



Homelessness Review 2022

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 What is a homelessness review?

The homelessness review process undertaken by Cannock Chase Council has been taken in accordance with Section 1(1) of the Homelessness Act 2002 (“the 2002 Act”), which gives housing authorities the power to carry out a homelessness review for their district and formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on the results of the review.

The purpose of the review is to establish the extent of homelessness in the district, assess its likely extent in the future, and identify what is currently being done, and by whom, and what level of resources are available, to prevent and tackle homelessness.

By undertaking this process the Council has been able to gain a clearer picture of homelessness and its associated problems in the District. A mapping exercise has taken place to ascertain the level of resources and services available to help prevent and tackle homelessness. Cannock Chase Council is committed to addressing the problem of homelessness in the District and will utilise any available resources to provide the best possible service for homeless people or people at risk of homelessness.

The review process has adhered to the following principles:

- To ensure homeless clients can make informed choices through appropriate advice and effective and efficient homeless procedures;
- A primary focus on the activities that may contribute to preventing the occurrence of homelessness;
- Taking a long-term strategic approach to the issues surrounding homelessness;
- To acknowledge the wider social issues affecting the District of Cannock Chase;
- Working in collaboration with a number of different organisations to ensure a cohesive approach to homelessness;
- To deliver holistic services that meet the needs of the client group.

1.2 Consultation

In order to map the services available to homeless people, a detailed questionnaire was sent out to all the main providers in the area. The questionnaire requested information as to what homeless advice, accommodation and support agencies provide and to which client group. The questionnaire also identified what the main causes of homelessness were for the agencies’ client groups and any contributory factors.

1.3 Methodology

The Review process sought to identify the needs of all homeless people, and those likely to become homeless. This was to be achieved by compiling a detailed picture of the past, current and future nature and levels of homelessness across the District and in relation to other areas.

The Review pulls together available data from a wide range of sources including P1E/H-CLIC returns and performance indicators. This information provides a detailed picture of the levels and causes of homelessness across Cannock Chase, and used together with demographic data, the review can identify unmet need and future trends.

This review forms the basis for the production of a new Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. It will demonstrate the major issues and gaps in provision regarding homelessness in the District. The Strategy will build further upon these, with further consultation of partners, to set out plans to tackle homelessness over the next five years.

The Review will be sent out for consultation to agree on the main issues and priorities before writing the Strategy.

2. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

2.1 National Strategic Context

The primary homelessness legislation – [Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996](#) – provides the statutory under-pinning for action to prevent homelessness and provide assistance to people threatened with or actually homeless.

In 2002, the government amended the homelessness legislation through the [Homelessness Act 2002](#) and the [Homelessness \(Priority Need for Accommodation\) \(England\) Order 2002](#) to:

- (a) ensure a more strategic approach to tackling and preventing homelessness, in particular by requiring a homelessness strategy for every housing authority district; and
- (b) strengthen the assistance available to people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness by extending the priority need categories to homeless 16 and 17 year olds; care leavers aged 18, 19 and 20; people who are vulnerable as a result of time spent in care, the armed forces, prison or custody, and people who are vulnerable because they have fled their home because of violence.

The [Homelessness Reduction Act 2017](#) significantly reformed England’s homelessness legislation by placing duties on local authorities to intervene at earlier stages to prevent homelessness in their areas. It also requires housing authorities to provide homelessness services to all those affected, not just those who have ‘priority need’. These include:

- (a) an enhanced prevention duty extending the period a household is threatened with homelessness from 28 days to 56 days, meaning that housing authorities are required to work with people to prevent homelessness at an earlier stage; and
- (b) a new duty for those who are already homeless so that housing authorities will support households for 56 days to relieve their homelessness by helping them to secure accommodation.

Housing authorities have a duty to carry out an assessment in all cases where an eligible applicant is homeless or threatened with homelessness. This will identify what has caused the homelessness or threat of homelessness, the housing needs of the applicant and any support they need in order to be able to secure and retain accommodation. Following this assessment, the housing authority must work with the person to develop a personalised housing plan which will include actions (or ‘reasonable steps’) to be taken by the authority and the applicant to try and **prevent** or **relieve** homelessness.

