



Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

2020-2025

November 2019

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Forward (to be inserted prior to publication)

Executive Summary (to be inserted prior to publication if required)

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Introduction

Purpose of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

This Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy sets out how we will work together with partners to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping over the next five years.

It replaces our Prevention of Homelessness Strategy 2014-2019 and includes a more detailed approach to our rough sleeping interventions and how homelessness services have changed since the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

Our Vision is to:-

Prevent homelessness and end rough sleeping in Blaby by working in partnership to meet the housing and broader needs of those at risk of, or who are already homeless.

Our key aim is to ensure that this strategy is an easy to read document with the emphasis on delivering high quality homelessness prevention and rough sleeping services and achieving effective actions from our delivery plan.

Our strategy covers four key priorities:

- **Preventing homelessness and reducing the use of temporary accommodation**
- **Increasing the supply of affordable housing**
- **Developing partnership work and wider communications to ensure efficient and effective use of resources in the best interest of our customers**
- **Supporting Vulnerable Households**

Delivering services and interventions to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping cannot be achieved without the support of our partners; those in the voluntary sector, faith groups, registered providers and other partner agencies. This strategy reflects our joint working through a multi-partnership action plan to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping.

The actions we are proposing as part of this consultation are listed under each priority for the purposes of the consultation. Once agreed, actions will be added to a delivery plan which will include lead officers/organisations and timescales.

Partnership Working

It is recognised that the priorities within this strategy cannot be delivered by us alone. Robust, collaborative partnership working is required at a local level, with key local players actively involved in homelessness issues. In addition to this, we need to continue to work on a sub-regional, and regional basis in order to maximise our

opportunities to increase the supply of affordable housing, and access funding streams to enhance local services.

Links with other Blaby priorities

This Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy is aligned with other priorities set out by Blaby District Council to ensure a cohesive and joined up approach. As such this Strategy has been aligned with our Corporate Plan so that it assists us to achieve the following priorities:

Blaby District.....a place to live

Where

- ***New and established neighbourhoods are integrated, strong, healthy and safe***
- ***Sustainable communities are able to access services and opportunities***
- ***Inequality is reducing and the most vulnerable in our society are supported***

We Will

- ***Design and deliver housing to meet the needs of our residents***
- ***Work well with partners to keep our communities safe***
- ***Support our residents to live healthy lifestyles***
- ***Create opportunities for community involvement***

The Blaby Plan 2018 - 2021

Moreover, this Homelessness Strategy will seek to contribute to the success of the Housing Strategy by aligning to the three priority areas laid out:

- ***Priority 1 – Increasing Housing Supply across the tenures***
- ***Priority 2 - Providing appropriate housing options and support services for vulnerable households***
- ***Priority 3 – Making the best use of existing housing stock***

Blaby Housing Strategy 2015

National Policy & Context

This Homelessness Strategy has been developed in line with national policy and legislation, as well as careful consideration of the local context and identified needs. Here follows an outline of the key national policy documents and legislation that relates to this strategy.

Housing Act 1996

Local authorities' legal responsibilities to homeless people, and those at risk of homelessness is set out in Part VII of the Housing Act 1996, amended by the Homelessness Act 2002. The Housing Act 1996 places a range of duties upon each local authority including the requirement to provide advice and assistance and the provision of emergency accommodation in certain circumstances.

Homelessness Act 2002

This Act established the requirement for local authorities to have a homelessness strategy published every five years. It requires that the strategy must set out how the local authority will prevent homelessness and ensure that it has adequate accommodation options and support for homeless people and those at risk of homelessness.

Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 came into force on 3 April 2018. It was the biggest change to homelessness legislation in 40 years and brings in new duties to prevent and relieve homelessness.

The key measures in the Act are:

- An extension to the period "threatened with homelessness" from 28 to 56 days
- New duties to prevent or relieve homelessness for all eligible applicants threatened with homelessness, regardless of priority need
- A new "Duty to Refer" – a legal requirement for certain services to notify a local authority if they come into contact with someone they think may be homeless, or are at risk of becoming homeless.

There are 12 new clauses contained within the Act which includes the legal requirement to complete an assessment of someone's circumstances, production of a personal housing plan, free information and advice on specific services, and changes to care leavers local connection criteria.

Duty to Refer 2018

A new Duty to Refer has been introduced and applies to public sector organisations to refer anyone who they believe may be homeless or at risk of being homeless to the local authority for assistance with housing needs. This recognises that other organisations have a responsibility for preventing homelessness by making timely referrals.

The duty to refer will help to ensure that services are working together effectively to prevent homelessness by ensuring that peoples' housing needs are considered when they are in contact with other public authorities. It is also anticipated that it will encourage local housing authorities and other public authorities to build strong partnerships, which enable them to work together to intervene earlier to prevent homelessness through increasingly integrated services.

We continue to build upon our existing partnerships to prevent and tackle homelessness and the "ALERT" Duty to Refer portal is being used here in Blaby District Council.

Homelessness Code of Guidance 2018

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government published the most recent Homelessness Code of Guidance in 2018, following the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 receiving Royal Assent. The Code gives guidance on how local authorities should exercise their homelessness functions and apply the various criteria in practice.

Localism Act 2011

This Act made key changes to how a local authority may end its main homelessness duty. Following the Localism Act, local authorities are able to discharge their duty to secure accommodation through the offer of suitable accommodation in the private rented sector. This offer must comprise of a minimum 12 month assured shorthold tenancy.

MHCLG Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018

In August 2018, government published their new Rough Sleeping Strategy which sets out their plans to help people who are sleeping rough now and to put in place the structures to end rough sleeping for good by 2027.

To support the strategy, government announced a fund of £100 million to support the delivery of the strategy and a further £45 million for the Rough Sleeper Initiative Fund which aimed to help deliver substantial reductions in the number of rough sleepers being recorded.

A delivery plan was published in December 2018 setting out progress and next steps.

Housing & Planning Act 2016

This Act made a clear commitment from the government to increase home ownership and as such, did not include extra resources for social rented housing. The Act also include measures underpinning the voluntary Right to Buy agreement with housing associations, which the government hoped would support a doubling of the number of customer and self-build homes by 2020, tackling rogue landlords and speeding up the neighbourhood planning process.

Welfare Reform Act 2012 and Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 introduced a host of changes to welfare benefits, many of which have a direct impact on homelessness issues. These include:

Universal Credit

Universal Credit was implemented in Blaby in June 2018. All welfare benefit claimants are gradually being moved into payment by Universal Credit which is a monthly payment of all benefits, including housing benefit. Claims under this system are made online and payments are made into a bank account. It is anticipated that the roll out of Universal Credit will be complete by December 2023.

Universal Credit has caused concerns over the delays in payment as well as concerns that a monthly lump sum can result in problems for people with limited budgeting skills and those with chaotic lifestyles. This could cause rent arrears and an increased risk around homelessness. Some landlords have already indicated their increased reluctance to accept those in receipt of Universal Credit.

Benefit cap

Welfare reforms have introduced a cap to the amount of benefits that any one household may receive, including housing benefit payments. The Welfare Reform and Work Act further reduced the cap for families outside London to £20,000 (£13,400 for single people).

