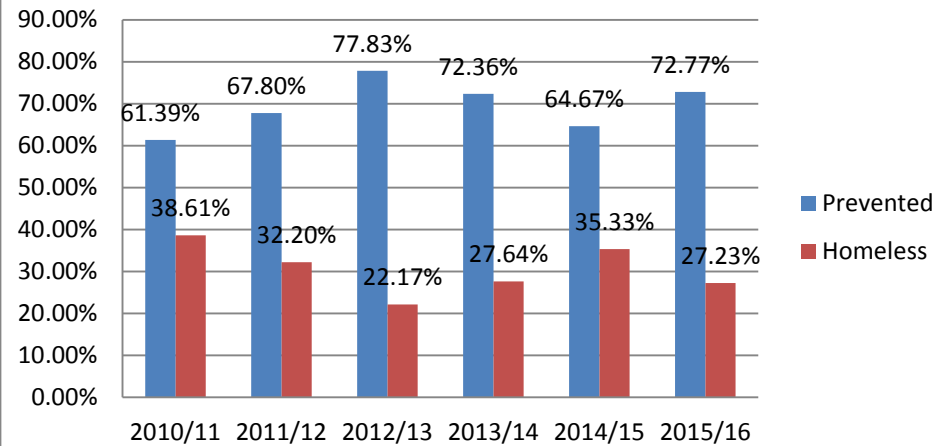
Wychavon has seen a large decrease from between 2010/11 to 2011/12 however it has had a steady trend of increasing preventions since that date. Worcester has seen an increase in households whom are neither prevented from becoming homeless nor have had a homeless decision. This can be because a household came in for housing options and was not threatened with homelessness, contact was lost with the client, or the client did not wish to have a homeless application taken.

Comparing figures to the Homeless Review 2011, in 2011 over the past 5 years they had been a significant increase in the amount of cases being prevented due to the introduction of the prevention agenda. Although the numbers of those being prevented is still increasing, this is due to rising demand, and the proportion of cases being prevented seems to be plateauing.

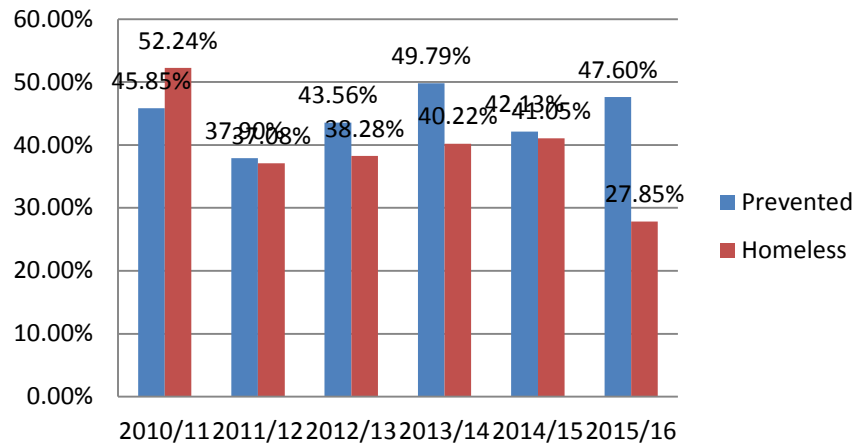
**Proportion prevented against proportion homeless (Bromsgrove)**



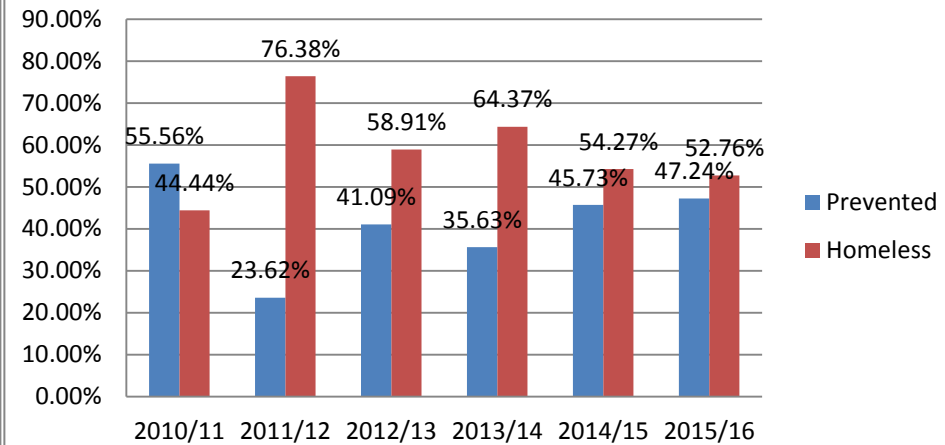
**Proportion prevented against proportion homeless (Malvern)**



**Proportion prevented against proportion homeless (Worcester)**

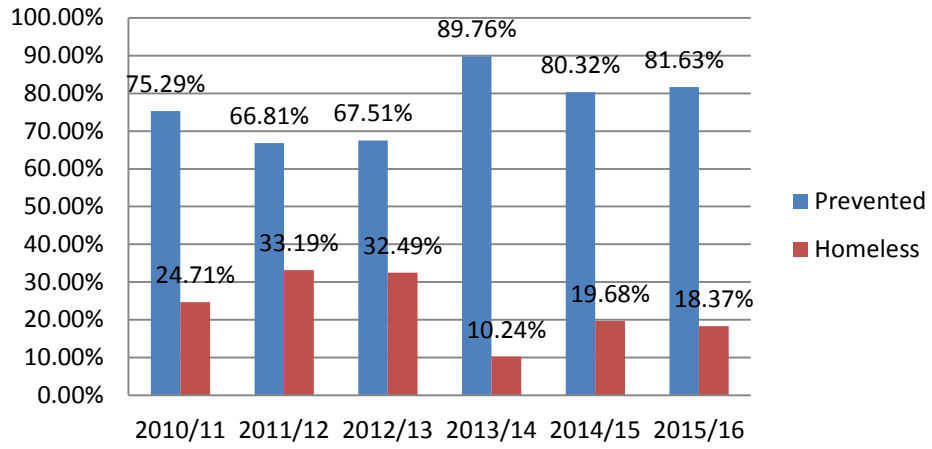


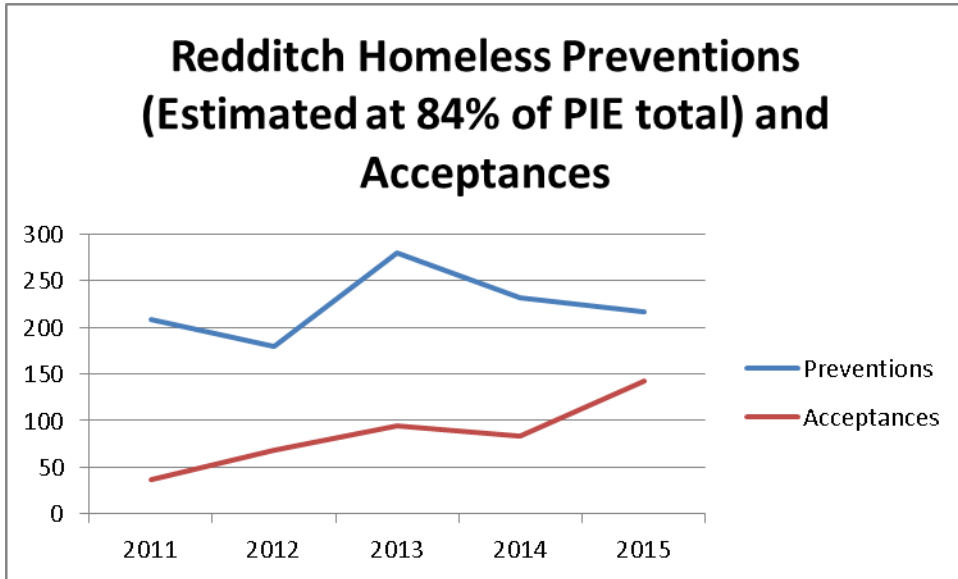
**Proportion prevented against proportion homeless (Wychavon)**





**Proportion prevented against proportion homeless  
(Wyre Forest)**





Please note Redditch Borough Council uses a different system to record homelessness than the other districts, therefore their homelessness trends are not reflected in the overall Worcestershire trends above. The above information for Redditch is taken from P1E statutory statistics. The other countywide information is taken from Home Choice Plus and P1E returns.

### 2.3.1 Prevention by reason

Looking at preventions by reason has only been possible for Worcester and Wyre Forest and it is clear that there are different approaches being undertaken by both districts.

For example, in Worcester the top 5 prevention reasons are the use of the private sector, arranging accommodation with friends or family or conciliation with existing family members, the use of supported accommodation and the use of social housing.

In Wyre Forest there is a bigger focus on debt advice, resolving housing benefit problems, and other crisis intervention. The use of private sector accommodation or arranging accommodation with friends or family is a much smaller proportion.

However, in both districts, there is a telling decrease in the use of the private rented sector to prevent homelessness, in particular through the use of bond schemes. This, in part, has been due to staff shortages in Wyre Forest but also reflects a wider trend of a decrease in Landlords being interested in taking homeless and potentially homeless households in receipt of Housing Benefit.