Prevention duty

Housing authorities have a duty to take reasonable steps to help prevent any eligible person (regardless of priority need status, intentionality and whether they have a local connection) who is threatened with homelessness from becoming homeless. This means either helping them to stay in their current accommodation or helping them to find a new place to live before they become actually homeless. The prevention duty continues for 56 days unless it is brought to an end by an event such as accommodation being secured for the person, or by their becoming homeless.

Relief duty

If the applicant is already homeless, or becomes homeless despite activity during the prevention stage, the reasonable steps will be focused on helping the applicant to secure accommodation. This relief duty lasts for 56 days unless ended in another way. If the housing authority has reason to believe a homeless applicant may be eligible for assistance and have a priority need they must be provided with interim accommodation.

The [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#) amends Part 7 of the 1996 Act to strengthen the support available to victims of domestic abuse. The Act extends priority need to all eligible victims of domestic abuse who are homeless as a result of being a victim of domestic abuse. The 2021 Act brings in a new definition of domestic abuse which housing authorities must follow to assess whether an applicant is homeless as a result of being a victim of domestic abuse.

National guidance on homelessness is set out in the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities/overview-of-the-homelessness-legislation>

2.2 Local Strategic Context

The Council's **Corporate Plan 2018-23** outlines priorities of 'Promoting Prosperity' and 'Community Wellbeing', priorities that interlink and reinforce each other to improve the opportunities, wellbeing and quality of life of our communities. These areas are inter-linked - employment, a safe and attractive environment, good quality housing, community safety and an active population all play a huge part in achieving a prosperous and thriving local economy, as well as being vital to good health and wellbeing.

For each of these priorities, a revised annual Priority Delivery Plan is developed. The Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2017-22 contributed to delivery of the Corporate Plan.

The Council's **Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018-23** set out the plans for the improvement of housing and support needs across Cannock Chase for the 5 year period. The key aims of the Strategy are:

- To increase the supply of Affordable Housing;
- To improve the maintenance and management of existing housing;
- To promote the provision of suitable accommodation, information and advice to prevent and reduce homelessness and rough sleeping.

The Council will review and develop a new Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for the 2023-2033 period.

3. PROFILE OF CANNOCK CHASE

3.1 Social Characteristics of the District

Many of the communities in the District of Cannock Chase developed because of coal mining and the legacy it has left behind. The collapse of the coal mining industry had severe economic and social implications for the District and led to some areas suffering from the most acute concentration of multiple deprivation.

The District had an unemployment rate of 3.8 per cent at Sep 2021, which has increased since the publication of the last review. The average annual household income in the District is around £27,241 – lower than the national average at £31,785. From scores contained within the Indices of Deprivation 2019, Cannock Chase District is ranked 126th, on the average rank scores, out of 317 local authorities in England. Cannock Chase is the second most deprived authority in Staffordshire (excluding Stoke-on-Trent) just one place lower than Tamworth.

Factors such as these can directly or indirectly contribute to homelessness and affect an individual's ability to maintain a tenancy. Education, skills and training in the District is the worst aspect of the Index, ranking 37 out of 317 LAs in England and Wales. Employment, Health and Income indicators are also in the bottom third local authority areas. With high levels of deprivation in Education, skills and training as well as Employment, Health and Income, it will create negative impacts upon income and subsequently upon housing affordability and options.

The District has an estimated population of 101,484, according to the 2020 mid year population estimate and population projections suggest that this will increase to 108,908 by 2032. Approximately 17.9% of the population is aged under 16 years and the District has a teenage pregnancy rate of 22.2 per 1,000 women aged between 15 to 17, which has reduced from the last review at 37.4 per 1,000, but is still higher than the regional and national averages.

Youth unemployment (16 to 24 years) in the District is higher than the national average, with 5.7% claiming out of work benefits compared to 5.1%. Significantly, only 43.2 per cent of pupils in the area achieve the average GCSE/GNVQ qualifications average, lower than the national average of 46.9 per cent. It is essential that young people in the District have their support needs met and can access relevant supported accommodation if necessary. Receiving appropriate help and advice can prevent homelessness occurring and also help with the wider social issues of crime, drug use, unemployment and early pregnancy.

