

## **Summary of key points**

5.41 Below is a summary of key points from the review of homelessness services and the consultation exercise (with service users, organisations working with homeless people and members of the public):

### **5.42 Housing in Leicester**

- Need for more affordable housing
- Difficulty in meeting affordable housing targets due to funding restrictions and lack of suitable land
- Affordability is a barrier for people to access home ownership and to rent in the private sector
- Increasingly difficult for people receiving benefits to access private rented accommodation. Welfare changes have had, and continue to have an impact
- Increased demand for social housing - but there are fewer lettings available, which means waiting times are increasing
- The quality of housing in the private rented sector needs to be addressed
- Private rented claims for possession and orders for possession have both shown a significant increase between 2020 and 2021
- Overcrowding – due to affordability issues and availability of appropriately sized housing stock
- Most lettings in the private rented sector are assured shorthold tenancies which are insecure and often short-term
- Significant increase in private sector rents based on national data and local experience
- Work to make it easier and attractive for council tenants to downsize

### **5.43 Family homelessness**

- Leicester, in comparison with other authorities, has a strong track record on preventing homelessness. Prevention options are becoming more limited due to the lack of available options including affordable housing.
- Since 2021/22 there has been an increasing number of families that have needed to go into temporary accommodation and external pressures, such as cost of living pressures may lead to more family homelessness.
- Currently there are no families in B&B for more than 6 weeks.

### **5.44 Singles and childless couples' homelessness**

- Increasing numbers of singles and couples seeking assistance
- Increased preventions likely to be further strengthened following full recovery and return to business as usual following the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Further development of the newly established Transitions Team to reduce the number of rough sleepers and repeat homelessness. We need to strengthen services to improve sustained outcomes and reduce

abandonment / disengagement. For example, by ensuring support plans follow individuals through breaks in service

- Preventing homelessness is not just about housing. Many homeless people have complex needs which require a multi-disciplinary approach. We will continue to work with others and seek to forge strong working relationships with a range of services / organisations including physical and mental health services, social care services, criminal justice organisations, employment and advice services.

#### 5.45 **Floating Support Services**

- Commissioned floating support services are effective to help individuals sustain their tenancies and prevent homelessness.
- The Council could improve processes to ensure support is available in a timely fashion when individuals are moving-on from temporary accommodation
- Demand for services is currently increasing

#### 5.46 **Rough Sleeping**

- Rough sleeping has increased due to the increase in the flow of individuals to the street, however we have become better and faster at responding.
- Street begging continues to be an issue in the City
- We need to improve early interventions and access to advice, so individuals do not go on to rough sleep
- Most individuals who rough sleep have complex support needs, not just housing needs

#### 5.47 **Young People**

- Limited affordable housing options available
- Preventing homelessness, and if young people become homeless preventing this from reoccurring helps break the cycle of repeat homelessness.
- The average length of stay in young person's accommodation is generally longer than other accommodation providers. This reflects the needs of this client group.
- Working with accommodation providers to address barriers for move-on.

#### 5.48 **Persons from abroad with restricted eligibility**

- It can take time to establish an individual's immigration status and there can be fear of disclosure with local authority staff. This can make it difficult to establish a person's immigration status and therefore provide appropriate advice and support
- As individuals do not often qualify for statutory support from the Council or the Home Office housing schemes are often provided by the voluntary and community sector, as in the case in Leicester

- Explore with third sector partners additional offers of accommodation that could be provided, for example hosting schemes.
- Improve information sharing with the Home Office regarding the numbers of individuals who have been informed they have no leave to remain who were located within Leicester at the time of decision
- Lobby government to review all immigration-based restrictions on public funds to ensure that local authorities have powers to provide emergency accommodation in order to prevent destitution.

#### 5.49 **Offenders / ex-offenders**

- Ensuring best use of limited offender provision to prioritise higher need clients (from offending and housing perspectives)
- Work with Probation Services to identify appropriate and relevant pathways (including all services available not just commissioned housing accommodation services) for known homeless offenders.
- Working with accommodation providers to understand the variation in length of stay and any barriers for move-on
- Consider opportunities for more partnership working to identify early interventions that can prevent homelessness from occurring e.g., working with Leicester prison's 'through the gate' team
- Building on joint work across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland councils, probation and prison services
- Ensure HMP Fosse Way is linked with existing protocol agreements and processes to ensure risks of crisis homelessness are reduced to a minimum
- Work with Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Chief Housing Officers Group to develop improved representation at MAPPA, potentially sharing the housing core panel member responsibility

#### 5.50 **Health and wellbeing and homelessness**

- Nationally recognised and CQC highlighted "Outstanding" rated care provided by Inclusion Healthcare
- Equity of healthcare outcomes for people experiencing homelessness is based on core principles of care including, continuity, multi-disciplinary approach, permanent registration, service user involvement, routine liaison with outreach teams and collaboration with wider services (housing, dentistry, podiatry, mental health).
- Whilst having a home is one determinant of health, good health and wellbeing cannot be achieved in isolation of the other wider determinants of health such as employment or education. This requires partnership working and integration across a range of services and organisations including physical and mental health services, social care services, criminal justice organisations, employment and advice services to provide wrap-around support as part of the homeless pathway. Holistic, joined-up, co-ordinated person-centred care and service provision is crucial, especially for people

with tri-morbidities or co-morbidities, and people who may find it difficult to look after themselves due to their circumstances.