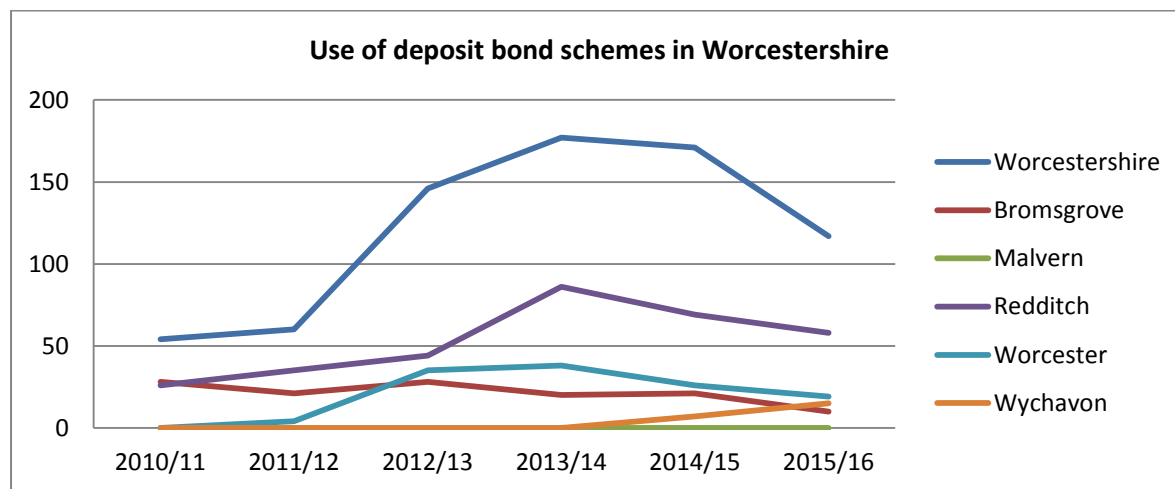
This marries up with statistics provided by districts in relation to their deposit bond schemes, where all districts aside from Wychavon have reported a decrease in landlords working with their schemes due to the reason given above.

### 2.3.2 Use of the deposit bond schemes

As has been highlighted above, the use of the private sector as a means of prevention appears to be diminishing.

Looking at data from the districts regarding their use of the private sector through deposit bond schemes, it can be seen that there has been a decrease over the years in all districts following an initial surge.

The only district that has not decreased is Wychavon, though this may be because their bond scheme, from the data has started after the others and is still in the initial surge phase and if their trends follow the other districts they may suffer a similar decrease as well. This could indicate that landlords in general are less likely to utilise bond schemes, or it could indicate that the model being pursued by Worcestershire leads to an initial increase then a decrease as districts have exhausted their stock of landlords who would be willing to work with such a scheme.



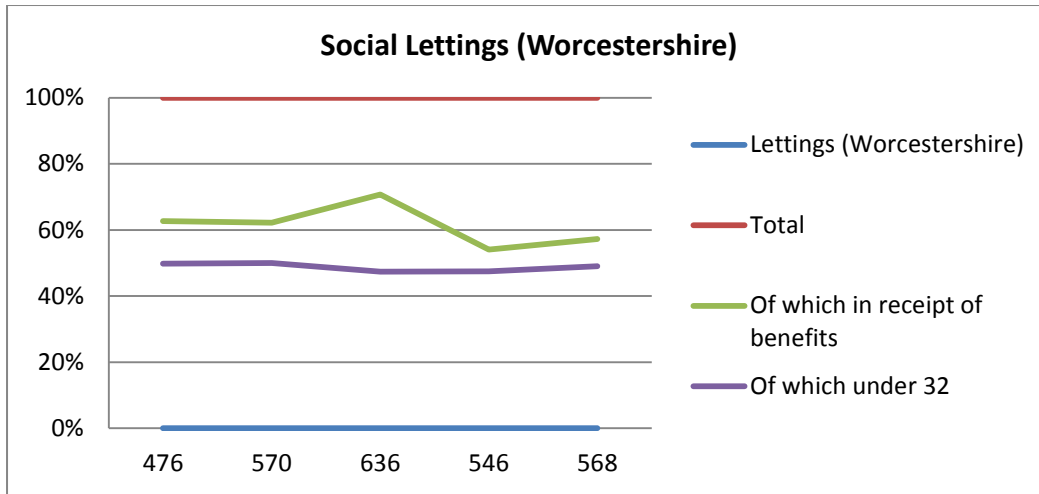
### 2.4 Lettings Analysis

One of the key partners in preventing and dealing with homeless households is Registered Providers. Over the years there have been a number of reforms that have affected Registered Providers such as a decrease in rents, welfare caps, removal of spare room and limiting housing benefits claims to the local housing allowance. As such the lettings of Registered Providers has been assessed to determine what impact these reforms may have had as well as the impact of future welfare reform changes such as Universal Credit may have.

Over the years, the total level of lettings has increased (by 47%), mirroring the trends from 2006 to 2011 which also saw an increase in overall lettings, the proportion of lettings to those who are statutory homeless has remained relatively stable following a slight peak in 2012. However, this is due to Redditch, being a stock owning authority which is the only district to see an increase in allocations to statutory homeless households. Every other district has seen a decrease; this has been most prominent in Worcester, seeing a 10% drop. .

		2010/11		2011/12		2012/13		2013/14		2014/15	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<b>Number of lets to statutory households</b>	<b>Bromsgrove</b>	52	24.64%	54	17.88%	65	24.90%	42	13.42%	55	21.57%
	<b>Malvern</b>	41	14.14%	45	14.38%	41	11.92%	47	15.06%	41	13.02%
	<b>Redditch</b>	42	6.21%	37	6.43%	54	10.19%	82	16.80%	100	17.57%
	<b>Worcester</b>	127	37.91%	167	42.39%	182	37.60%	163	33.00%	149	27.34%
	<b>Wychavon</b>	73	16.98%	126	23.86%	139	28.90%	123	16.44%	116	16.98%
	<b>Wyre Forest</b>	141	22.52%	141	24.74%	155	23.59%	89	14.15%	107	19.74%

Comparing these findings to the Homeless Review 2011, the Homeless Review 2011 found that there was a large decrease in the amount of lettings to statutory homeless households between 2006 to 2011, indicating a long standing general trend of registered providers letting less and less of their properties to statutory homeless households restricting one of the most relied upon housing options for resolving homelessness and only authorities that own their own stock, such as Redditch, being able to work against this trend.



These figures do not however take into account those areas where there was a significant number of new build properties whereby Home Choice Plus would have been used to prevent homelessness by giving households reasonable preference without them becoming statutory homeless

If we look at the number of households housed under Gold Plus (Homeless / Threatened with homeless) prevention banding we can see that for Worcester City, Wychavon and Wyre Forest there has been a significant increase since 2010/11 in the number of lettings to those threatened with homelessness. Figures for Bromsgrove and Malvern Hills remain broadly similar.

	Bromsgrove	Malvern Hills	Worcester City	Wychavon	Wyre Forest
2010/11	67	101	52	97	66
2011/12	33	116	53	99	104
2012/13	45	96	75	163	107
2013/14	35	84	114	187	107
2015/16	65	95	126	173	99