Current homelessness policy has placed a greater emphasis on prevention. It is therefore essential that good quality, free and accessible housing advice is provided for those who need it. Cannock Chase Council endeavours to prevent homelessness occurring in

conjunction with a range of services, including Social Services, Education, Probation and Voluntary Organisations. The causes of homelessness are often extremely complex and the Council's Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy will provide a strategic approach to inform these issues.

3.2 COVID-19 in Cannock Chase

Like many local authority districts across the UK, Cannock Chase has experienced social and economic impacts resulting from the global coronavirus pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic was declared by the World Health Organisation on 11 March 2020 with a national lockdown enforced by the UK Government on 23 March 2020. This required businesses, including non-essential retail, to close and residents to stay at home for all but essential travel. In November 2020 and again in January 2021 further national lockdown measures were taken after a rapid increase of coronavirus cases and consequent hospitalisation caused increased pressure on the NHS. At the time of writing in May 2022 Cannock Chase had recorded almost 35,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and, very sadly, 368 coronavirus-related (recorded on death certificate) deaths across the District. 88.8% had received their first dose of COVID-19 vaccine, 84.8% second dose and those receiving the booster or third dose total was 68.3% of people in the District in May 2022.

Beyond the health impacts of the pandemic, lockdown has had a detrimental economic impact on trade, workforce and turnover for businesses forced to close, particularly in sectors such as retail, hospitality and arts entertainment. Lockdown has also had a major social impact on the lives of residents in Cannock Chase, with restrictions imposed on people mixing outside their own household as well as the closure of schools and hospitality venues.

During summer 2020 Staffordshire County Council surveyed 399 residents in the District about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their lives. 63% of respondents identified that the pandemic had a negative impact, with the most significant negative being 'not seeing friends and wider family' – a factor which was recognised by 80% of respondents. However, respondents also identified positive impacts such as enjoying more time outdoors in their local area (50%), as well as being able to work from home (50%) and spend more time with immediate family and children (47%).

Amongst those who felt the most significant impact of the pandemic were people identified to be Clinically Extremely Vulnerable and required to shield within their households. During the summer of 2020 4,700 vulnerable residents were contacted by Cannock Chase Council and offered assistance through the Council's Community Vulnerability Hub. Work to support these people involved the efforts of many third sector organisations and community volunteers. COVID-19's impact on galvanising community voluntary action is evident in Staffordshire's COVID-19 Resident Survey, with 50% of

respondents in Cannock Chase recognising that they had provided help or support to others in the local community. By March 2021 6,500 local people were identified by the NHS as Clinically Extremely Vulnerable. Of these, the Hub was in frequent contact with 165 people, offering practical support and social contact.

3.4 Our Current Services

The Housing Division contains both the Strategic and Operational housing functions.

Strategic Housing

The Strategic Housing section consists of three functions: Housing Strategy, Housing Options & Homelessness and Systems Administration.

Housing Strategy and Service Improvement

The strategic housing role requires the team to:

- assess and plan for current and future housing needs of the local population;
- make the best use of existing housing stock;
- plan and facilitate new supply;
- plan and commission housing support services which link homes to support and other services that people need to live in them;
- have working partnerships that secure effective housing and neighbourhood management.

By contributing to place shaping, strategic housing activity can help to deliver improved services (including health, education, social services); a safe environment; accessible transport; a strong sense of community; and a decent home for all at a price people can afford.

Housing Options and Homelessness

The Housing Options team performs the strategic housing function of providing and commissioning advice and assistance to help people in housing need to find suitable accommodation. It is often the case that people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness approach the Housing Options team directly. The Housing Options team provides advice on a number of housing issues including tenancy problems, illegal eviction and housing benefit entitlements. On the Council's website, the team's webpages includes lots of information that covers a range of housing issues and details of Registered Social Landlords and private landlords in the District are also available.

Systems Administration

The Systems Administration team are responsible for the administration, management, and support activities associated with the electronic housing management system.