- Continue to strengthen the links between homelessness services and health services, for example health visiting.
- Equitable access will require different approaches for different people - the COVID-19 pandemic exemplified the ability of services to be flexible and adaptable to meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness, for example through digital/online connections. It is important to continue to assess and consider changing needs and adapt our services, systems and processes to engage with people and continually monitor the best way to do so. This includes taking into account each person's communication and information needs and preferences, and their circumstances, for example internet or phone access.
- The last Homelessness Health Care Needs Assessment/Joint Strategic Needs Assessment on Homelessness was published in 2016. The evidence base is to be refreshed to further understand the unmet needs and gaps in health and wellbeing provision for people experiencing homelessness.

#### 5.51 **Working in partnership**

- Leicester's Homelessness Charter now in place for over three years with committed oversight and management group and organisations actively working together
- Homelessness is not just a housing issue. Continue to build on existing partnerships and forge new strong working relationships with a range of services / organisations including physical and mental health services, social care services, criminal justice organisations, employment and advice services to provide wrap-around services as part of the homeless pathway
- A range of providers who are specialist at providing employment, training and meaningful engagement with people who are homeless so a wide range of choices are available for individuals who are looking for training and employment opportunities
- Work with the voluntary and third sector, empowering and growing their homelessness service provision so this is sustainable and resilient to future funding changes

#### 5.52 **Consultation (Gaps & Suggested Improvements)**

- Not enough temporary accommodation hostels
- Waits to see homelessness prevention staff
- Increased support needed for those with mental health, drug and alcohol issues
- More support needed to manage the transition /support for those leaving NASS accommodation/provision of suitable accommodation
- More affordable housing
- Greater partnership working required to help make the best of limited resources and to provide more effective services

- More assistance with accessing the private rented sector
- There needs to be more information made publicly available and available to those who need it on what to do when faced with homelessness
- Larger duty team to improve access / more homelessness staff to speed up process and improve communication
- Make homelessness prevention service more accessible
- Fund development of specialised units/schemes to wrap around complex cases in a multi-agency approach. Accommodation for those excluded from generic accommodation
- More support – particularly for those with chaotic lifestyles, complex needs
- Resident involvement some of the management of the accommodation they live in

### **Key challenges**

5.53 At the current point of time, these are some of the key challenges for Leicester in effectively tackling homelessness. There will be new challenges emerging and there may be some mitigations, dependent on Government responses.

#### Cost of living crisis

5.54 The 'cost of living crisis' refers to the fall in disposable incomes (that is, adjusted for inflation and after taxes and benefits) that the UK has experienced since late 2021. It is being caused predominantly by high inflation outstripping wage and benefit increases and has been further exacerbated by recent tax increases.

5.55 According to the Office for National Statistics, 87% of adults in the UK reported an increase in their cost of living in March 2022. The Office of Budget Responsibility expects household incomes after tax and adjusted for inflation to start falling in Q2 2022 and not recover until Q3 2024.

5.56 The ONS found that some of the most vulnerable groups to the crisis are:

- Those on low incomes
- Adults who rent their own homes
- Adults with no qualifications and those educated below degree level
- Parents with dependent children
- Adults who were divorced or separated
- Younger adults
- The disabled
- The unemployed and economically inactive
- Individuals from a BAME background

5.57 Leicester has a disproportionately high percentage of many of the affected groups, including those on low incomes, renting households, young adults,

people experiencing unemployment, BAME households and areas experiencing deprivation.

- 5.58 The Survey of Leicester was conducted by Leicester City Council in the autumn of 2021 with the aim of better understanding the lives of Leicester's residents, their households, and communities.
- 5.59 Respondents' personal characteristics and the characteristics of their household were associated with having difficulty paying for living costs. 26-45 year-olds and Asian and Black respondents were more likely to have had difficulty paying for something. Renters, those with children in the household, and those with large households were also more likely to have experienced hardship.
- 50% of black households said that they had found it difficult to pay any living cost since the start of the pandemic.
  - 54% of private renters said that they had found it difficult to pay any living cost since the start of the pandemic.
  - 49% of 5+ person households had difficulty paying any living cost since the start of the pandemic
  - 30% of renters who had had difficulty with living costs, said that rent was one of the costs they were struggling with.
  - More than a third of those renting said that they couldn't cover living costs for more than a month if the main income was lost (38% of social renters and 36% of private renters).

### Benefit changes

- 5.60 Looking forward, the following are likely to have an impact on homelessness:
- the continued roll out of universal credit and the full migration from legacy benefits by 2024.
  - the continued application and impact of the universal credit two child limit (introduced on the 1<sup>st</sup> February 2019)
  - the continued impact of the benefit cap, particularly on single parent households
  - the continued impact of the removal of the pandemic related Universal Credit uplift
  - the ending of some of the discretionary funding related to the pandemic – including the COVID Winter grant, COVID Local Support Grant, and the potential end of the Household Support Fund in 2024
  - reduction in the national funding that has been made available for Discretionary Housing Payments. Crisis warns this could lead to tens of thousands of people nationally falling into arrears and facing eviction as people struggle to stay afloat.

### Asylum & Immigration

5.61 As a national dispersal area, for Asylum seekers, since the pandemic we are seeing additional pressures in the number of cases being referred to the Authority to manage Home Office backlogs. These cases can be single or family households who have received their refugee status and want to remain in Leicester. However, at the present moment in time there are no additional pressures on homelessness services due to the Afghan Schemes or the Ukrainian emergency situation. We will continue to monitor this closely. In relation to the European Union (EU) - the application deadline for applications for settled status has passed and we are seeing more EU Nationals rough sleeping. We can offer to signpost to Migrant Help and if they have pre-settled status try and engage them with our employment, education, and training initiatives.

Reduced funding

5.62 All council departments will be affected by financial cuts, including Housing, which delivers homelessness services on behalf of the council.