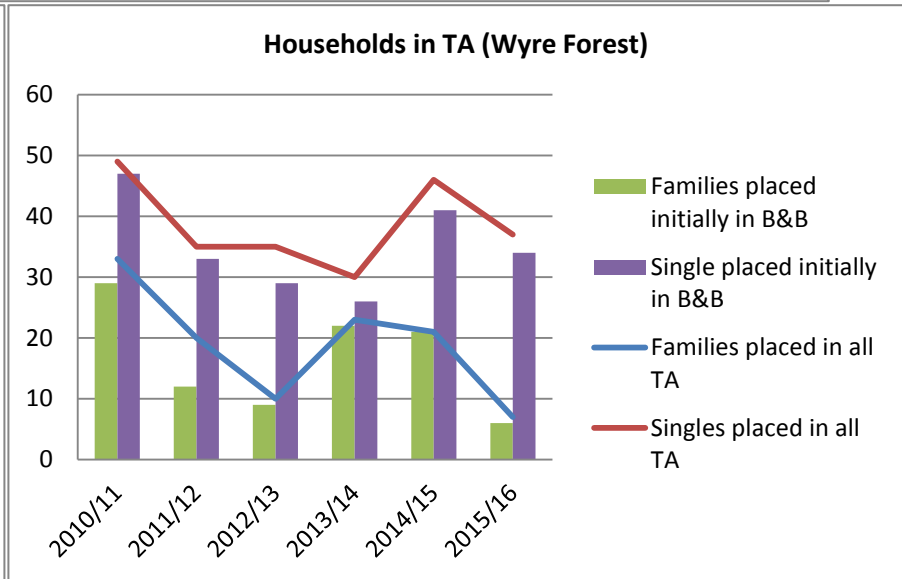
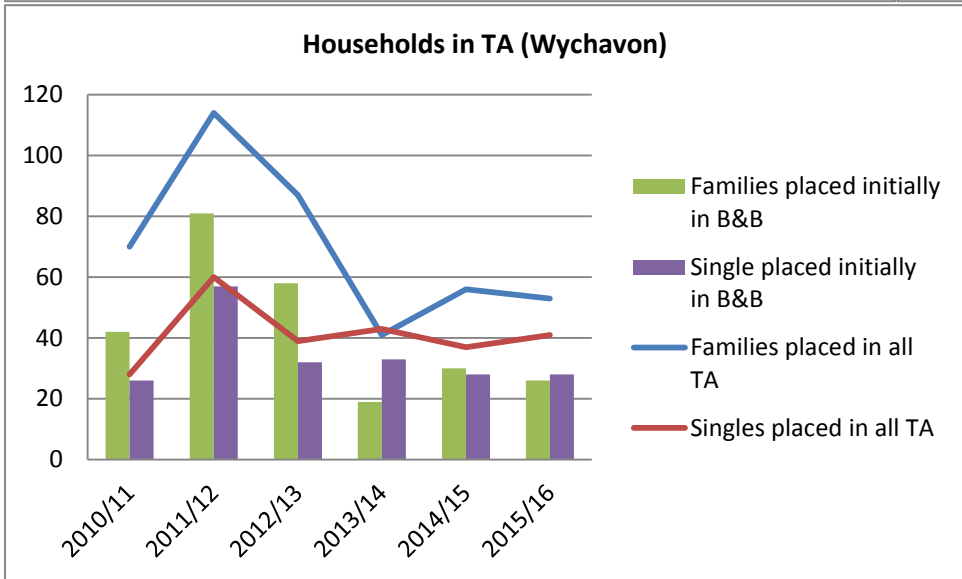
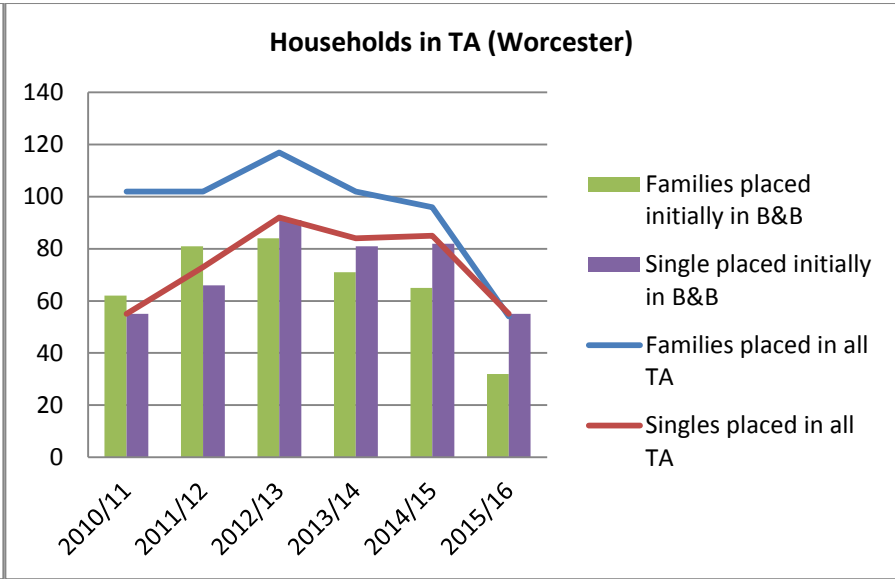
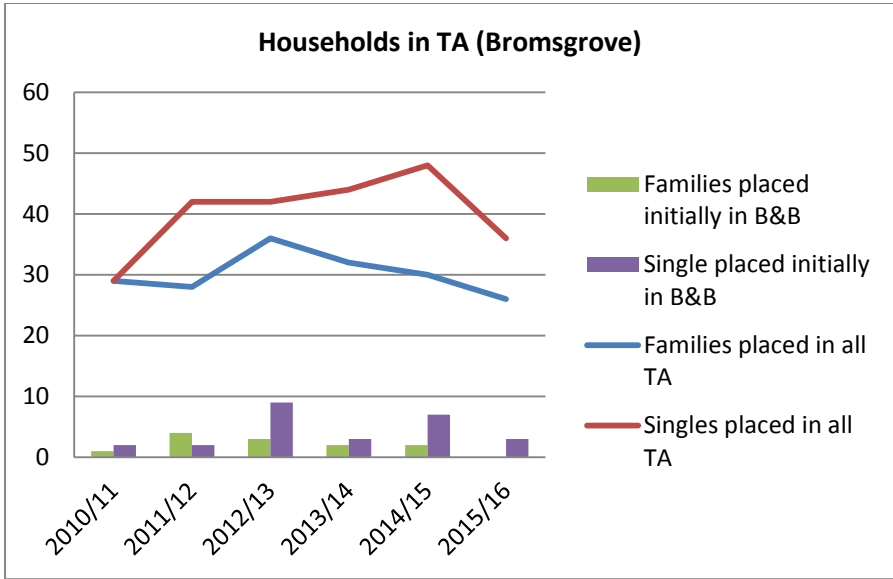
## 2.5 Use of temporary accommodation

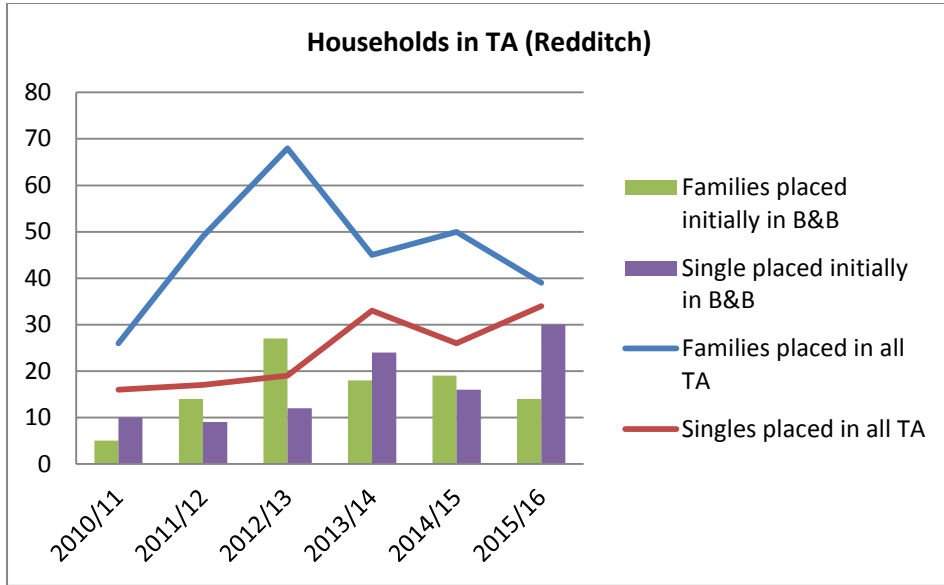
In regards to the use of temporary accommodation, over the years there seems to be a decreasing trend of families being placed in bed and breakfast accommodation.

However the number of singles being placed in temporary accommodation has stayed at relatively similar levels to 2010 following a peak in 2012/13.

This could indicate that prevention efforts are mainly focused upon family households and that there is a lack of housing and preventative options available for single households.

Malvern report that they place very few households into temporary accommodation.





Comparing statistics to the Homelessness Review 2011, there was a significant decrease from 2008 of the use of B&B however this was increasing towards 2011. The trend of an increase has decreased up into 2013 for many districts, where the use of B&B seems to have dropped again.

### 3 Rough Sleeping in Worcestershire

According to Government figures, an average of 3,599 people slept rough in England each night in 2015. This was 30% higher than in 2014 and more than twice the number of people who were sleeping rough in England in 2005. Of this total 41 individuals were estimated to be sleeping rough across Worcestershire.

As set out in the table below, the increase in rough sleeping has not been uniform across Worcestershire with both increases and decreases seen across the 5 years in individual districts.



<b>District</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>
Bromsgrove	7	3	3	1	3	4	2
Malvern Hills	4	3	6	2	3	4	1
Redditch	1	3	3	2	3	0	5
Worcester	7	17	34	21	22	27	10
Wychavon	14	14	6	12	8	1	2
Wyre Forest	7	1	9	8	5	5	1
England	1,768	2,181	2,309	2,414	2,744	3,569	4,134
<b>Worcestershire Total</b>	40	41	61	46	44	41	21

There total numbers of rough sleepers in Worcestershire remained fairly static in the low to mid 40's until 2016 with a considerable spike in 2012. In 2016, there was a significant reduction in the numbers of rough sleepers.

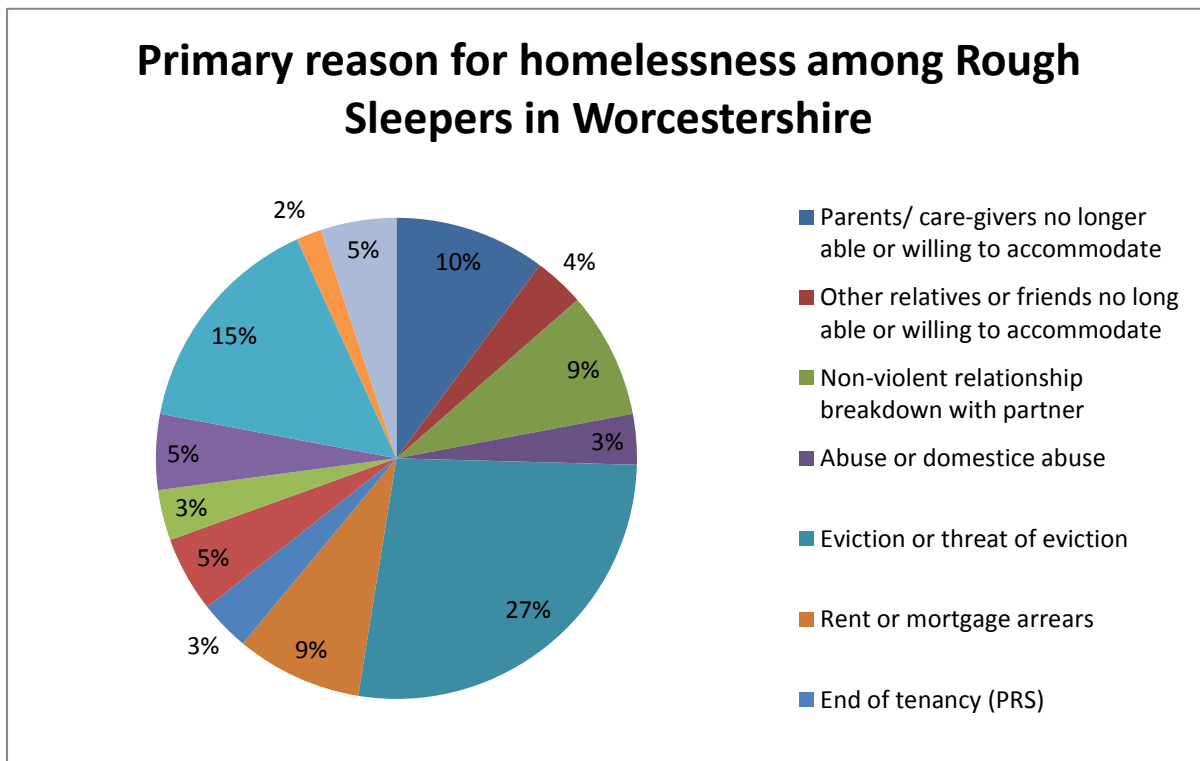
An understanding of homelessness demonstrates that it is caused a number of factors, some of which relate to the wider state of the economy and housing market, known as 'structural' factors and personal or family factors that include

- Drug and alcohol misuse, lack of qualifications, lack of social support, debt ( especially mortgage or rent arrears), poor physical or mental health, relationship breakdown and getting involved in crime from an early age
- Family background including family breakdown and disputes, sexual and physical abuse in childhood, having parents with drug or alcohol problems and previous experience of family homelessness
- And institutional background such as having been in care, armed forces or in prison.