Housing Services

Housing staff have been split into teams covering: Tenancy Services; Housing Property Services; and Housing Maintenance.

- *Tenancy Services* – Allocations and Lettings; Rent Collection and Arrears Recovery; Housing Applications, Housing Register and Choice Based Lettings Scheme; Estate Management; and Supported Housing Services.
- *Housing Property Services* – Planned maintenance including kitchen and bathroom replacement; Cyclical maintenance including gas servicing; Disabled persons adaptations; Asset Management Strategy; Right to Buy applications.
- *Housing Maintenance* – Responsive repairs; Works to voids; Elderly persons decoration scheme; Supervision of minor works contracts; and Tenants' requests for improvements.

The Housing Strategy and Service Improvement, Housing Options and Allocations & Lettings teams meet regularly to discuss new initiatives, recent trends and any problems or recurring issues.

3.5 Homelessness Procedure

Information on all homelessness cases is stored on a central computer system to obtain complete and accurate figures. The data held also records reasons given for homelessness which enables the Council to find out what services could be put in place to help prevent homelessness occurring. Under the Council's homelessness procedure if there is any doubt about a homeless application it is treated as a potential homeless application until the matter is clarified. At the earliest opportunity a personal interview is arranged, currently held via phone or online. If a new or existing applicant contacts the Council and states that they are homeless or will be homeless that night, they are interviewed the same day.

There is also a homeless callout procedure in place so that homeless people can contact someone out of office hours for immediate assistance. The homelessness officer on duty will ask a series of questions to the applicant and make a decision as to whether to accommodate them. If so, appropriate accommodation is found and the homeless person is instructed to contact the Council the next working day for further help and assistance.

Cannock Chase Council sets a target for making a decision on its Assessments completed for households presenting where the household is homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days of 98%. In 2020/21 the Council achieved 96% of decision within those 56 days and in 2021/22 we achieved over 99%. The service provided is undertaken as quickly and efficiently as possible to help the homeless applicant and enable them to access relevant support services and/or accommodation.

Despite Covid restrictions meaning the team were not available in person at our offices, performance and working practices have actually improved. Clients have found it easier to contact staff via telephone and virtual meetings, they are responding to queries from the team much quicker and are able to send documents more quickly electronically than having to attend the office for face to face meetings.

3.6 Current Housing Provision

There are currently around 44,700 dwellings in Cannock Chase District, of which approximately 2.3% are vacant. According to the latest available Census data (2011 unfortunately, the results for 2021 were not available at the time of writing) the majority property type is semi-detached, accounting for 47% of all properties. Detached properties make up 29.3% of the total, whilst there are smaller proportions of terraced (12%) and flats (9.9%). The District has larger proportions of both semi-detached and detached housing than both the region and England, and therefore smaller proportions of terraced houses and flats.

Property Type	Cannock Chase (%)	West Midlands (%)	England (%)
Detached	29.3	23.7	22.3
Semi-detached	47.0	36.8	30.7
Terraced	12.0	22.9	24.5
Flat/Maisonette	9.9	13.3	16.7
Other	1.8	3.3	5.8

Figure 1 – Accommodation type breakdown
Source: Census 2011, ONS.

The majority of households in the District are owner occupiers, of which 38.7% own with a mortgage or loan and 30.5% of households own their property outright. This level of home ownership is slightly above both national and regional levels for the number of owners with a mortgage or loan, but level with England for outright owners. The District has higher levels of Council renters, due to the Council retaining its stock and therefore lower levels of HA/RSL renters. Overall social rented is on a par with national figures, but slightly lower than the West Midlands proportion. There is however a smaller private rented stock than both regional and national levels.

Tenure	Cannock Chase (%)	West Midlands (%)	England (%)
Owner occupied: Owns outright	30.5	32.3	30.6
Owner occupied: Owns with a mortgage or loan	38.7	32.6	32.8
Owner occupied: Shared ownership	0.6	0.7	0.8

Rented from: Council (local authority)	13.0	10.9	9.4
Rented from: Housing Association / Registered Social Landlord	3.9	8.1	8.3
Rented from: Private landlord or letting agency	11.1	12.8	15.4
Rented from: Other	2.3	2.7	2.7

Figure 2 – Tenure breakdown
Source: Census 2011, ONS.