Benefit Sanctions

Benefit sanctions were introduced by the government to address situations in which claimants have not complied with required activities, for example, failure to attend JobCentre Plus appointments or training events. Sanctions (non-payment of benefit) can last between one and 156 weeks.

Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016

A change to rent policy has been introduced through the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016. It requires both Registered Providers and local authorities to reduce rents for social housing by 1% per annum over 4 years, which commenced in 2016/17. This has meant a reduction in monies previously secured for housing and homelessness services.

Ending Violence against Women and Girls Strategy 2016-2020

The ending violence against women and girl's strategy 2016 to 2020: provides an overview of the wide range of actions the government is taking over a period of four years to end violence against women and girls. It was launched on 8 March 2016.

In March 2019 a refreshed strategy was published to re-affirm commitments to tackling violence against women and children. The refreshed strategy sets out additional actions to strengthen our response through to 2020. The action plan update provides detail of progress made against the actions set out in the 2016 strategy.

Domestic Abuse Bill 2019

This new bill is making its way through the House of Commons at the time of drafting this strategy. The aim of the new legislation is to raise awareness and understanding about the devastating impact of domestic abuse on victims and families, further improve the effectiveness of the justice system in providing protection for victims of domestic abuse and bringing perpetrators to justice, and strengthens the support for victims of abuse by statutory agencies.

The Bill is yet to complete its journey through the House of Commons and still needs to be heard at the House of Lords before it receives Royal Assent.

Local Context

Reduced Government funding

Extra funding from Government for homelessness prevention services is often time limited, for example, the recent successful sub-regional bids to the Rough Sleeper Initiative and Rapid Rehousing Pathway funding streams were for 12 months only.

There is a degree of uncertainty around levels of Flexible Homelessness Support Grant which may be awarded in future years which makes it more difficult to plan for future service delivery

The New Burdens funding that was given to Local Authorities in order to assist them with the delivery of the new Homelessness Reduction Act, started in 2017 but was time limited to three years, therefore ending in 2019/20. There is no indication that this will be replaced by any other funding streams.

Population Data – July 2017

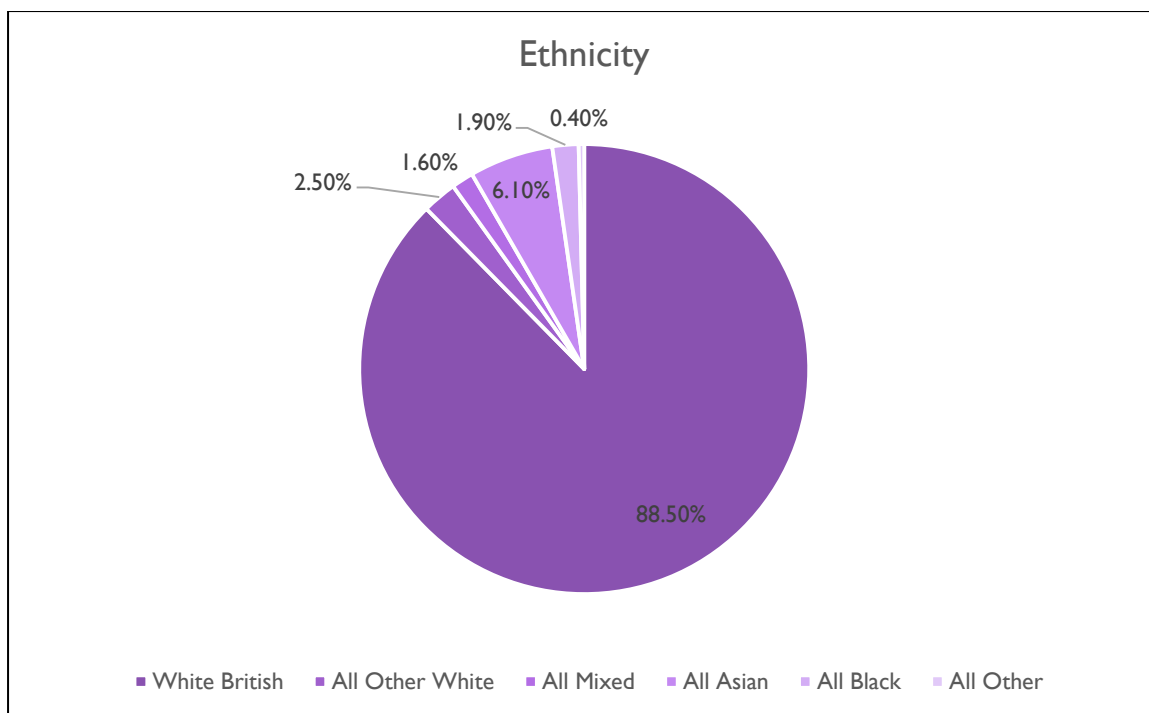
According to Council Tax records from July 2017, there were just under 42,000 households living in Blaby, with a population of 96,000. The population is predicted to increase to 111,000 by 2039.

Current Population (NOMIS 2018)

	2018
Blaby	100,400
East Midlands	4,804,100
England	64,553,900

Ethnicity – Census 2011

According to the 2011 census, 88.5% of residents in Blaby were White British and 11.5% were from Minority Ethnic Groups, with the main Ethnic Group being Asian or Asian British (6.1%) with the same group in the East Midlands representing 6.5%.



Employment Data

NOMIS official labour market statistics reveal the following data for Blaby's residents' earnings in 2018.

Gross weekly pay	Blaby (£)	East Midlands (£)	UK (£)
Full time workers	572.60	529.90	571.10
Male full time workers	647.80	574.90	612.20
Female full time workers	496.50	460.00	510.00

Average earning for Blaby residents is significantly higher when compared to East Midlands and almost on par with the UK average.

Further, NOMIS provides the following data on working age benefit claimants as in November 2016.

	Blaby (numbers)	Blaby (%)	East Midlands (%)	UK (%)
Total Claimants	4,120	6.9%	10.7%	11%
By statistical group				
Job Seekers	240	0.4	1.0	1.1
ESA and incapacity benefits	2,250	3.8	6.0	6.1
Lone parents	330	0.6	1.0	1.0
Carers	730	1.2	1.8	1.7
Others on income related benefits	50	0.1	0.2	0.2

Disabled	390	0.7	0.7	0.8
Bereaved	130	0.2	0.2	0.2
Main out-of-work benefits	2,870	4.8	8.0	8.4

This data reveals that Blaby has almost half the number of working age claimants than when compared to East Midlands or the UK. However, the number claiming ESA and incapacity benefits are high in proportion which indicates that people's ability to work could be affected.

Deprivation

Blaby has low levels of deprivation. It is the 2nd least deprived district in Leicestershire as it was in 2010 (Harborough has remained the least deprived district in Leicestershire). Blaby is ranked the 39th least deprived district in England (where 324 is the most deprived and 1 is the least deprived).

Housing Profile

According to the 2011 Census, Blaby has a much lower stock of private rented homes available to residents in comparison to the East Midlands and nationally.