National evidence shows that the 3 main reasons that individual report for their homelessness is as follows.

- parents, friends or relatives unwilling or unable to continue to accommodate them
- relationship breakdown, including domestic violence
- loss of an assured shorthold tenancy.

This is in line with local data which is presented in the graph below which was taken from a survey of people who experienced homelessness across the county;

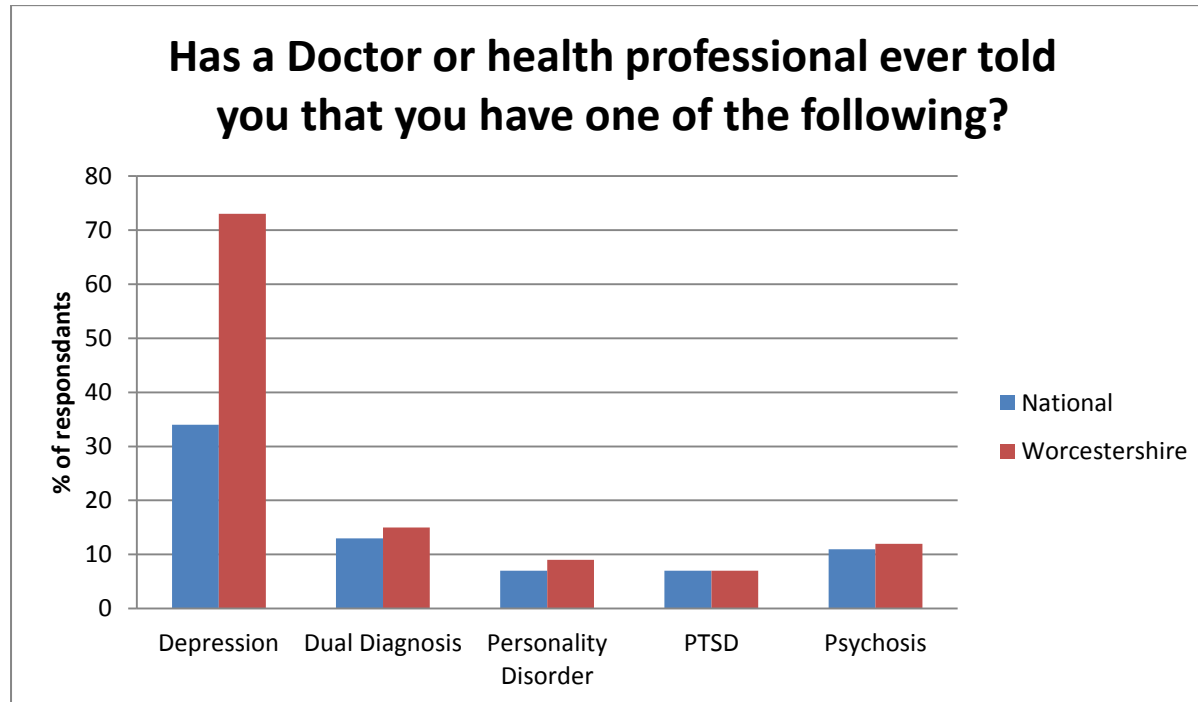


Of those who had reported that had spent time rough sleeping, just over 40% had previously spent time in prison, 30% had been admitted to hospital because of a mental health issue. Just over 25% stated that had an intuitional background (local authority care, young offenders institution or armed forces) while nearly 15% had been a victim of domestic violence.

### 3.1 Recent Healthcare studies

People who rough sleep are far more likely to experience mental and physical ill health. Two studies conducted in Worcestershire in the past 12 months have shown that in particular the local homeless population have significant mental health issues.

The borough/district led Worcestershire Homeless Healthcare needs Survey showed considerably higher numbers of homeless people reporting mental ill health in comparison to homeless people nationally, as reported by Homeless Link.



As evidenced in the above graph, the levels of reported Clinical Depression are double the national average for homeless individuals. Of this total, less than 30% reported that they received mental health support that met their needs. The South Worcestershire CCG led Homeless Health Forum has attempted to understand the reasons behind this but has been unable to draw conclusions at this stage.

Maggs Day Centre also completed a survey of Mental Health of individuals who rough sleep, 82% of those who were surveyed reported seeking help for a mental health condition, of which only 69% said they were receiving treatment at the time of the survey. 46% of those receiving treatment were taking medication – interestingly 54% of service users said that they felt they needed more practical support alongside taking medication for long term treatment to

be effective, as they felt the medication was only treating their symptoms and not their underlying issues. In total, 62% reported that they self – medicate with alcohol or drugs to deal with their mental health issues.

There is a small but significant EEA Migrant community who rough sleep. Rough Sleeper counts has shown that a number of these individuals have been on the streets for a number of years and have proved particularly difficult to move into housing due to having no recourse to public funds and lack of appropriate personal finance, often as a result insecure seasonal income. Agencies report that they have difficulty to engaging with this community, who have traditionally not accessed mainstream homeless services. Work is currently on going with the UK Border Agency to ascertain if a number of these individuals are exercising their treaty rights.

## **4 Homelessness Services and Support**

This section covers the homelessness services provided across the districts. This includes services provided and commissioned by the districts and the services covered by the voluntary sector. This will show a picture of the key services provided across Worcestershire and aid identification of gaps in service provision

### **4.1 Services provided by the six district local authorities**

- Housing advice and assistance to anybody who approaches
- Homelessness assessments under the terms of the Housing Act 1996 part VII
- Temporary accommodation to those households to whom a duty is owed under the homelessness legislation
- Strategic and Partnership working within each district. Plus two posts jointly funded to work strategically across the six districts. One of these posts is focussed on single homeless and childless couples. The other post works more generally across housing and homelessness.
- Worcestershire Young Persons Pathway Workers. District councils and Children's Services jointly commission a housing support model, known as the Positive Pathway, to prevent young people from becoming homeless. Young Persons Pathway Workers, based in each of the homeless teams, provide an integrated advice, mediation, referral and assessment service in conjunction with Children's Services. The model also includes supported accommodation for 16 to 17 year olds, young families and 18-23 year olds and a floating support service.
- In April 2013 Worcester City Council set up a new Discretionary Welfare Assistance Scheme (DWAS) to provide assistance to vulnerable households across South Worcestershire. The scheme provides assistance in the form of goods or vouchers to help individuals or families facing exceptionally difficult circumstances or an emergency.
- In February 2013 Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Council's set up an Essential Living Fund (ELF) since. People living in Redditch or Bromsgrove facing a financial crisis or emergency may be able to get essential goods or food vouchers, but not cash, through the ELF. The ELF is a discretionary fund, which means applicants have no entitlement or statutory rights under this scheme. It is a limited fund which prioritises the greatest needs of the most vulnerable people.
- Wyre Forest District Council operates a Welfare Support Scheme. The aim of the scheme is to help vulnerable people with support where they are can't meet their immediate short term needs or where they need help to keep their independence or re-integrate within the community. The

scheme works in partnership with other organisations to help people in the longer term to maximise income and reduce debt. Support given includes homeless prevention/help to stay in your home, access to items that will enable a tenancy to be sustained, help with certain bills and housing costs that will enable a tenancy to be sustained, access to financial assessments, money advice, food banks and charitable organisations.

- Wyre Forest District Council dedicate existing staff resource time to provide specialist debt advice to homeless and potentially homeless people. The officer is based in the hub and takes referrals from the Hub Customer Service Advisors or Housing Advice workers.

## **4.2 Worcestershire wide council led/commissioned services**

There are already a number of council led or commissioned services focussed on supporting homeless single and childless couples which work alongside independent charitable activities.

These services work in conjunction with local authority housing options teams which also includes prevention activity.

### **4.2.1 Single Homeless and Childless Couples Homeless Services**

Launched in April 2016, the Single Homeless and Childless Couples Homeless Service operated by County Community Projects (CCP) focuses on a range of homelessness prevention activities across Worcestershire. It carries out short term and intensive interventions that will aim to firstly prevent homelessness to begin with, while still providing support services to those who become homeless. Accredited training is provided alongside peer to peer mentoring for individuals who may need longer support services. The service has a reconnection fund available to provide rough sleepers with support and assistance to reconnect with housing and support to an area where they have proven social and support networks to prevent vulnerable people becoming isolated.

### **4.2.2 No Second Night Out**

Our No Second Night Out protocol was successfully launched by all six Worcestershire Local Authorities to create a fast, simple and clear service for people newly arrived to the street. Working in partnership with the CCP and YMCA Worcester, anyone who is a new rough sleeper is moved into emergency short term shelter while a full housing needs assessment is completed. The individual is then provided a single service offer outlining the support and housing options available to them. By providing rapid intervention for new rough sleepers we are able to prevent the consequences of long term rough sleeping such as poor mental health, risk of violence and developing substance misuse issues and the subsequent potential cost to the public purse.

### **4.2.3 Severe Weather Emergency Protocol**

All district and borough local authorities work in partnership to deliver a Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) for rough sleepers in the county. The protocol was developed using best practice guidance from Homeless Link. It enables an emergency night shelters to be opened for rough sleepers if the weather is forecast to drop below 0 degrees for 3 consecutive nights. The emergency shelters will reduce the risk of serious harm or death during the most

severe winter weather. With fully qualified professionals on hand to provide support and guidance to rough sleepers who would like to seek longer term sustainable accommodation.