Cannock Chase Council is the main provider of social housing in the District and currently owns and manages around 5,400 dwellings. Since the introduction of the Right to Buy policy in 1980, over 5,000 council homes have been sold to tenants. This accounts for over 45 per cent of the Council's original housing stock. However, the number of Council houses that are sold each year had decreased. In the last three years we have sold 91 properties, around 30 per year. However with the Council also building new properties the net loss has decreased, 31 new properties were delivered in the last three years with a further 71 in the pipeline for the next 3 years.

Affordable housing is also provided by Registered Providers in the District, detailed in figure 3 below:

RSL Name	General Needs	Supported Housing	Total
Midland Heart	331	166	497
Bromford	290	0	290
Sanctuary	267	6	273
Walsall Housing Group	244	0	244
Waterloo (now Platform)	227	0	227
Housing Plus	133	78	211
Wrekin Housing Trust	92	63	155
Accord	67	9	76
Housing 21	0	30	30
Anchor Trust	0	29	29
Aspire	17	0	17
Hopkins and Sneyd	9	0	9
Birch and Samson	2	0	2
Golden Lane	0	1	1
Total	1679	382	2061

Figure 3 – RP Stock
Source: Government Statistics

3.6 Lettings, Demand and Turnover

The following table (fig. 4) presents the number of general needs lettings made by the Council to tenants new to social housing and the turnover that it equates to. These figures only include new lettings and do not include any social housing transfers or mutual exchanges.

Year	No. of Lettings	Turnover (%)
2021/22	192	3.78%
2020/21	133	2.62%
2019/20	216	4.22%
2018/19	259	5.03%

Figure 4 – Council New Lettings and Turnover
Source: Local Authority Housing Statistics (LAHS)

In 2021/22 there were 22 lettings to those on the housing register that had ‘No Fixed Abode’ or were Rough Sleepers in 2020/21. There was another 55 lettings to applicants classed as lodgers, some of these may well have been sofa surfing or actually homeless.

There is a high demand for social housing in the District. At the end of March 2022 there were 1183 applications from households on the Council’s housing register. However, the average number of Council lettings accounts for only 6% of the affordable housing stock on average.

The Council offers a Choice Based Lettings Scheme called ‘Cannock Chase Housing’. It aims to provide people with more choice and control over where they live. There are four priority bands which people are placed in upon receipt of their application. Available properties are advertised on a regular basis and customers can then express an interest them. Both Council and RP properties are advertised and can be bid for in the same manner, the Council makes nominations for the RP properties. The CBL scheme further helps the Council to identify those households most in need and match them with appropriate housing. The CBL scheme also includes the provision for Local Lettings Plans in respect of specific areas or schemes.

Aids and Adaptations

A disabled adaptation can be minor or major works/adjustments made to a tenants home which enables them to live both independently and in improved comfort in spite of their disability. If required, the Council will work with the tenant to find alternative accommodation suitable to their needs of disability, thus reducing the threat of homelessness. If, following assessment, you are deemed to require major works then the Council prioritises the work based on the level of need and the length of time the tenant

has been waiting. The Council will work to ensure any specific needs are identified and ensure a high standard of adaptation is provided.

During 2021/22:

No. of tenants benefiting from minor disabled facilities work (under £1000) = 26

No. of tenants benefiting from major disabled facilities work = 129

No. of tenants with medical needs benefitting from rehousing = 15

No. of new referrals for the year = 163

At year end 2021/22:

No. of tenants awaiting major disabled facilities work (registered and work approved) = 41

No. of tenants awaiting minor disabled facilities work (registered and work approved) = 3

No. of tenants on rehousing list = 45

No. of tenants awaiting OT Assessment = 10

No. of tenants awaiting feasibility = 12

No. of properties that have been in Adaptation process for over 12 months = 41

Anti-social behaviour

Council tenants and other residents should be able to live free from violence, disturbance or nuisance. The causes and effects of ASB are wide and varied and our work would not be effective in dealing with these issues without input from partner agencies, which include, Staffordshire Police, Environmental Health, Youth Offending Team, Street Wardens, Victim Support, Education Welfare and Mediation Services.