Tenure	Blaby (%)	East Midlands (%)	National (%)
Owner Occupied	80.9	67.3	63.5
Shared Ownership	0.6	0.7	0.8
Rented from Council or Registered Provider	7.7	15.8	17.6
Privately Rented	10.0	14.9	16.7

Most housing in Blaby is owner occupied semi-detached accommodation. There are a minimal number of flats and the private rented sector is very small, particularly in the more rural areas.

Average house prices in Blaby in August 2019 were £232,982 according to Land Registry records.

	Blaby (£)	East Midlands (£)	UK (£)
Average House Price August 2019	232,982	197,682	234,853

The average house price for Blaby is close to the UK average however, it is considerably higher than the East Midlands region. This does, however, mirror the trend in average earnings.

Private rented accommodation is low in supply and for most people on a low income or in receipt of state benefits is unaffordable when you compare market rents to LHA levels. Unusually, 2 bedroom properties are less affordable than 3 bedroom

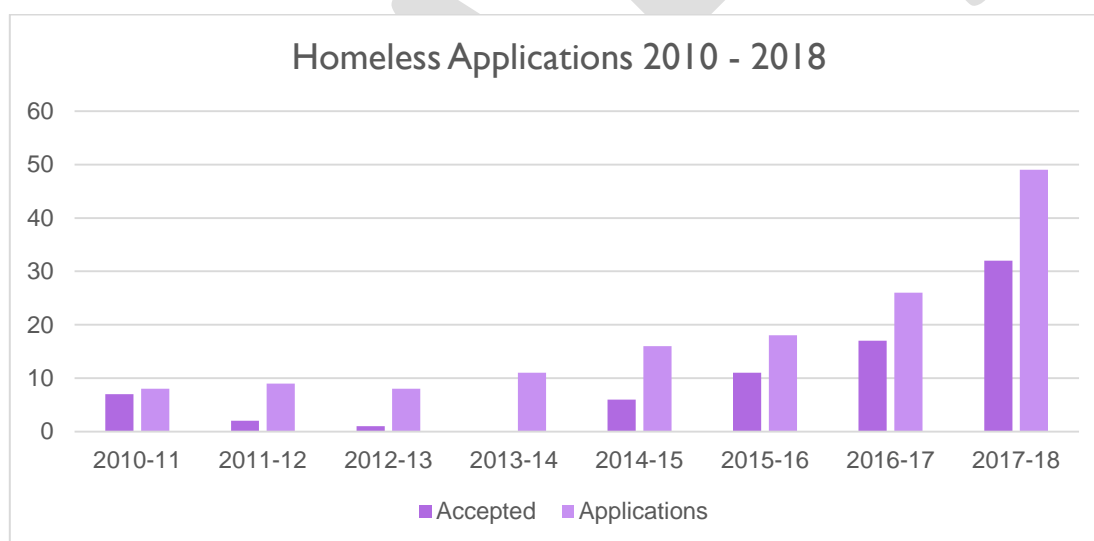
properties. This puts pressure on our housing register where demand exceeds the supply.

Local Housing Allowance Rates and Average Market Rents

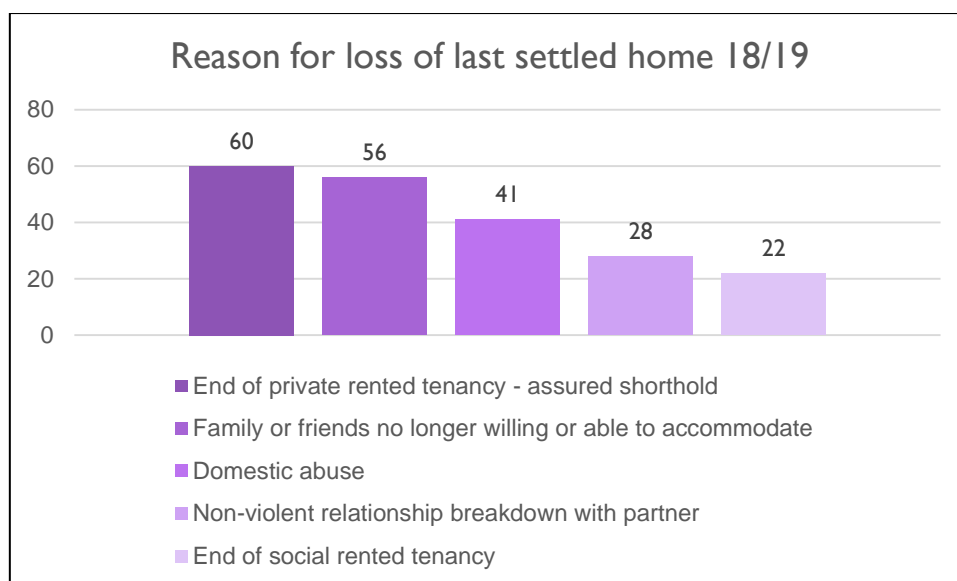
Property Size	Blaby LHA (£ PCM)	Median Market Rent (£ PCM)	Potential Shortfall (£PCM)
Shared	273.95	n/a	
1 Bedroom	373.96	525.00	151.05
2 Bedroom	473.72	724.00	250.28
3 Bedroom	564.98	750.00	185.02
4 Bedroom	707.02	n/a	

Prevalence of Homelessness

Prior to the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, the homelessness landscape changed considerably with applications rising year on year since 2010, however, there was a sharp rise of 88% in applications between 2016/17 and 2017/18.



The reasons for the increase in applications are varied and often complex, however, it is apparent from our data that eviction from private rented accommodation is the most common reason given by households, accounting for 22% of reasons for people approaching us for help. This reflects the national trend. Parental/friend eviction is the next highest cause of homelessness in Blaby which represents 21% of approaches.

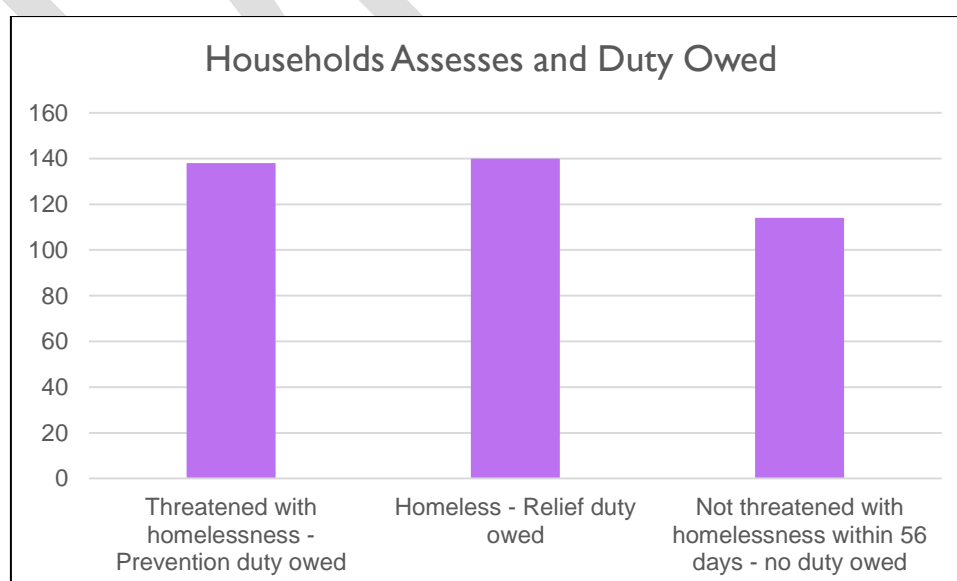


There are a significant number of applications where the loss of last settled home is recorded as “other”. This will need to be unpicked to ensure that the complete picture of the reasons people approach us for help is clear.