#### **4.2.4 Prison transition and Homeless Patient Pathway**

In partnership with St Pauls Hostel, a prison transition and homeless patient pathway project is run out of HMP Hewell, Redditch and the acute hospital trust within Worcestershire respectively. These services aim to identify those who are at risk of rough sleeping prior to discharge or release and provide a package of support that prevents the individual from having to spend one day on rough sleeping and provides an on going package of support.

#### **4.2.5 Domestic Abuse Service**

Worcestershire County Council commission a specialist Domestic Abuse service with Stonham and Women's Aid. The aims of the service are;

- Managing and reducing risk to children and adults by offering a support service for people seeking help for Domestic Violence and Abuse (DVA) at an early stage.
- Preventing repeat occurrences of DVA through the provision of family support.
- Reducing serious harm by availability of dedicated, specialist residential provision in Worcestershire or support to access out of county.
- Reducing inequalities and ensuring a high quality customer focus meet the different needs of all sectors of the population, including those with protected characteristics.
- Partnership working with a range of agencies and service users to prevent DVA and reduce future demand upon other services.
- Increasing mutual aid and volunteering through building individual and community resilience as part of the service offer.

WCC recently tendered for Domestic Abuse services in August 2016, but were unable to award a contract as no suitable bids were identified.

This has provided an opportunity to review the potential for future contracts in this area following feedback from partners and stakeholders. Current providers have both agreed to continue providing existing Domestic Abuse services until 30<sup>th</sup> June 2017. An executive group, including representatives from Housing, CCG, PCC and Local Authority, will be meeting in November to consider their joint responsibilities in ensuring appropriate funding and effective care pathways for victims of domestic abuse.

In addition, the County Council will be reviewing the potential for developing training for professionals and Perpetrator programmes in partnership with the Police and Crime Commissioner, to help break the cycle of domestic abuse.

The County Council Domestic Abuse support service contract is now being advertised. The contract will be for 3 years with an extension option. The value of the contract is £417k per annum and will commence in July 2017.

#### 4.2.6 District Domestic Abuse funding

In 2015 the six Worcestershire districts we were successful in securing a £160,000 grant from the DCLG to strengthen accommodation based support services across Worcestershire. Two support providers – Stonham and West Mercia Women’s Aid were successful in securing contracts covering 2015/16 and 2016/17 and align with the County Council contract. Stonham’s funding is for one full time support worker runs from January 2016 to October 2017. Women’s Aid funding is for 2 full time support workers and 1 part time helpline worker.

The **Freedom Programme** - to work with the professionals who come into contact with victims of Domestic Abuse and the **Survivor Programme** – to work with victims of Domestic Abuse to help them move away from a pattern of abuse being repeated. These programmes were run by Wyre Forest District Council for Worcestershire.

#### 4.2.7 Worcestershire Young Persons Pathway Workers

District councils and Children’s Services jointly commission a housing support model, known as the Positive Pathway, to prevent young people from becoming homeless. Young Persons Pathway Workers, based in county homeless teams, provide an integrated advice, mediation, referral and assessment service in conjunction with Children’s Services. The model also includes supported accommodation for 16 to 17 year olds, young families and 18-23 year olds and a floating support service.

#### 4.2.7 Critical 10 Forum (Worcester City)

October 2015 saw the launch of the Critical 10 working group. This partnership brings agencies working together who work with rough sleepers to ensure a multi agency approach to supporting individuals with the most complex needs. The forum includes representatives from a range of different partners including the police, substance misuse specialists, homeless outreach and accommodation providers, social services and council officers. The forum has identified the “critical 10” rough sleepers and appoints a lead agency to work with the individual. Each partner organisation understands the contribution expected as part of a multi disciplinary approach to someone’s care and support. The ultimate aim is to end the cycle of homelessness for a group of individuals who have become entrenched on the streets. Consideration is currently being given to whether this would be a useful model to roll out across other councils in the county.

## 5 Audit of Services

An audit of services (Appendix 1) across the county was carried out to identify gaps in current and future homelessness support service provision.

The conclusions from this research are as follows;

- Lack of mediation and reconciliation services. Only currently exists for young people via Nightstop and N Worcestershire Basement Project. Wychavon have a trained and accredited mediator within the housing team.
- Support for ex offenders is limited.
- Housing related support for those with mental health issues has gone or is very limited.

- Lack of support for those with low level Learning Difficulties and Autism.
- Tenancy sustainment for families is really restricted within existing contracts.
- Not enough accommodation for Care Leavers with higher needs.
- Number of services for single homeless and childless couples with lower level needs, but not for those with more complex needs and chaotic lifestyles.
- Geographical gaps; some areas don't have any direct access accommodation for any client groups, there is a lack of direct access accommodation in general.
- Only Redditch has supported accommodation for young parents.

It is also important to highlight the fact that the funding for some existing services is at risk or being retendered with only a 1 year contract which will further impact the lack of support and accommodation identified. Of particular concern is the Young Person's housing related support contract which is currently subject to significant cuts.

## 6 View of Customers

As part of the review customer satisfaction surveys were sent to households who had received housing advice and assistance from local authorities to get the opinions of how the housing options services run from the customer perspective.

The first question asked was "Why did you visit us?", and for the majority (45%) it was due to being threatened with homelessness. However a significant proportion of households (16%) reported that they approached as they were homeless that day. Households who approach as homeless on the day represent a particular problem as there is often much more limited options for prevention, forcing households down the homeless route when it may not be suitable. Worcester City appears to have the greatest problem with those approaching as homeless on the day with 10% of respondents stating they approached on the day, with Wyre Forest and Bromsgrove having 3%.

Why did you visit us?	Worcester	Wyre Forest	Bromsgrove	Total
You are/were threatened with homelessness	17.81%	10.27%	16.44%	44.52%
You needed advice about your tenancy/landlord	0.00%	0.68%	0.68%	1.36%
You wanted advice about finding a new home	0.00%	1.37%	11.64%	13.01%
You wanted advice about your housing options	2.05%	0.68%	16.44%	19.17%
You were homeless that day	9.59%	2.74%	3.42%	15.75%
Unanswered	2.05%	0.00%	0.00%	2.05%



71% of households felt it was either easy or very easy to access housing options services, 16% found it difficult and 5% found it very difficult. The majority of customers stated that they found out about the housing options services through family and friends (26%) or local knowledge, followed by the customer service centre (19%) and then the internet (14%).

How easy was it for you to access the service?	Worcester	Wyre Forest	Bromsgrove	Total
Very easy	16.00%	13.33%	0.00%	29.33%
Easy	29.33%	12.00%	0.00%	41.33%
Difficult	12.00%	4.00%	0.00%	16.00%
Very difficult	4.00%	1.33%	0.00%	5.33%
neither easy nor difficult	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%

Please note Bromsgrove use a different customer survey and do not include this question.

In regards to how quickly households receive an appointment, 21% received an appointment on the day; a further 25% received an appointment within days, and 14% within one week. However 14% of customers responded that they waited 3 weeks or more for an appointment.

How long did you have to wait for a housing advice/options interview?	Worcester	Wyre Forest	Bromsgrove	Total
Same day	9.59%	5.48%	2.05%	20.55%
Within days	6.85%	3.42%	15.07%	25.34%
1 week	7.53%	2.74%	4.11%	14.38%
2 weeks	2.05%	1.37%	10.96%	15.07%
3 weeks	0.68%	0.00%	4.79%	5.48%
More than three weeks	3.42%	2.05%	2.74%	8.22%
Unanswered	1.37%	0.68%	8.90%	10.96%

Households generally approach inside office hours; however 10% of households reported that they became homeless outside of office hours. Outside of office hours customers are unlikely to get as high a level of service and this is done at an increased cost to local authorities due to out of hours expenditure.

Were you homeless with nowhere to go outside normal office hours? (before 9am or after 5pm)	Worcester	Wyre Forest	Bromsgrove	Total
No	24.66%	13.01%	38.36%	79.45%
Yes	6.85%	1.37%	1.37%	10.27%
Unanswered	0.00%	1.37%	8.90%	10.27%

What is also concerning is that only 10% of households know how to get help outside of office hours. Although out of hours services and phone numbers are advertised online and elsewhere in a variety of media/situations.

Did you know how to get help outside normal office hours? (before 9am or after 5pm)	Worcester	Wychavon	Wyre Forest	Bromsgrove (different survey)	Total
No	17.12%	2.05%	6.85%	0.00%	26.03%
Not applicable	7.53%	1.37%	6.85%	0.00%	15.75%
Yes	6.85%	0.68%	2.05%	0.00%	9.59%
Unanswered	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	48.63%	48.63%

Please note Bromsgrove use a different customer survey and do not include this question.

Similar to the results of analysis of reasons to approach, the most common types of accommodation prior to seeking assistance are either friends or family, or privately renting. What needs to be determined, in consideration of the fact that many households approach on the day they are homeless, is are households allowing themselves to be evicted from private rental accommodation then staying with family before approach and as such not approaching when they are threatened with homelessness from private rental accommodation?

What type of accommodation did you occupy when you accessed the service?	Worcester	Wyre Forest	Bromsgrove	Total
Hospital discharge	0.68%	0.00%	0.68%	1.37%
Housing association/Council tenant	3.42%	1.37%	7.53%	12.33%
Owner occupier	2.05%	1.37%	2.74%	6.16%
Privately renting	7.53%	8.22%	10.96%	28.08%
Rough sleeper	0.00%	0.68%	0.68%	1.37%
Sheltered accommodation	2.05%	0.00%	0.68%	2.74%
Staying with friends or family	10.27%	2.05%	13.01%	26.71%
Supported accommodation, for example YMCA/hostel	2.74%	0.00%	0.68%	3.42%
Other	0.00%	0.00%	3.42%	3.42%
Unanswered	2.74%	2.05%	8.22%	14.38%

For many households, by engaging in support with a housing officer they were either able to find a solution to their problem or a housing advisor is in the process of finding a solution. This was the case in over 50% of cases, with a further 7% being empowered to find their own solution. However, there are a number of households who did not receive the help they needed, little over 10%. Further analysis of these cases would be necessary to determine if there are

any common factors, such as age, household type, or housing situation that would indicate particular groups of people are more difficult to assist or those coming from different housing circumstances.