The Council's approach to responding to ASB is one of prevention, diversion, enforcement and support. Cannock Chase Council will take a balanced approach recognising the importance of the benefits of prevention and rehabilitation through such things as diversionary activities and engaging with offenders and recognising the need to support vulnerable people (as victims and perpetrators), referring them to partner agencies for support where necessary to reduce the risk of homelessness.

During 2021/22:

No. of ASB Cases Closed Resolved = 36

No. of ASB Cases Closed Unresolved = 13

Avg. time taken to resolve ASB cases (calendar days) = 279

No. of tenants issued a notice (NSP, NTQ, EXTEN etc.) = 4

No. of Evictions for ASB = 0

Rent Arrears

Cannock Chase Council adopts a fair but firm approach to rent arrears recovery. We understand that illness or unemployment can sometimes make it difficult to pay your rent. Our policy is therefore, to make contact at the earliest opportunity, rent accounts that are in arrears are monitored weekly and the first contact is made when an account

is two weeks in arrears. The Council can offer advice on housing benefits, supply contact numbers for debt and welfare advice and will arrange repayment agreements that are affordable and sustainable. During the Covid pandemic we have not evicted anyone with rent arrears.

During 2021/22:

Average arrears debt = £284

No. of Evictions for Rent Arrears = 0

No. of tenants in Arrears (at period end) = 988

No. of tenants claiming Universal Credit (at period end) = 1,470

No. of tenants claiming Universal Credit and in arrears (at period end) = 547

Average arrears debt for Tenants on UC and in arrears = £396

3.7 Private Rented Sector

The private rented sector in Cannock Chase has grown in recent years due to house price unaffordability and a lack of social housing in the District. According to 2011 Census data the private rented sector now accounts for 11.1% of the housing stock, which has grown from 4.5% in 2001. This is expected to have grown further but Census 2021 statistics were not available at the time of writing. The growth in the private rented sector is a national trend but the District's PRS has increased at a faster rate than national and regional levels. The sector remains very buoyant in the current economic climate.

A healthy and high quality private rented sector has an important function within our local housing market by providing flexibility, transition and additional options for local residents. We will continue to work in partnership with local landlords. This partnership has remained fairly strong and has been sustained over a number of years, through landlord forums and the use of a private property register to match those seeking housing options advice with vacant private rented properties.

The table below presents the number of households that have been assisted by the Council to enter the Private Rented Sector.

2021/22 = 1
2020/21 = 8
2019/20 = 11
2018/19 = 43

Figure 5 – PRS accommodated
Source: CCDC Housing Options Team

As is clearly obvious, the numbers of households being rehoused successfully into the PRS by the Housing Options team has dramatically decreased since 2018/19 and not all as a

result of the Covid pandemic. Landlords are finding it increasingly easy to find tenants and don't feel the need to work with the Council as they used to. This is an area the Council will be improving upon, and rebuild some of the relationships with landlords, offering incentives etc. Utilising the private rented sector is a key tool in tackling homelessness as the demands on the social rented sector are high and continue to increase.

3.8 Affordable Housing Delivery

During the past five years the Council has enabled the delivery of 688 new affordable homes in the District. This has included new build schemes by RPs and the Council, and the purchase of existing dwellings from the private sector. A mixture of social rented, affordable rented and low-cost homeownership units (shared ownership) have been provided across a range of housing types and sizes.

Period	Number Delivered	of which Council owned:
2021/22	272	22
2020/21	60	0
2019/20	108	9
2018/19	70	19
2017/18	178	35

Figure 6 – Affordable Housing Delivery
Source: Housing Strategy Team, CCDC

3.9 Housing Market and Affordability

Although average house prices for the Cannock Chase District are high for many people, particularly first-time buyers and low-income families, they do compare favourably with the rest of Staffordshire and the West Midlands, and therefore are slightly more affordable. At the end of 2021 the average house price for Cannock Chase was £208,925, the second lowest average house price of all the eight Staffordshire local authority areas after Newcastle under Lyme. Cannock Chase also has a much lower average than the West Midlands at £273,016.