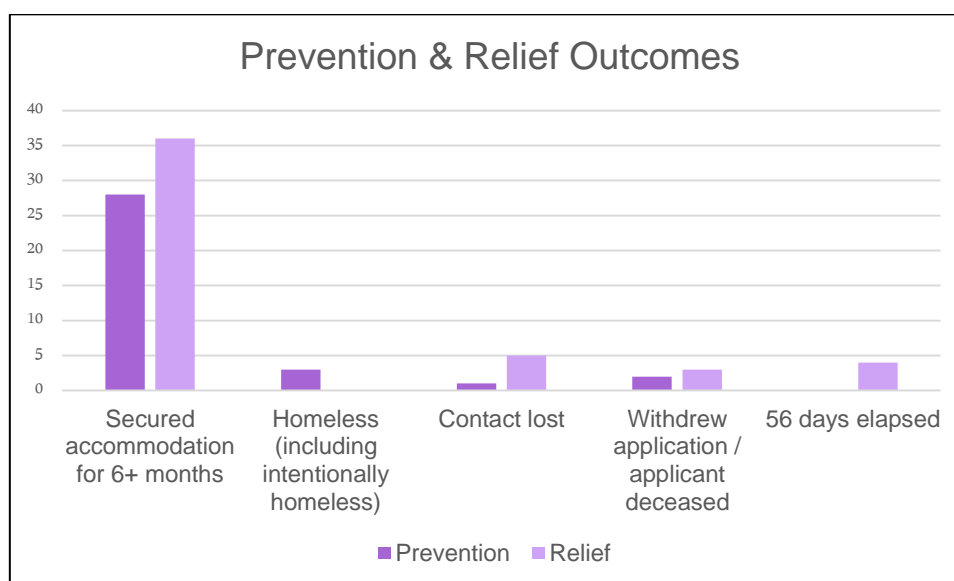
The ending of a social rented property is also prevalent which is why we have included in our priority of “Preventing homelessness and reducing the use of temporary accommodation” and action to work with social landlords to identify tenants at risk of homelessness to support them and prevent their eviction.

Prevention and Relief of Homelessness – Homelessness Reduction Act

The implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act increased the amount of statutory duties that local authorities were required to meet; mainly to prevent and/or relieve homelessness. Blaby’s performance in the prevention of homelessness is slightly below the national average which we intend to address through the actions identified in the delivery plan under our “Preventing Homelessness and Reducing the use of Temporary Accommodation” priority.



For those applications where a prevention or relief duty is accepted the outcome is generally positive. As the table below demonstrates, a high number of these cases are closed as a result of accommodation been sourced which has a reasonable prospect of being available for 6 months or more. .



NB These statistics have been taken from HCLIC returns held by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government who have labelled their year 1 data (18/19) as “experimental”.

Temporary Accommodation

Despite the level of enquiries and homelessness applications increasing, the number of households in temporary accommodation has remained relatively stable, however, these figures can fluctuate week on week. Access to self-contained temporary accommodation is available is by way of 3 units which are leased through East Midlands Homes. These units vary in size in order to offer options to a range of different sized households (1, 2 and 3 bedroomed), and are located within close proximity of the council offices and local services. The remaining households are in bed and breakfast accommodation.

Under section 210(2) of the Housing Act 1996, the Secretary of State has made the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) Order 2003 (‘the 2003 Order’). The Order specifies that B&B accommodation is not to be regarded as suitable for applicants with family commitments provided with accommodation under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996.

Local authorities should, therefore, use B&B accommodation to discharge a duty to secure accommodation for applicants with family commitments only as a last resort and then only for a maximum of 6 weeks.

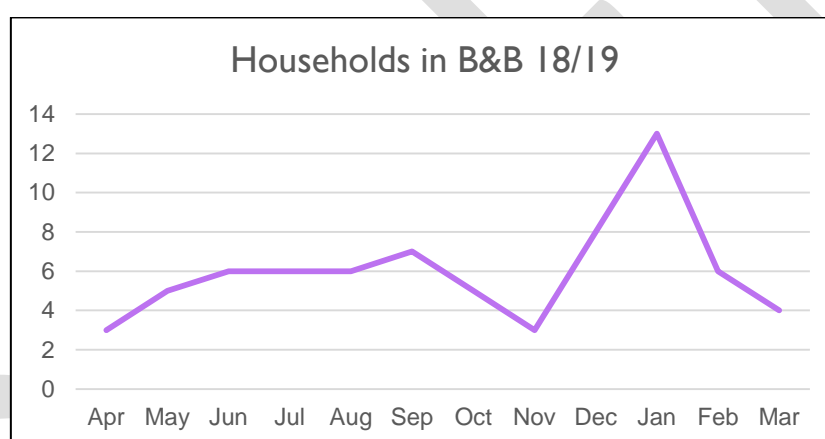
The Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) also produced a report in 2013 “No place like home: Councils’ use of unsuitable bed and breakfast accommodation for families and young people.” The report was based on learning from complaints that had been made to the LGO.

The report highlights complaints brought to the LGO, where they were seeing a worrying trend emerging with councils' homelessness services. It related to some of the most vulnerable sections of society – young people and families under threat of homelessness being housed by councils in unsuitable bed and breakfast accommodation.

The following is a table show the number of households in temporary accommodation since April 2017, split by household type.

Type of Household	17/18	18/19	19/20 (to date)
Couple with Children	2	4	2
Lone Parent	13	15	7
Single Female	5	9	6
Single Male	4	9	8