What happened as a result of your interview?	Worcester	Wyre Forest	Bromsgrove	Total
A housing advisor is helping me to find a solution to my problem(s)	9.59%	1.37%	15.75%	28.08%
A solution was found to my problem(s)	9.59%	9.59%	13.01%	34.93%
I did not receive the help I needed	5.48%	2.05%	2.74%	10.27%
Other (please specify)	6.16%	2.05%	0.68%	8.90%
I was given advice so I could help myself	0.00%	0.00%	6.85%	6.85%
Unanswered	0.68%	0.68%	9.59%	10.96%
Grand Total	31.51%	15.75%	48.63%	100.00%

Looking at the levels of professionalism within the housing options teams customers find that the majority of the time, officers are helpful and interested and that they are also polite and professional. However there are a minority of cases where officers were deemed not to be helpful or interest or polite and professional. Looking at the comments left on the questionnaire, some of these relate to the outcome being found not being what the household felt they needed. However there are other comments indicating that some times, there can be a lack of communication, not being told all the information, and not providing assistance without paperwork being provided.

Was the officer helpful and interested?	Worcester	Wychavon	Wyre Forest	Bromsgrove	Total
Strongly agree	6.85%	2.74%	6.85%	19.86%	36.30%
Agree	11.64%	0.68%	2.74%	15.75%	30.82%
Disagree	3.42%	0.00%	1.37%	1.37%	6.16%
Strongly disagree	1.37%	0.00%	2.05%	0.00%	3.42%
Unanswered	8.22%	0.68%	2.74%	11.64%	23.29%

Was the officer was polite and professional?	Worcester	Wyre Forest	Bromsgrove	Total
Strongly agree	9.59%	8.22%	21.23%	42.47%
Agree	10.27%	2.05%	14.38%	26.71%
Disagree	2.74%	1.37%	0.00%	4.11%
Strongly disagree	0.68%	1.37%	0.00%	2.05%
Unanswered	8.22%	2.74%	13.01%	24.66%

Looking at the overall level of satisfaction with the services received, the majority of applicants are either happy or very happy with the level of service provided. Looking at the reasons why people are very unhappy, it is a mixture of households not receiving the housing outcome they wanted, information not being provided, contact not being maintained, and bureaucracy preventing the provision of housing assistance being given.

Overall how satisfied are you with the service you received?	Worcester	Wychavon	Wyre Forest	Bromsgrove	Total
Very happy	8.22%	2.74%	6.16%	28.08%	45.21%
Happy	9.59%	0.68%	3.42%	8.22%	21.92%
Unhappy	1.37%	0.00%	0.68%	2.74%	4.79%
Very unhappy	4.79%	0.00%	2.74%	0.00%	7.53%
Unanswered	7.53%	0.68%	2.74%	9.59%	20.55%

A customer survey was sent out for Redditch but unfortunately the number of responses received was not significant enough to include within the above figures as it would be unrepresentative in comparison. However, from the responses that were received, it can be said that the results were broadly very similar to the other districts. All of the respondents approached for advice because they were homeless or threatened with homelessness. 100% said that it was easy or very easy to access the service. With regards to finding out about the service, again it was often through family or friends, however some reported that they found out from a health visitor or support worker. With regards to appointment time, 80% of the respondents said that they received an appointment on the same day or within days. 60% had a solution to their problem after seeing a housing officer, and 100% agreed that the officer was helpful, interested, polite and professional.

## 7 View of Partner Organisations

As part of this review, a survey was sent out to local partners to identify current and future gaps in housing related services, and to identify risks to these services. This is a summary of the key points.

### 7.1 Current/future gaps in housing related services

#### 7.1.1 Complex needs

Many services are seeing an increase in demand from those with complex needs and partners feel that the county needs;

- A service for those with combined mental health and substance/alcohol misuse. Clinical Commissioning Groups are currently working on a Memorandum Of Understanding for co-existing substance misuse dependency and mental ill health. Commissioners are also looking at appointing two mental health well-being support workers one for south Worcestershire and the other for North Worcestershire.
- A rough sleeper's outreach service. Partners are reporting the current gap in this type of provision has had a knock on affect to other services – increasing demand and complexity of service users.
- Complex needs service (an example in Oxford) run as a therapeutic community.
- Accommodation with appropriate support for those with complex needs and/or offending history following the reforms to Intensive Housing Related Support.
- Housing provision that deals with those with long term alcohol problems (mainly men) those who require alcohol in a daily basis, but who are in pre contemplation stage of change.
- High risk, high tolerance facility for homeless people who are intravenous drug users.
- A residential detox facility.

The criminal justice sector report how workload has significantly shifted towards dealing with mental health, missing people and the vulnerable.

### 7.1.2 Accommodation issues

Accommodation is also a major concern for partners, especially for young people and those under the age of 35. They report;

- A lack of supported accommodation and stable move on flats, a lack of decent shared accommodation, especially for those who will be affected by welfare reform and only entitled to a shared accommodation rate.
- A lack of provision of housing with specialist support i.e. mental health and drug and alcohol support.
- Limited availability for clients with learning disabilities
- Accommodation pathway issues - the time scales for clients when being offered a property is unrealistic as clients often have to view and sign for a property on the day they are expected to move in. If someone is currently in temporary accommodation there can be an overlap of rent being due on two properties (dual housing payments are extremely difficult to get awarded) whilst awaiting applications for essential items. Delay in budgeting loans also an issue.
- Access to the private rented sector presents issues as landlords are more reluctant to accept people with housing benefit and the need for a deposit. There are successful schemes across the County who assist people to access the private rented accommodation but there is often a waiting list. There are also other barriers as potential tenants may not be tenancy ready. There is a need to work collaboratively to develop a scheme to address these issues, which includes working with service users to get them tenancy ready and to begin to address any issues they have. Partners are also looking at a befriender system and matching service users with people who will be able to offer extra support, which can then remain in place once they are accommodated.

### 7.1.3 Early prevention and resilience services

Partners support services that will prevent homelessness from the earliest possible stage and equip people with the skills to establish and maintain lifelong independence;

- Early prevention and education services for young people most at risk i.e. young people in alternative education, families identified through Stronger Families and Early Help, families that have already had siblings become homeless/leave home early.
- Resilience workers to increase independence

### 7.1.4 Gaps in knowledge and information

Some services are seeing an increase in customer demand; however it is unclear if this is because of a higher number of homeless people or more awareness of/trust in the service. There is an identified need for better data collection and a County forum that brings together homeless services.

### 7.1.5 Risks to continuity of service

Accommodation providers are concerned about the Government review of funding for supported accommodation – it may make accommodation unviable and force closure.

Partners are reporting an increase in numbers and have concerns around capacity, resource and future funding generally.

## 8 Key Conclusions

- Homelessness is increasing locally, as it is nationally. However, homelessness prevention continues to have an impact as homelessness applications have remained relatively static whilst approaches for homelessness assistance has increased. The ability to continue prevention activities at the same levels in the face of austerity measures is a concern.
- The Homelessness Reduction Bill, likely to become law in 2017, will introduce further duties for Local Authorities including the requirement to assist people at a much earlier stage and expands the categories of people eligible for support.
- The impact of Legislation and National Policy, welfare reform, the benefit cap, Universal Credit, social rents being limited to LHA rates, the shared room rate for under 35's and the 1% social rent reduction are and will have a huge impact on preventing homeless and housing options. The Government is also currently consulting on the future funding model for supported housing meaning a lot of uncertainty around whether schemes will become unviable, and also hindering new development.

- There are concerns about whether there are *any* affordable housing options for some households, especially large families and those under 35. Local Authorities are finding it increasingly difficult to discharge the homeless duty into private rented accommodation as it is often considered unaffordable. Registered providers are also introducing affordability assessments for social and affordable rented tenancies.
- The homeless service does not adequately meet the needs of families and single people with complex needs. In some districts the number of single people approaching as homeless with an identified vulnerability has now exceeded the number of families.
- It is becoming increasingly difficult to move people on from short term and emergency accommodation due to a range of issues e.g. complex/higher support needs, poor tenancy histories, the demand for social housing far outstripping supply, a buoyant private sector housing market meaning private landlords can afford to be selective. The shortage of properties available is further compounded in districts that cover a wider geographical area as customers want to remain living in particular areas e.g. for Wychavon there are few properties becoming available in Droitwich, meaning additional wait times in temporary accommodation.
- Local Authorities are seeing significant pressures on interim accommodation and this may be set to increase with the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Bill. There has been an increase in the number of single people and childless couples approaching for assistance and this is likely to continue with the impact of welfare reform, high thresholds for social care eligibility, lack of housing related support options and no revenue funding to deliver new supported housing (currently).
- The Single Person and Childless Couples service focuses on prevention work and moving those newly arrived rapidly off the streets and into long term housing, but there is a gap in provision for continuing and entrenched rough sleepers.
- The Audit of Services identified a number of gaps in provision for certain client groups and also geographically. Potentially gaps could increase as services may become unviable due to further funding cuts. Partnership working may also increasingly become strained through funding cuts and service changes. There is a need to form and build on relationships with those services that work with/come into contact with those who are at risk of homelessness in order to “plug” identified gaps.
- Accommodation issues are a major concern and this was particularly evident in the response to the Partner Organisation survey. They felt there was a general lack of supported accommodation and shared accommodation, particularly for young people and those under the age of 35.
- The Private Rented Sector – the ending of Assured Shorthold Tenancies continues to be a major reason for homelessness. Also fewer properties are becoming available through the deposit bond schemes across Worcestershire meaning less private rented properties available to prevent households from becoming homeless.

