

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

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

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

Part A: Initiatives that will continue with improved delivery

Key Priority 1: Preventing homelessness

<i>Objective 1: Tackling the causes of homelessness and rough sleeping and improving the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act</i>						
<i>Action No.</i>	<i>Action Description</i>	<i>Who is leading on this action?</i>	<i>Who and what resources are needed to achieve this action</i>	<i>How will success be measured?</i>	<i>By when success will be achieved?</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Action 1	Review and update the Council's housing web pages annually to ensure they are accessible and provide up to date information and advice.	Watford Borough Council (WBC) Service Transformation Lead	Housing Strategy Officer Service Transformation Lead Web Team	Housing options and homelessness information web pages on the council's website are up to date	September 2024	First update to be completed following the customer journey mapping
Action 2	Review and simplify the online Housing Advice Form (HAF) to make it easier for potentially homeless households to access advice and support they need.	WBC Service Transformation Lead	Service Transformation Lead	A simplified, online housing and homelessness advice form is available.	December 2024	High priority
Action 3	Work with key partners to develop a prison release protocol to prevent homelessness and deliver training for staff and partners.	WBC Single Homeless Pathway Co-ordinator	WBC Housing Solutions Probation Service Prison Service	100% prison discharges are planned Partner awareness and training has taken place	December 2023 January 2024	Update needed, monitoring and then close
Action 4	Continue housing and homelessness education work in schools through the Home Truths programme.	Herts Young Homeless Housing Options Manager - Families	Herts Young Homeless	Quarterly monitoring meetings are held with HYH.	Each quarter or at least twice yearly.	Meetings to be set up to review funding, number of students, colleges targeted and outcomes.
Action 5	Establish website for Watford Strategic Homelessness Forum to share information between Forum members.	WBC Housing Web Team with input from partners	Housing Strategy Officer Communications and Engagement Manager	A Watford Strategy Homelessness Forum website is set up	March 2024	To be used to store minutes, papers and annual reports of partners and other information. Not needed
Action 6	Embed the Single Homeless Pathway by: 1. Scoping a shared IT system for information sharing (e.g. Inform) 2. Review how person-centred the pathway is and produce a summary for the WSHF.	Watford Strategic Homelessness Forum	Single Homeless Pathway Co-ordinator Single Homeless Pathway Strategy Group	1. A singular IT system for the SHP is scoped. 2. Review complete and summary provided to WSHF identifying any actions / training needed.	1. March 2024 2. September 2023 3. December 23 4. Jan-March 2024	Leads to update by when dates

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	3. Define criteria for the levels of support need for each level of accommodation. 4. Create and carry out an implementation plan for embedding the HRA within the SHP to include training and support for partner agencies 5. Embed the role of the HRA within the SHP. 6. Review SHP governance arrangements and level of meetings	Single Homeless Pathway Co-ordinator Housing Options Manager Singles		3. Criteria defined and communicated to partners. 4. Implementation plan created and carried out. Process guide produced. 5. HRA embedded 6. Review of governance taken place	5. September 2024 6. June 2024	
Action 7	Work with partners to develop the concept of an integrated single homelessness service. Carry out a feasibility study looking at demand, costs, site options, etc.	WBC Single Homeless Pathway Co-ordinator	Housing Watford Strategic Homelessness Forum members	Feasibility study completed and report with recommendations considered by Forum.	June 2024	Review as per SHP Co-ordinator's own Action Plan
Action 8	Develop a Communications plan, promoting the Council's homeless prevention service and early intervention approach. Implement the Plan using all channels of communication including press releases and social media.	WBC Service Transformation Lead	SMT Communications & Engagement Manager	A communications plan is developed and approved including an implementation plan. The Communications Plan is implemented, and regular monitoring is put in place.	September 2024	
Action 9	Together with internal and external stakeholders, including other local authorities, identify and develop timely responses to housing situations that may lead to homelessness, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cuckooing, • gangs, • domestic violence • modern slavery • tackling illegal evictions 	Watford Strategic Homelessness Forum Housing Service Operational Lead	WBC: Housing Department; Community Safety Team; Legal Team Watford Strategic Homelessness Forum Watford Police Hertfordshire Las Watford Citizens Advice	Pathways are formalised for responding to cuckooing, gang-related incidents, domestic violence, and modern slavery. Resources for challenging and tackling illegal evictions are identified	September 2024	Ops Lead to decide management lead(s). Finalise current system/pathway with Community Safety Lead (Kerri Marks).
Action 10	Identify avenues of preventing homelessness upstream working with stakeholders on information provision. Carry out research with homeless households to identify factors which indicate how	WBC All Housing Service SDLs	Housing Solutions Team Revenues & Benefits Watford homeless support providers	Information on likely indicators of homelessness and avenues of information on potentially homeless households established.	June 2024	