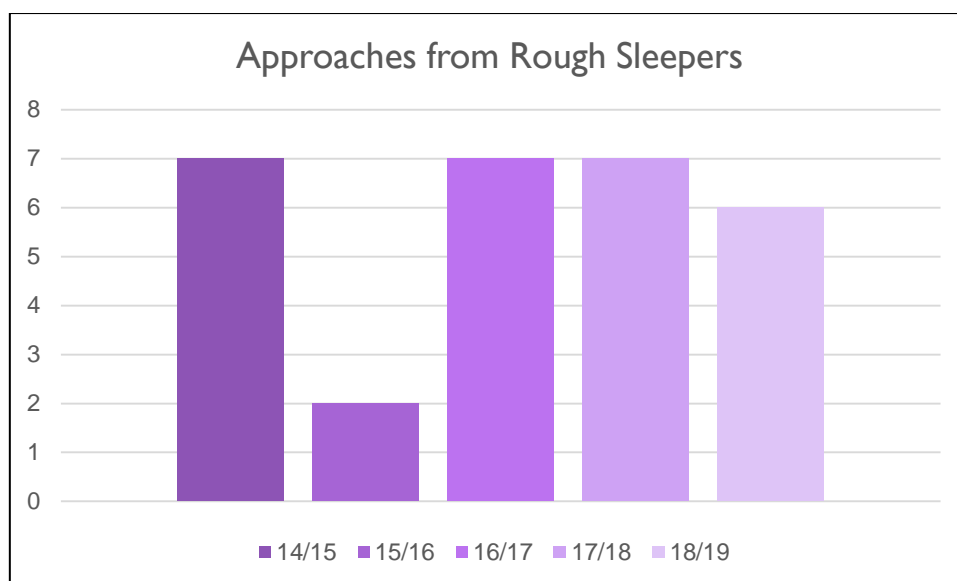
And a snapshot of those accommodated in bed and breakfast accommodation on a month by month basis in 2018/19



As previously mentioned, we have 3 units of self-contained temporary accommodation which are leased through our main housing provider, East Midlands Homes. The remaining households are in bed and breakfast accommodation which is a priority for us to reduce the use of.

Rough Sleeping

Approaches from people who had been rough sleeping at the time of their application has remained constant over the last five years, apart from a drop in 2015/16.



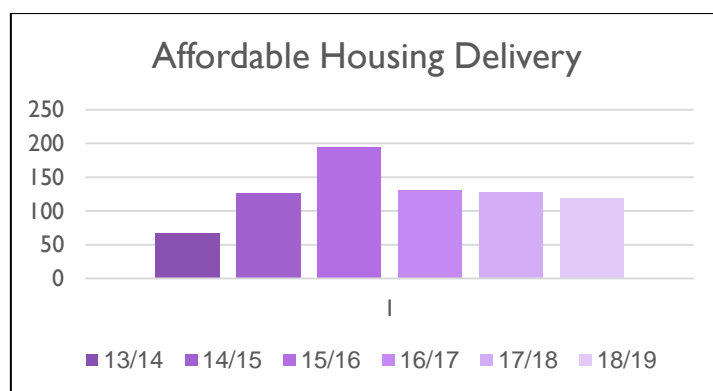
Whilst our count numbers remain low (2 recorded rough sleepers in 2018/19), the number of people approaching the council for help has not diminished significantly. We will continue to work with our sub-regional and county colleagues to identify those at risk of being street homeless, and to help those who approach as street homeless into accommodation.

Affordable Housing

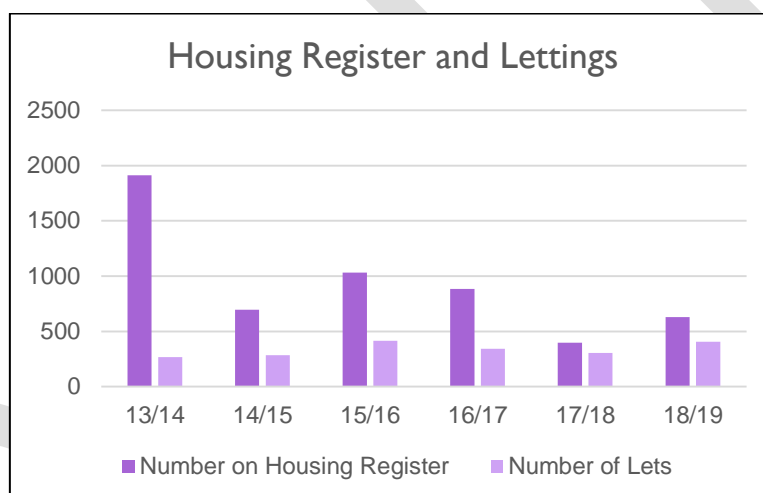
Lack of affordable and settled housing in Blaby contributes to the number of people who come to see us for help because they are at risk of becoming homeless or are actually already homeless.

A Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment was published in 2017 for Leicestershire and the Leicester Authorities and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership. The assessment results showed that Blaby would need to deliver 273 affordable home per year between 2011 and 2031 to meet our housing need.

Whilst current delivery does not meet this target and is unlikely to do so, affordable housing delivery in Blaby, in comparison to our closest neighbours, has been significant over the last three years and plans are set to continue in this way. Our Supplementary Planning Document states that 25% of all new build homes on major development schemes in the District should be given over to affordable housing, 80 percent of which should be for either affordable or social rent – this is being achieved and will continue to be the case into the future.



Social housing in Blaby continues to be high in demand against a backdrop of limited supply. We recently reviewed our allocation policy in order to give higher priority to those households to whom we owe the full housing duty, or to those who are owed the relief duty. This decision was made in order to reduce the length of stay in temporary accommodation.



There is a limited availability of private rented sector (PRS) homes that are both affordable (i.e. at Local Housing Allowance (LHA) level) and of good quality. We continue to see rent rises in this sector and those trying to secure PRS accommodation for those in need, often find landlords wanting market rents.

The number of households accommodated by us in the PRS over the last 5 years has dropped considerably. This had been identified as an issue and actions to try and improve our performance in this area are set out in our Priority 2 “Increasing the supply of affordable housing”

Sub-regional context

Blaby is a relatively small local authority and it is often the case that efforts to develop schemes in isolation are often not viable. In recognition of this, opportunities to develop schemes and services across the region are optimised wherever possible.

A county wide Homelessness Delivery Group meets bi-monthly with all District Councils and the City Council attending. This group reports to the County Wide Housing Services Partnership which is a higher level meeting and deals with a range of issues, including homelessness. The group is chaired by Blaby's Chief Executive Officer.

The Housing Services Partnership also has a website which is administered by the Housing Strategy Service at Blaby District Council:

<http://www.leicshousingservicespartnership.co.uk/>

The Housing Services Partnership has also set up a new Countywide Homelessness Group which brings together all of the Districts as well as supported providers and housing associations and voluntary/charitable organisations.

The Chief Housing Officers Group is attended by Chief Housing Officers across the county and they also discuss current housing related issues including homelessness. This group is supported by the Development Strategy Officers Group that discusses housing delivery issues across the county.

As a result of our positive sub-regional and regional work we have been successful in bidding for funding through the Rough Sleepers Initiative which was launched following the publication of the Government's Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018.

A Rapid Rehousing Pathway project is county wide and funds the following services:

- 1) Supported lettings service administered by The Bridge (East Midlands). The Service has been commissioned for one year to offer tenancy sustainment support to individuals throughout Leicestershire with low/medium support needs who are rough sleepers leaving the streets, former rough sleepers leaving hostels, or those at imminent risk of sleeping rough due to being in Local Authority (LA) temporary accommodation.

Its primary objective is to prevent repeat homelessness by offering flexible, intensive one-to-one support

- 2) County wide Private Rented Sector service. This service is administered by one of the District Council's in the partnership and is shaped around offering a letting agency type service as an incentive for recruiting new landlords.

A successful bid was also made for funding Cold Weather provision and offers bed spaces with Action Homeless in Leicester City, in an attempt to bring people in from the cold.