## 9 Recommendations

- Protect and increase good quality, cost effective support services that will prevent homelessness from the earliest possible stage and equip people with the skills to establish and maintain lifelong independence (systems thinking approach). Ensure effective communication and joint working relations between housing advice teams and commissioned services.
- Develop a mobilisation plan for the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Bill.
- Develop pathways with key partners to ensure a different and more integrated approach to meet the needs of single people and families with complex needs e.g. mental and physical health, social care, substance misuse.

- Explore funding opportunities to extend the prison and hospital pathway worker service.
- Consider how to effectively collect needs information on complex needs e.g. Homeless Journey Mapping.
- Review and expand the provision of interim accommodation and permanent affordable accommodation, particularly for large families and those under 35 who are increasingly finding it hard to access any accommodation options.
- Deliver new models of accommodation, particular for under 35's, in partnership with registered providers and private landlords.
- Some districts are also prioritising the development a Local Authority owned / procured property to be utilised for a variety of client groups' i.e. single people, couples, pregnant women who are homeless. Customers would move in on a 12 month tenancy and can receive the support they need to get them to the point where they are 'property ready' and then move through into their own independent accommodation. Thus ensuring that there is constant through put from the accommodation and assist with preventing repeat homeless presentations / failed tenancies and requiring increased financial resources to solve their housing need.
- Increase service provision to assist entrenched rough sleepers move off the street. Consider more regular reviews of numbers of rough sleepers to see if there are seasonal variations. Consider where a Critical 10 service (or another model to assist single people/childless couples with complex needs) to be rolled out to any of the other districts. Address gaps in services geographically to meet the needs of this client group. There is concentration of services in Worcester City and for customers in other districts to access those services they would need to leave behind their support networks and familiarity.
- Increase the use of tenancy ready schemes and tenancy support especially for private rented sector to improve access and to prevent homelessness. Improve online information for anyone taking on a tenancy in any sector e.g. tenancy support checklist for new tenants, leaflet outlining responsibilities. Consider an early "befriending" scheme to assist applicants with the initial set up of tenancies and work with from the start.
- Explore gaps in service provision identified by the audit of services and prioritise which to focus on to meet key local priorities. Gaps identified - mediation and reconciliation services, support for ex offenders, housing related support for those with mental health issues, low level Learning Difficulties and Autism. Also tenancy sustainment for families, supported accommodation for young parents and direct access accommodation generally.
- Address the shortage of accommodation for Care Leavers with higher needs in conjunction with Children's Services.
- Improve data recording and analysis to reflect the true nature of homelessness across the County.
- Improve how we share learning across districts where there have been successes. Further investigation into how homelessness prevention and relief is recorded and outcomes monitored across the county would be beneficial, especially in relation to where the homelessness service is based e.g. within local authority or Registered Provider.
- Support the work of the Homeless Health Group and the Homeless Charter.
- Consider trialling a new recording tool to take a snapshot for a quarter which records more detailed information e.g. if debt what type of debt, if substance use what sort etc.
- The remit of this report did not include work on the cost effectiveness of the homelessness service (cost of statutory vs cost of prevention). This may need to be considered as a follow up report (Gold standard, VFM).
- Work with partners to improve customers' wealth and resilience to prevent homelessness occurring throughout their lives - getting people into work, provision of debt awareness/financial management and maximising benefit services.



- Step up communications to reduce people approaching local authorities as homeless on the day, and also so they know how to get help outside office hours. The earlier people approach for assistance, the higher the likelihood of preventing homelessness. Review whether enhanced housing options toolkit is achieving this.

## Appendix 1 – Audit of services

### Breakdown by district

Client group/service type	Wyre Forest	Worcester	Redditch	Bromsgrove	Malvern	Wychavon
LA Housing Advice	Housing Advice	Housing Advice	Housing Advice	Housing Advice	Housing Advice	Housing Advice
Enhanced Housing Options Service	Enhanced Housing Options Service	Enhanced Housing Options Service		Enhanced Housing Options Service	Enhanced Housing Options Service	Enhanced Housing Options Service
Young Persons Pathway Worker	Young Persons Pathway Worker	Young Persons Pathway Worker	Young Persons Pathway Worker	Young Persons Pathway Worker	Young Persons Pathway Worker	Young Persons Pathway Worker
Supported accommodation for young parents			Smallwood Almshouses (Young Parents) 16 units			
Housing/money/debt advice	CAB Housing & Money Advice	WHABAC – housing advice / money advice	Housing Debt Advice CAB	Housing Debt Advice CAB	CAB	CAB + ‘Two Pennies’
Connecting Families			Connecting Families	Connecting Families (TBC)		
LA Welfare assistance	Welfare Assistance	Welfare Assistance	Welfare Assistance	Welfare Assistance	Welfare Assistance (administered by Worcester City)	Welfare Assistance (administered by Worcester City)
Deposit/bond schemes (via partners)	Deposit Bond – singles/couples (WHABAC)	Deposit Bond – single/couples (WHABAC)	Rent Deposit Scheme	Deposit Bond Scheme	Fortis Living hold/administer a flexible prevention fund for MHDC	Deposit Bond Scheme: grant for singles and couples + interest free loans for deposits
Local Authority deposit/bond scheme	Deposit Bond – all (LA)	City Life Lettings (rent bond scheme)		Deposit Bond – family	See above	See above
Young people – mediation, emergency accommodation, Education projects	Nightstop; Mediation Host Accommodation Education Project	Nightstop Mediation Host Accommodation Education? (pending success of new bid)	Nightstop	Basement Project drop in service for under 25’s and mediation	Nightstop – funded through lottery grant (pending success of new bid)	Nightstop – funded through lottery grant (pending success of new bid)

Young peoples' emergency accommodation	St Basil's crash pad coming soon	YMCA Crash Pad	St. Basil's Crash pad	St Basils Crash Pad		2 crash pads at the YMCA for singles and 16/17 year olds
Young people's accommodation and support	Kidderminster Foyer (19 units)  St Basils – to provide additional out of hours cover at Foyer + shared house  Fairer Chance project (for existing cases for 3 years)	Fortis Living - Bath Road Young Persons Accommodation (17 units)  Henwick Road shared house (Fortis) 5 units  Worcester YMCA,	St Basils supported accommodation – St Georges (23 units)  YMCA – Gordon Anstis House	Bromsgrove Foyer (15 units)  St Basil's Young Persons Scheme  Floating Support for under 35's in shared accommodation	Malvern Hills Foyer accommodation for 16-24 year olds. (17 bed spaces).  Somers Park shared housing (3 units)	
Vulnerable adults/complex needs	Vulnerable Adults Panel	Critical 10				Police liaison meetings
Hostel accommodation		St Paul's Hostel YMCA				
Domestic abuse – refuge accommodation/safe houses	Refuge  Stonham Safehouses in Kidderminster	Refuge / Safe House  Dispersed Safehouses (Stonham)	Dispersed safe houses (Stonham)	Safe Houses (Stonham)		
Domestic abuse – security measures	Sanctuary Schemes/extra security measures as part of prevention activities	Sanctuary Schemes/extra security measures as part of prevention activities	Sanctuary Schemes/extra security measures as part of prevention activities	Sanctuary Schemes/extra security measures as part of prevention activities	Sanctuary Schemes/extra security measures as part of prevention activities	Sanctuary Schemes/extra security measures as part of prevention activities
Ex - offenders				Fry Supported Housing for ex offenders		
Day centres		Maggs's Day Centre  Homeless Health Hub, City Centre GP				
Food/furniture/clothing				New Starts Furniture Project		Roundabout + Salvation Army + Caring Hands + Trussel Trust Food Bank

## Countywide services

Countywide
CCP HOPES (single homelessness prevention)
Hospital and Prison Pathway Workers
Domestic Abuse Support Funding (Survivor programme, Crush)
Basement Floating Support Service for Young people
County Partnership Officer
Heenans Court – single persons move on accommodation
CCP – NSNO protocol and access to emergency NSNO accommodation
SWEP - Cold and Hot weather provision
Nightstop
Single Homeless Pathway Officer
Swanswell- county substance misuse contract
Early Help – support for Young People / Families
St Paul’s Hostel
Maggs Day Centre
YMCA
Care & Repair Worcestershire
Wellbeing Hub
Mental Health Housing Related Support – Sanctuary & CCP

## Appendix 2 (taken from the Worcestershire Housing Partnership Plan)

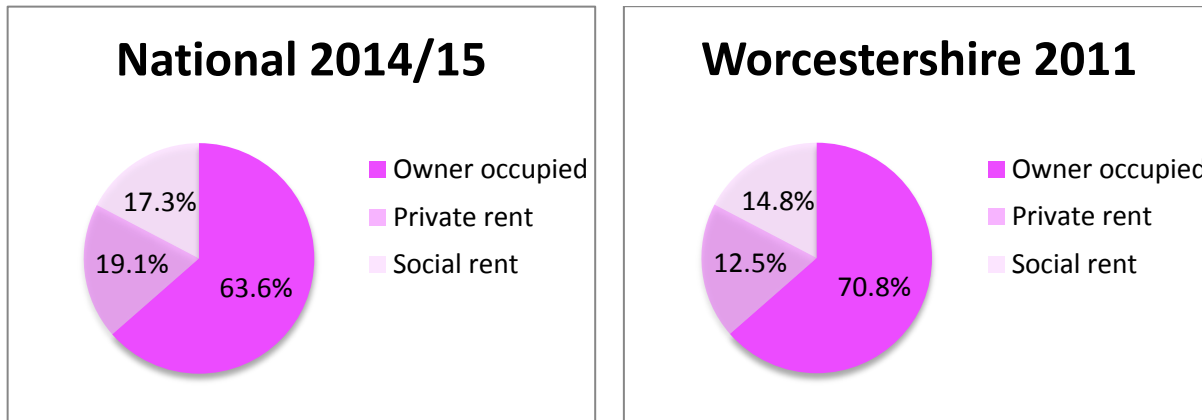
### Local Context

#### The population

There is a population of 575,400 in Worcestershire and this figure is expected to increase by a further 21,579 over the next 10 years with the biggest increase in the older population. The County has a higher proportion of older people than nationally which presents some on-going challenges.