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	homelessness could have been prevented at an earlier stage, including floating support and apply the lessons learned		CAB GPs, health services, Revenues & Benefits, JobCentre+, Prisons	Research carried out and report provided.	September 2024	
Action 11	Capture and report on the extent to which upstream homelessness prevention activities delivers: a) savings to health, community protection and other services b) promotes individual and family well-being including improved health and educational attainment	WBC	Housing Strategy Officer	Project developed and initial research started. Cost savings established and reported on.	March 2024 December 2024	May be health prevention issue. Leave for now. Housing is an ICS priority. HCC have resources to lead on this.
Action 12	Integrate the activities of local stakeholders in preventing homelessness through secondment, training and shared learning, or working in each other's offices	Watford Strategic Homelessness Forum Working Group from WSHF. Service Transformation Lead		Programme of training, secondment and shared learning opportunities developed and agreed by Homelessness forum. Implementation and training delivered.	September 2024 March 2025	For WSHF
Action 13	Research what schemes are in place in other areas that deliver online homeless prevention training, which prioritises education, training, and employment, how to access the private rented sector, knowing where to find help, etc. and implement a scheme in Watford	WBC Service Transformation Lead Housing Service Operational Lead	Housing Solutions Housing Property Teams	Research completed and reported with key findings and recommendations. Online training course developed and made available on the council's website	April 2024 December 2024	

<i>Objective 2: Improving access to affordable and sustainable housing options</i>						
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Action 14	HomeLet – review the council's financial assistance scheme to enable homeless households to access private rented homes	WBC Resettlement Manager	Housing Property Manager and Team Leader	A revised HomeLet policy and procedure and updated website information are in place	December 2024	A new procedure could be promoted through the Landlord forum.

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			Housing Strategy Officer			
Action 15	Review and update the Councils Nominations (Allocations) Policy	WBC Housing Policy, Projects & Strategy Manager Service Transformation Lead	Housing Strategy Officer	New Nominations Policy adopted by Cabinet. Housing Register reviewed and all applications re-banded according to new policy.	November 2024 January 2025	
Action 16	Enable Affordable Homes delivery: 1. WBC Strategic Affordable Homes group to lead on delivery of affordable homes by WBC and partner RPs 2. Meet quarterly with WCH to review the number, type and size of new affordable homes focussing on the need for larger social rented homes for benefit capped households. 3. Meet annually with other housing association partners in the borough to discuss WBC's affordable housing needs and opportunities for delivery. 4. Review and report annually numbers in the Affordable housing pipeline split by Shared ownership/ Affordable and social rented for all RPs to CMB and Portfolio Holders.	WBC Enabling and Development Manager	Property Team Housing Strategy Planning (Policy and Development Control) WCH RPs	1. New social rented homes are delivered 2. Quarterly meetings in place with WCH – needed? 3. Annual meeting with other RPs held. 4. Annual report to CMB and Portfolio Holders	1. March 2026 2. First quarterly meeting by end March 2024 3. First annual meeting by end April 2024 4. First annual report by end July 2024	
Action 17	Review the effectiveness of and knowledge about the Watford Credit Union to ensure WBC Housing Team and partners are aware of it and enable clients to make use of it.	WBC Service Transformation Lead	Housing Solutions Manager Housing Property Manager/Team Leader	Review has taken place with Watford Credit Union and a summary report prepared with actions	June 2024	

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

<i>Objective 1: Preventing and responding to rough sleeping</i>						
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Action 18	Work with Hertfordshire County Council on best use of housing-related support funding via the prospectus for support for single homeless, review options for floating support.	WBC Single Homeless	Housing Strategy Officer	Officers engaged in tendering to ensure WBC secures sufficient funding to provide support to people at risk of rough sleeping.	March 2024	Update and then complete.

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		Pathway Co-ordinator Housing Options Manager, Singles				
Action 19	Achieve and maintain zero rough sleepers on the streets of Watford by carrying out regular monitoring of numbers on the streets.	WBC Single Homeless Pathway Co-ordinator	Single Homeless Pathway Co-ordinator New Hope Street Outreach Service	Official annual count completed. Bi-monthly RSI counts Street Outreach Service recorded and reported-.	November 2023 November 2024 Bi-monthly	

<i>Objective 2: Providing individualised support for families with children and vulnerable adults</i>						
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Action 20	Ensure the duties of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 are carried out to their fullest extent including: 1. Work towards ensuring council interview facilities meet psychologically informed environment (PIE) principles. 2. Complete staff training to embed person centred motivational and coaching interview techniques. 3. Develop a programme of learning and training opportunities with internal and external partners.	WBC Service Transformation Lead Housing Service Operational Lead	Housing Solutions Manager Head of Customer Services	1. Interview facilities meeting Psychologically Informed Environment (PIE) principles are in place. 2. Motivational and coaching interview training completed by all officers in Housing Solutions, Caseworkers and Housing Property Teams 3. Programme developed with internal and external partners	1. March 2025 2. June 2024 3. September 2024	
Action 21	Ensure households access all benefits they are entitled to including using Discretionary Housing Payments Establish a working group to review best use of DHP in relation to homeless prevention, including potential for a local emergency grant system to top up benefits for benefit capped families.	WBC Housing Welfare Advice and Outreach Officer	Housing Revs and Benefits	Working Group established	September 23 March 2024	