The sub-region was also successful in bidding for Trailblazer funding in 2017. This funding was used to develop a homelessness app 'MyHome' which can be accessed by homeless people to help them access information and self-refer to the relevant Local Authority.

Housing Protocols

Through the countywide Homelessness Delivery Group, a number of Housing Protocols are currently in the process of being updated and amended with sub-regional partners to meet the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act:

- 16 & 17 year olds – being led by Charnwood Borough Council
- Careleavers – being led by Charnwood Borough Council
- Prisons – being led by Harborough District Council
- HET and Mental Health Duty to Refer – being lead by Blaby District Council
- Domestic Violence – being led by Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council
- Veterans – being led by Oadby and Wigston Borough Council
- Drugs & Alcohol – being led by North West Leicestershire District Council

It is anticipated that these protocols will be agreed across all the District and Borough Councils, and become active working documents in early 2020

Gypsy & Traveller and Mobile Home Sites

There are a number of sites across the District which could potentially be subject to planning enforcement within the next twelve months. This could result in an increase in approaches from occupants of these sites. Work with planning colleagues will continue in order to minimise the impact of any legal action, and to ensure that the occupants of these sites are fully supported in finding other accommodation or sites on which to pitch their homes.

Local Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Services

Initial advice and assistance

A Housing Options Team of 5 full time equivalent Housing Options Officers, one full time Tenancy Sustainment Officer and one full time Housing Services Assistant located at the Council Offices in Narborough, all of whom to provide advice about housing and homelessness.

The team has been piloting a new way of working for the latter part of 2019. The team were previously generic and dealt with both housing register and homelessness casework which meant that they were unable to focus their time wholly on homelessness prevention. A new triage system has been introduced which deals with housing register queries, and general housing advice. If a homelessness issue is identified at the triage stage, this is immediately passed to a Housing Options Officer in order for them to maximise opportunities for prevention.

One of the roles within the team is a Tenancy Sustainment Officer who has created and maintained a good relationship with Registered Providers in the area and has achieved positive outcomes with initial tenancies and helped to prevent eviction through benefit liaison, payment plans and court representation.

The service is co-located with the Citizens Advice Bureau who also provide advice and assistance with housing issues, as well as advice on other issues including advice on money and debt and helping people to claim benefits.

Domestic Abuse Outreach Coordinator

Blaby District Council recognises domestic abuse as a serious issue and is therefore committed in supporting residents and tenants who are victims of this crime. Confidential advice and support on all domestic abuse issues is available by contacting the Domestic Abuse Outreach Coordinator who is located at the Council Offices. The Coordinator has also produced information which signposts residents to a wide range of services including counselling, money and health, refuge accommodation and legal assistance.

Blaby Children and Young People's Support Service

The Community Services Team at the council offers emotional and practical support to children and young people between the ages of 4 to 18 who have been affected by domestic abuse, substance abuse or anti-social behaviour. The service is offered in a safe and confidential space, either in term time or school holidays, and can be on a one to one or group work basis. Children and young people can access support and advice as well as therapeutic interventions.

Accommodation provision for homeless households

There are 3 units of self-contained accommodation available to homeless households which are leased through East Midlands Homes and managed by the Housing Options Team. These units are in close proximity to the council offices and local services and range in bedroom size – a one bedroom, a two bedroom and a three bedroom property.

In order to further reduce the use of bed and breakfast accommodation, further consideration will be given to increasing the number of these self-contained units going forward.

Housing related support

Blaby has an internal Resident Support Team which has two full time members of staff. They support residents across all tenures who have issues with housing, and anything related to it, for example checking tenancy agreements. They can also signpost to more specialist services. The aim of this service is to identify at an early stage, those residents who may be at risk of losing their homes.

Supported Housing Provision

There is little supported housing within the Blaby area as it is small and so many schemes would not be viable, however, Advance Housing runs a small supported housing scheme for people with mental health issues which the Housing Options Team can refer to.

Rough sleeping

Historically, Blaby has very low numbers of rough sleeping and so there are few services provided locally. However, two recent bids were made to the MHCLG's Rough Sleeper Initiative to fund a Rapid Rehousing Programme which includes cold weather provision, these bids were made with sub-regional partners to provide accommodation and support across the area.

Blaby District Council can refer rough sleepers to Action Homeless who are a Leicester based charity and who have two emergency supported bed spaces available.

The Falcon Centre is a 30 bed supported housing scheme for people who are vulnerable. The aim of the service is to help people to live independently and make a positive contribution to the community. The scheme is based in Loughborough, but it is open to anyone with a connection to the Leicestershire area.

Settled Accommodation

There are a range of options available to people living in Blaby who are looking for settled accommodation. We have a variety of ways in which we can help with people accessing this type of accommodation:

- A rent deposit and rent in advance loan scheme to help households secure a private sector tenancy.

- An allocations policy to manage allocations into social rented housing.
- Nomination rights for some formerly empty homes which have been returned to use following council intervention.

Homes for Cathy

Homes for Cathy is a small group of housing associations who formed in 2016 and whose commitment was to end homelessness. The group now includes over 80 registered providers, local authorities and charities who work together to achieve this joint aim.

They have a range of commitments which includes the prevention of homelessness amongst registered provider tenants, offering homes to people who are or have been homeless, and to lobby and challenge others to support homelessness.

Other services

Clockwise (Credit Union) are available in the area and offer loans for rent deposits and rent in advance when a resident may not be eligible for our own in house scheme

Turning Point is a charitable organisation that provides a wide range of health and well-being services for people with drug and/or alcohol and mental health issues. Referrals can be made into the service by the Housing Options Team.

Swanswell Trust is a charitable organisation which provides a floating support service for people with drug and/or alcohol issues. They are regular contributors and attendees to a number of groups both statutory and voluntary.

County Local Area Coordinators are funded by Leicester County Council but work across the sub-region. Their aim is to help residents who may be approaching a crisis in their lives by helping them to access a wide range of services, and to support them with a wide range of issues. These roles are critical in identifying opportunities for early intervention and prevention where tenancies or accommodation could be at risk.

P3 is a charitable organisation which offers a floating support service for adults over the age of 16. Their aim is to work with adults in Leicester who need help with their housing situation. They can support people to manage and clear rent arrears and debts, identify financial support they may be entitled to, and can support individuals who are at risk of eviction or homelessness.

P3 also run a homelessness prevention coaching service which is commissioned across Leicestershire and was funded through a cross authority bid for trailblazing funding in 2017. The aim of the service is to work with people who are at risk of homelessness before things reach crisis point in order to prevent them from losing their home or returning to a life on the streets. They seek to enable people to access and/or sustain accommodation independently, and increase their chances of securing a long-term home, as well as identifying gaps where people may need extra support.

The Lightbulb Service is a partnership hosted by Blaby District Council from its offices in Narborough. The partnership includes Leicestershire County Council, District Councils, the County's Clinical Commissioning Groups, Leicester Partnership Trust and University Hospitals of Leicester.