#### Housing stock and affordability

The charts below illustrate the breakdown of property by tenure nationally and the comparison in Worcestershire. Worcestershire has a significant proportion of households within the private sector, which has the highest number of unhealthy homes.



As can be seen below, the quality and affordability of housing varies between the different tenures.

Social/Affordable Rent	Private Rent	Owner Occupation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 14.8% homes in Worcestershire</li> <li>• Shrinking tenure &amp; will continue</li> <li>• Healthiest homes</li> <li>• Highest % accessible homes</li> <li>• Most overcrowded &amp; least under-occupied</li> <li>• Second most affordable tenure (housing costs)</li> <li>• Higher proportion of older households</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 12.5% of homes in Worcestershire</li> <li>• Growing tenure &amp; expected to continue</li> <li>• Highest prevalence of unhealthy homes</li> <li>• Second most accessible homes</li> <li>• Second most overcrowded &amp; least under-occupied</li> <li>• Least affordable tenure (housing costs)</li> <li>• Higher proportion of working age and family households</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 70.8% homes in Worcestershire</li> <li>• Shrinking tenure: future unknown?</li> <li>• Highest number of unhealthy homes</li> <li>• Least accessible homes</li> <li>• Least overcrowded &amp; most under-occupied</li> <li>• Most affordable tenure – if you are able to put down a deposit or are if you are already a home owner</li> <li>• Highest number of older households</li> </ul>

## Owner Occupation

The Government's drive is towards affordable home ownership, using the rented sector as a short term solution. However, home ownership is not an option for all. In Q4 2014, the mean house price in the county had increased by 7.6% on the previous quarter to £226,259.<sup>1</sup> The average household income in Worcestershire is £37,000 (2013) which makes average house prices more than six times the average income.

Although house prices had increased across Worcestershire there were some district variations. For example;

- The greatest increase in house prices was in Wychavon, which saw a rise of 12.0%.
- There was a decrease in house prices in Malvern Hills of -1.6%.

<sup>1</sup> Source: Land Registry, 2014.

There were also variations across the districts in terms of property sales. The number of property sales in Q4 2014 was 3.4% higher than in Q4 2013. However Malvern Hills and Wyre Forest saw a decrease in sales of -5.6% and -7.0% respectively whilst Worcester saw the greatest increase in sales of 13.8%<sup>2</sup>.

## Private Rental Sector

We have increasingly relied on the growing private rental sector as the social sector continues to decline, but affordability is an issue and properties can be in poor condition. The ending of private rented tenancies is consistently one of the top three reasons for homelessness in the County, which is comparative to the national picture. These issues make it a sector that needs to have the focus of our attention.

The average rents per month nationally are shown below.

Private Rents monthly	Room	Studio	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed
Worcestershire	£355	£346	£452	£578	£699	£1,064
Annual Income needed <sup>3</sup>	£17,040	£16,608	£21,696	£27,744	£33,352	£51,072
England	£362	£555	£606	£677	£771	£1,348

Source – Private Rental Market Statistics 2013/14

The annual income for Worcestershire shown below highlights how at least 12% of the population would not be able to afford to rent a room at average rent in the private rental sector and, 35% of the population could not afford to rent one bedroom accommodation.

Annual Income - Worcestershire	Proportion of Population
Less than £10,000	12%
Between £10,000 and £20,000	23%
Between £20,000 and £30,000	17%

<sup>2</sup> Source: LandRegistry,2015

<sup>3</sup> The annual income required to be able to afford to access this sector has been calculated so that the rent makes up no more than 25% of the annual income including benefits.

Between £30,000 and £50,000	24%
Over £50,000	24%

Source – Worcestershire Atlas (2013)

## Social Sector

Social housing is affordable housing provided by either registered providers e.g. Fortis Living and Wyre Forest Community Housing or local authorities who have retained their own housing stock – within Worcestershire this is only Redditch Borough Council. A key function of social housing is to provide accommodation that is affordable to people on low incomes.

Social Rents (housing association) monthly	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed
Worcestershire	£299	£331	£356	£393
Annual Income Needed <sup>1</sup>	£14,352	£15,888	£17,088	£18,864
England	£328	£375	£419	£504

Source – RSR Guide to Local Rents 2011 for Worcestershire and Core Data 2014/15 for England

As well as open market housing being unaffordable to many, we are finding it increasingly difficult to ensure that social housing for rent remains affordable to those on low incomes. Government wants to increase the rate of new house building and housing associations have an important role in contributing to this. Funding the delivery of more affordable homes for rent and homeownership, whilst maintaining affordable rent levels, is a continuing challenge. As can be seen in the table below, affordable rents are becoming increasingly unaffordable to those working and non working households on lower incomes.

Affordable Rents monthly	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed
Worcestershire	£364	£455	£540	£733
Annual Income Needed <sup>1</sup>	£17,472	£21,840	£25,920	£35,184



England            £508            £519            £567            £709

Source – RSR Guide to Local Rents 2011 for Worcestershire and Core Data 2014/15 for England

## Housing Shortage

In order to address the housing shortage within Worcestershire and ensure there are a sufficient number of good quality homes for the population, Worcestershire needs to develop between 2228 and 2408 homes a year according to the South Worcestershire Development Plan, North Worcestershire Housing Needs Assessment and the Wyre Forest Objectively Assessed Housing Needs document.

This mismatch in supply and demand contributes to:-

- Affordability and suitability issues nationally and locally.
- Migration from more expensive areas.
- Increasing number of working households across Worcestershire needing Housing Benefit. The number of claimants has risen from 30,837 in April 2009 to 34,139 in April 2016.
- Rising homelessness across Worcestershire, experienced by all households with a 10% increase in people seeking homeless assistance from their local authority since 2010 and a 25% increase in homelessness acceptances.
- Lack of specialist independent living e.g. people with learning and other disabilities who are placed out of county or remain living with families.

## Housing and health

In addition to the complexities above, it should be highlighted that one in five homes presents a risk to health, the majority of these are in the private sector with 15% homes nationally in poor condition with a cost to the NHS of £1.4bn p.a. The cost to society is estimated to be £18.6bn including costs to education and employment<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> [BRE, Briefing Note: The cost of poor housing to the NHS](#)

A household is in fuel poverty and lack thermal comfort if they are on a low income and struggle to pay heating costs e.g. this may be due to an inefficient heating system and/or poor insulation. This consequently contributes to health and social inequalities. It has a direct effect on heart attack, stroke, respiratory disease, flu, falls and injuries and hypothermia<sup>5</sup>

- Fuel poverty is significantly worse in Worcestershire than the England average affecting around 11.2% of households compared with only 10.4% of households in England as a whole.
- Excess winter deaths (all ages) 2010-2013 are again higher in the County. There are 17.4 deaths for England compared to 18.6 for Worcestershire.<sup>6</sup>

There is strong evidence for the positive social impact of better housing (Friedman 2010); for example, the Marmot Review (2010) cites housing as one of the key social determinants of health inequalities alongside education, employment and standard of living.

The highest risks to health in housing are attached to cold, damp and mouldy conditions; cold conditions are statistically associated with early winter deaths, being four times more likely in the coldest homes (Marmot, 2011).

Tackling fuel poverty and cold and damp homes is important for improving health outcomes and reducing health inequalities. Local housing authorities and Health and Well-being Boards should provide partnerships which can work together to tackle these issues effectively, in line with the recommendations of the Worcestershire Fuel Poverty Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2016.

### Disability access

Government statistics show that there are currently more than 11 million disabled people in Great Britain. Our ageing society means that there will be an increase in the number of older disabled people as time goes on, rising from 2.3 million in 2002 to 4.6 million in 2041.

The vast majority of existing housing has poor access standards: government research shows that 91.5% of homes are not even fully 'visitable' by disabled people (including wheelchair users) as they don't have four very basic features that would allow adequate access. These four basic features are level access, flush threshold, toilet at entrance level and sufficiently wide doors and circulation space.

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<sup>5</sup> JSNA: Fuel Poverty 2016

<sup>6</sup> Public Health Outcomes Framework

The legacy of building properties with poor accessibility means that many people are faced with the need to adapt their home if they are disabled or become disabled. The demand for Disabled Facilities Grant's (DFG's) is increasing with more than 1 in 10 adults saying that they are either unable, or find it difficult, to move, walk or stand independently and a further 1.25 million people in England are living with significant sight loss. As the population ages the number of people with disabilities is rising. However, only 5% of the housing stock is fully accessible and few accessible homes are being built. This means that potentially demand is more than ten times greater than the funding available.

Analysis shows that on average DFG's help about 40,000 people a year with adaptations to their homes on a national basis. Within Worcestershire 408 DFG's were completed during the financial year 2015/16. This equates to a total spend on completed adaptations of just over £2 million. The value of cases diverted to another solution or decided not to proceed was £2,291,312. The majority of grants were paid to 60+ households and, with Worcestershire's growing number of ageing people this figure is predicted to increase.

Age	Number of grants
60+	257
20-60	116
Children and young people	35
Total	408

### Extra care housing

The Extra Care Commissioning Strategy 2012-26 has identified a need for 4703 units of extra care accommodation of which 3450 are for sale and 1253 for rent. To date 709 units for sale and 688 units for rent are either in use or under development. There remains a gap of 2676 units. Extra Care provides a cost effective way of maintaining an individual's independence for longer and reducing isolation.

Supported living for people with learning and other disabilities is a key priority, enabling people to live independently close to families and social circle. Housing needs to be varied and include cluster flats, shared houses and specialist ground floor accommodation for people with complex physical needs.

The Transforming Care Agenda expects local authorities to work to move people currently locked in step down accommodation into supported living.