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	Carry out the Review and report back findings and recommendations.			Review of current use of DHP is completed and report completed with recommendations.		
Action 22	Carry out information sharing on early prevention of homelessness through shadowing, attending team meetings, etc with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children’s and families team • Women’s services • Health services • JobCentre+ • Community protection • Justice services 	WBC Service Transformation Lead Housing Service Operational Lead	Housing Solutions Manager	Programme of information sharing agreed and shared with partners. Caseworkers are regularly based at key organisations within the town to provide face to face support on homelessness	September 2024 By December 2024	
Action 23	Review the Intentionally homeless families protocol in place with Families First Homeless Prevention Team at HCC	WBC Housing Options Manager, Families	Housing Solutions Mgr HCC’s Families First Homeless Prevention Team	Review meeting held, review completed and learning shared	September 2024	
Action 24	Carry out an annual review of the Temporary Accommodation Strategy to ensure it is a proactive service, that the agreed principles are followed and that the right mix and number of TA properties is available	WBC Enabling & Development Manager	Housing Property Team Property Team Planning (Policy & Development Control) Commuted Sums Capital sums	Annual review completed and report on findings delivered to CMB and Portfolio Holders.	First refresh: October 2023 Second refresh: October 2024	
Action 25	Consider the housing needs of young people under 35, whose housing options are extremely limited through exploring co-housing or similar schemes.	Watford Strategic Homelessness Forum Enabling & Development Manager	WSHF Working group / WBC	Options review completed and reported to Watford Strategic Homelessness Forum.	September 2024	
Action 26	Develop an offer for households with pets in temporary or complex needs accommodation.	WBC TA Co-ordinator	Housing Property Manager Team Leader	A scheme to house pets of homeless households is established	June 2024	Could use social media to ask for help
Action 27	Develop a tenant ready training programme for homeless households using learning from elsewhere.	WBC Housing Service Operational Lead	Housing Property Manager Team Leader Housing Solutions Manager	Research into schemes used elsewhere completed. A training course for households placed in PRS or in temporary accommodation is established.	June 2024 December 2024	

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Action 28	Work with JobCentre+, the Hope Academy, OneYMCA and West Herts College to enable more homeless households, including rough sleepers, to be job ready, and have access to available job vacancies.	WBC Single Homeless Pathway Co-ordinator Housing Welfare Advice & Outreach Officer	Housing Solutions Mgr Welfare Advice Officer JobCentre+ New Hope West Herts College OYMCA	Review available services for homeless people. Develop an information leaflet to provide clear accessible information to all households	September 2024 December 2024	
Action 29	Work with Citizen’s Advice Bureau and other partners to identify homeless prevention services particularly relating to the cost of living crisis and debt management	WBC Housing Service Operational Lead	Housing CAB Other partners	Options considered and a plan for future services developed. Service now set up. Quarterly monitoring meetings to be set up	January 2024	Now set up – monitoring needed


Part B: New activities for the period to March 2025

Key Priority 1: Preventing homelessness.

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Action 30	Reduce the risk of homelessness for refugees (Afghan, Ukrainian, Sudanese, asylum seekers given right to remain). See Also Objective 2	WBC Community Wellbeing Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Solutions • Other Herts LAs housing options teams • Housing Property Team • HCC’s Families First Team 	As few refugee households as possible are placed in TA, and if they are, they spend as little time as possible in it before moving on to settled accommodation	Ongoing	

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Action 31	Enabling access to affordable sustainable housing options for refugees. See also Objective 1	WBC Community Wellbeing Officer and Resettlement Manager Enabling & Development Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing Property Team WBC Property Team 	Sustainable and affordable homes of various sizes are procured anywhere in England	Ongoing	

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

<i>Objective 1: Responding to rough sleeping</i>						
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Action 32	Carry out Ending Rough Sleeping Plan for Year 2 of Rough Sleepers Initiative 5 (RSI5) funding	WBC Single Homeless Pathway Co-ordinator	Single Homeless Pathway Co-ordinator Single Homeless Pathway Support Officer		March 2024	 Watford Ending Rough Sleeping Plan . Completed

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Action 33	Develop a Supported Housing Strategy including contributing to government consultation on regulations regarding (a) building standards and (b) support standards)	Housing Service Strategic Lead Environmental Health Manager (Housing and Health)	Single Homeless Pathway Co-ordinator (support standards) Environmental Health Officers (building standards) Housing Policy, Projects and Strategy Manager (strategy development)	Supported Housing Strategy	Government timetable awaited	Added 25/01/2024. Required by Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023