As part of the Lightbulb Service, there is also a Housing Enablement Team (HET). This is a bedside service who offer a tailored assessment to patients who are delayed from hospital discharge, due to a housing issue. A specialist Officer will assess and develop a bespoke housing discharge plan in conjunction with Health colleagues, they offer:

- Assessment and 217 referrals for statutory duty cases
- Support to create a downstairs existence
- Clean and clears for return home
- Mediation / support with benefits to prevent eviction
- Support moving into direct lets or private rented properties
- Support with deposits and furnishings
- Support with managing a new tenancy & resettlement

Alongside the Disabled Facilities Grant available, A Home Support Grant can be accessed to help residents remain independent in their homes. For those who are unable to remain at home a Relocation Grant is available, to support with removal costs.

The team are based at the Leicester Hospitals and the Bradgate Mental Health unit and cover LLR

Delivery Plan

Our draft commitments can be found in our draft action lists for each priority below.

These actions, once agreed, will be put in table form with lead officers and time frames – making our delivery plan SMART – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and with Timescales

Priority 1

Prevent homelessness and reduce the use of temporary accommodation

Proposed actions

- Continue to make effective use of Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) to prevent homelessness and maintain tenancies
- Provide effective and timely advice which is outcome focused for those in housing need and concentrates on the prevention of homelessness
- Be creative and innovative in finding solutions to prevent homelessness, including using funding in a flexible manner.
- Tailor personal housing plans to meet individual circumstances, including access to skills and employment opportunities.
- Continue with our service design which will include a robust triage system that provides a seamless service to case management and advice and improves the customer experience.
- Working proactively with social and private landlords to identify and support people at risk of homeless and give support to sustain tenancies and prevent evictions.

Priority 2

Increase the supply of affordable housing

Proposed actions

- Continue to work in partnership with registered housing providers and Homes England to maximise the number of affordable homes built, to meet the demand of those households on our housing register.
- Seek innovative solutions to develop move on and supported housing for households who are vulnerable and/or have complex needs.
- Work closely with colleagues across the council to contribute to the ambitions for housing development opportunities within Blaby.
- Ensure that our Allocations Policy is kept up to date, to enable access to social housing for those in most need and to bid through our choice-based lettings service.
- Reduce stays in temporary accommodation and ensure that the use of bed and breakfast accommodation is only used as a last resort.
- Review the landlord incentive package currently offered to assist with the recruitment of new landlords in order to increase access to this sector.

- Continue to encourage owners of empty homes to consider renting their property to those who need affordable homes and do this in partnership with neighbouring authorities.
- Review the current in-house rent deposit scheme to ensure that those people at risk of parental/friend exclusion are prioritised.
- Consider the creation of a “homeless at home” scheme to work in tandem with the rent deposit scheme.

Priority 3

Develop partnership work and wider communications to ensure efficient and effective use of resources

Proposed actions

- Develop inter-agency understanding and joint working
- Work with partners to address the gap in the provision of support
- Work in partnership to minimise the impact of welfare reform
- Review homelessness communications with stakeholders
- Continue to pursue cross-authority projects and strategic and operational planning.
- Promote the prevention agenda and ensure that all council staff, members and partners are kept updated and informed.
- As appropriate, oversee the provision of regular workshops, briefings and sessions for relevant professionals.
- Develop partner understanding of respective procedures, pathways and expectations

Priority 4

Supporting vulnerable households

Proposed actions

- Work with EMH and other active Registered Providers to deliver new supported accommodation for vulnerable households
- Improve the options available for people with complex needs
- Continue to work with our partner agencies to deliver outreach and advice services to those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness
- Refer vulnerable households to our Resident Support Team to help support them to sustain tenancies and access other services
- Build on relationships with key partners including adult and children’s services to increase support and accommodation options available.
- Reduce the number of people sleeping rough by developing a person-centred approach where all personal circumstances are considered, and interventions are tailored accordingly
- Pool resources where appropriate to deliver services for rough sleepers

Resources

It should be recognised that the Housing Options Team has experienced some significant issues with staff recruitment and retention and ill health over the last twelve months. This has impacted on not only operational delivery, and our ability to deliver the service, but also on our budgets because of the need to employ temporary staff.

A significant amount of funding is required to deliver the priorities set out in the strategy. Staffing resources are key to this and cut across several teams, both internal and external.

We have a base budget to deliver the service of £320,000. It has been recognised that, in comparison to neighbouring authorities, the Housing Options Team at Blaby is not funded to equivalent levels. Work is underway to investigate ways of bringing parity to Blaby with other Housing Options Services across the sub-region.

Grant Funding

Blaby District Council does not receive specific government funding to support homelessness services but an indicative amount in the region of £188,000 is received which is made up of Flexible Homelessness Support Grant, New Burdens Funding (to implement the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017) and a small grant for us to update our IT software to meet the requirements of the new HCLIC reporting mechanism introduced by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)

A Central Government grant to assist people to pay their housing costs and to help people manage benefit reductions due to welfare reform measures. This amounts to £80,000 for the current year but this has reduced year on year since 2017.

It is important that we make full use of this grant which can be used for rent in advance payments, rent deposit payments, rent top ups (in certain circumstances) and the repayment of arrears.

Work will continue with the Housing Options Team to ensure that the DHP award from the Department of Work and Pensions is fully utilised.

Monitoring & Conclusions

Detailed Delivery Plan

Actions agreed will be put in a table form with lead officers and time frames once the strategy has been adopted

Monitoring of the strategy and delivery plan

The strategy covers a five year term; however, it will need to be responsive to change and will therefore be monitored and reviewed annually. This will ensure that strategic aims remain relevant and practicable, and that up to date best practice and guidance can be incorporated as appropriate.

The strategy is a working document which will be reviewed and monitored by partners across the sector who work in the Blaby area. A group for this purpose will be created following the publication of the strategy.

The Delivery Plan will be fully reviewed and refreshed with input from this group each year, furthermore, the group will continue to meet quarterly to undertake dynamic reviews and to develop and drive forward the action plan. This group will also be involved initially with the consultation process which will be key to the future monitoring and review of the strategy

Conclusions

This Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy sets out the national and local context on which future homelessness objectives are based. The need to address homelessness issues is crucial both for the individuals directly affected and the wider community. A robust multi-agency approach is required in order to deliver a coordinated approach.

The strategy will facilitate the focused and planned efforts required by defining the key objectives and the specific actions required to meet these objectives. Whilst Blaby is a relatively small local authority, it nevertheless faces the same challenges as other local authorities including the current financial climate. This means that planned and coordinated work is essential in order to tackle homelessness and ensure that resources are used in the most efficient way possible.

Consultation and Feedback

This draft strategy is subject to formal consultation, the results of which will be published in the final version of the document.

An initial, short period of consultation took place with our partners prior to the draft strategy being produced, the results of which are below. The feedback from this initial consultation will also be included in the final document as well as our response to it.

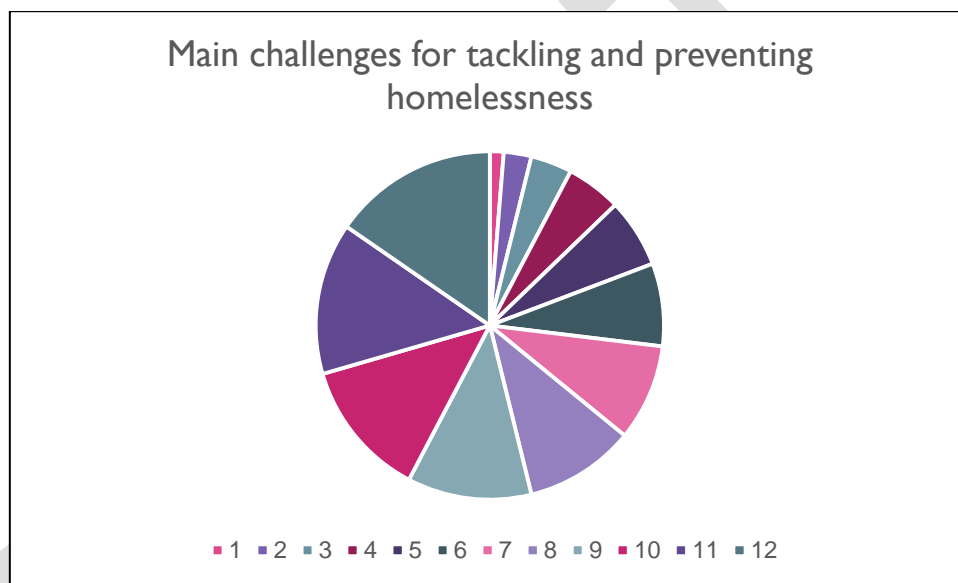
Question	Response
1.What do you think works best about our local services?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final outcomes often good but too slow. • Change in attitude towards clients. • Partnerships, conversations, trust • If we are sent information re the consultation I will check our statistics vis a vis Blaby and respond on facts • Take time to develop relationships to link people • Very clear pathways and people to contact communicated well, you also have clear actions/goals from meetings with housing/health to build on. • Most partners are very helpful, having that is key • Direct points of contact, face to face support for service users, community team • Partnership with EMH and Blaby DC • Dedicated Housing Options Team
2.What do you think are the gaps in local service provision?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision in a timely manner takes too long • Real and impactful health participation in the debate • Affordable accommodation for single people, with and without support. • Property availability • The offer and resources for those who are rough sleeping • Supported and unsupported accommodation, support workers, grants, hostels etc • No agreements with RP's on referral points, late referrals mean eviction can't be avoided, no hostels in the area, no NSNO funding, no access to emergency beds, a real surge in rough sleeping, duty to refer not being used fully. • Preventative services are lacking • Real commitment to work with adults and families to embrace change and remain involved whilst encountering difficulties.
3.What would you like to see change in the short/medium term that would improve the local response to preventing and tackling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater advertisement of services. • More information for customers • Inclusion of health services, particularly mental health & substance abuse services to build a real relationship (Public Health, LPT, NHS Trusts, UHL) • Floating support services provided by non-landlord organisations

homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing homelessness service across the district, tracking people identified as homeless and pooling resources and services further • Central reference point that all can tap into, knowing that this would include all accommodation, private and social. • Supported accommodation, joint partnerships with St Basils, Salvation Army (not just housing teams), different types of housing prioritised, DV, D&A and young peoples' hostels • Staff training to empower clients and get the best out of them. More staff to be able to offer more time to clients to find other options, rather than not do much for 56 days & close due to workload, this is very depressing and negative. • Proper commitment from service providers instead of short term resolution which is not effective.
4.What would you like to see change in the long term that would improve the local response to preventing and tackling homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less bureaucracy • Real understanding of financial planning and how we can get upstream • A wider variety of supported accommodation for all age groups, not just older people • Combined homelessness strategy across Leicestershire, sharing resources, wider/diverse partnerships, better communication for county wide bids and funding • More partnership working, more consistency • Sustained long term strategy & plan with partners • More housing options, we are very disadvantaged with no housing stock, hostels or PRS incentives/partnerships, EMH do more for clients that St Basils • Better designed processes of applying for housing. • More robust service providers to assist individuals to live independently and prevent crisis
5.Do you think we should be targeting resources across public services to prevent people reaching crisis in the first place?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quicker identification via NHS Services and other agencies of at risk clients. • Faster action on referrals • We need health % shift in £ or real partnership working with health, but at pace. • Definitely but there is also a need for crisis short term accommodation • Yes, anything to prevent crisis is a good thing • Yes an integrated prevention is a better use of resources as we can plan for the whole population • Yes, prevention. Public Services; be specific, be selective, be transparent • Yes! Need to invest in resources within the community to save in the long term. • More emphasis is required on preventative ways of working.

6.What do you think are the main challenges for local services when seeking to prevent and tackle homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Matching suitable housing to complex needs. • More charities on board for housing and funding
7.What do you think the main priorities should be for a future Blaby Homelessness Strategy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying to client's service availability and options. • Using existing networks to identify services such as GP surgeries etc • Be loud on communications on plans and ideas • Engagement with health services at decision making level • Involve homeless people, find out their stories to give greater impact. • Floating Support services • Housing First approach for single homeless people • Develop Housing First for all, cross authority tracking and temporary solutions (not B&B), affordable private sector/social landlords, range of short and longer term accommodation for complex needs, end homelessness in the district as an ambition • Identify households at risk of homelessness • Supported accommodation • Better links & agreements with partners (DWP re UC as it is a total blind spot for us) social care, private and social landlords, pools of PRS landlords. • To plan/provide supported accommodation (hostel/shared houses) for families and single people. • Awareness training for the whole of BDC for reasons for homelessness and educate team on options and signposting to other services. • Good news stories about the service.
Other comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perhaps call it "Homes for Homelessness" rather than "Homelessness Strategy" • Mr S got re-housed in Swindon in one day – would this be possible in Blaby? • Feedback group with those homeless clients who have access services in BDC to get honest feedback & ideas • Is there a homeless officers focus group we could set up with new ideas about landlords/charities and organisations we could share with and learn from other ways of working and good practice?

Partners were also asked what they thought the main challenges for local services were when trying to tackle and prevent homelessness. They were given the following options which have been ranked, with number one being the most challenging, and number twelve the least challenging:-

1. Accessing Support
2. Getting all relevant agencies to work together to address support needs
3. Availability of suitable housing options
4. Access to private rented accommodation
5. Identifying households at risk of homelessness
6. Debit issues
7. Improved partnership working
8. Getting people into education, training or employment
9. Preventing loss of rented/tied accommodation
10. Violent family/relationship breakdown
11. Non-violent family/relationship breakdown
12. Mortgage arrears



The biggest challenge identified through the survey were accessing the right support and getting all relevant agencies to work together to address support needs. It is clear therefore that support and accessing it is a significant problem in Blaby.

The three least challenging scenarios were violent and non-violent relationship breakdown, and mortgage arrears. Domestic abuse is the third highest cause of homelessness in Blaby and so this being amongst the least challenging group identified through the survey will need exploring.