The average annual income of full time employed residents in the Cannock Chase District in 2021 (ASHE provisional) was £31,608, whilst the overall resident average income is £27,241.

Comparing these annual incomes against average house prices can reveal how affordable property is in the District using an affordability ratio. As stated above the average house price in Cannock Chase is £208,925, which equates to 6.61 times the full time employed resident average, and 7.67 for all residents in the District. The West Midlands average incomes are £35,691 for full time employed residents and £29,670 for all residents, and

taken against an average house price of £273,016 affordability ratios work out at 7.65 and 9.20, slightly higher than the District.

Whilst Cannock Chase has lower affordability rates (i.e. is more affordable) than the West Midlands, the District's lower average incomes do increase the difficulty of purchasing a property on the open market.

Due to house prices being unaffordable for a large number of households in the District the private rented sector is now fairly buoyant in Cannock Chase. As a result of high house prices, many households have turned to the private rented sector for accommodation as it is more affordable and so, the demand for rental property is increasing. As previously mentioned, the size of the PRS housing stock has grown significantly over the past 10-15 years as it becomes the most affordable and accessible tenure type for a lot of households in the District.

The table below shows the average rental cost per calendar month (PCM) for the District compared to neighbouring local authorities and regional and national levels.

Average Rents PCM (£) by bed size

	Room	Studio	One	Two	Three	Four or more	Overall
ENGLAND	420	595	675	750	850	1,400	755
WEST MIDLANDS	400	475	550	650	770	1,100	675
Staffordshire	390	433	495	614	750	1,040	650
Cannock Chase	-	-	433	595	700	950	600
East Staffordshire	325	-	475	595	700	1,030	600
Lichfield	-	433	575	725	850	1,200	750
Newcastle-under-Lyme	477	498	450	550	675	1,000	585
South Staffordshire	-	-	535	650	780	1,125	715
Stafford	412	-	525	595	700	950	625
Staffordshire Moorlands	-	-	380	525	650	690	550
Tamworth	500	-	550	675	795	963	700

Figure 7: Average Rent PCM by bed size

Source: Valuation Office Agency – Lettings Information Database, Office for National Statistics. 1
October 2020 to 30 September 2021

Cannock Chase has the joint third lowest overall average rent across Staffordshire, private rented tenants paying £600 per calendar month, only Staffordshire Moorlands and Newcastle-under-Lyme being lower. Rent for each bed size in the District is lower than the Staffordshire, West Midlands and England average. There is very little room or studio

accommodation in Cannock Chase with less than 10 properties recorded - so no average figure is available.

For those households on low incomes that require assistance with their housing rent the Local Housing Allowance amount for the District is set by the Mid Staffs Broad Rental Market Area (BRMA) amounts. Whilst rents in comparison to neighbouring authorities and regional and nation levels seem more affordable, tenants may find a deficit between their rental costs and the LHA amounts that are available. This increases with the size of the property as shown in the table below.

Accommodation Size	LHA Amount per week	Average Rent Weekly equivalent for Cannock Chase	Difference per week
Shared Accommodation	£67.08	-	-
One Bedroom	£97.81	£99.92	£2.11
Two Bedrooms	£126.58	£137.31	£10.73
Three Bedrooms	£149.59	£161.54	£11.95
Four Bedrooms	£195.62	£219.23	£23.61

Figure 8: Average Rent PCM by bed size

Source: lha-direct.voa.gov.uk

The gap between LHA and rent is steadily increasing, at the time of the last review there was a small deficit in LHA amount for one and two bed accommodation of £0.48 and £1.77 respectively, but 5 years later the gaps have increased to £2.11 and £10.73. Therefore households reliant on LHA to cover rent will be having to find additional money on top to cover the cost of rent and with demand increasing, the availability of good quality rented accommodation is limited.

For three and four bed accommodation the LHA amount is approximately £12-24 per week or around £50-100 per month short of the average rent amount, which means households dependant on LHA will need to find accommodation at the lower price end and therefore quality of accommodation is not quite as good – this in turn may have an impact on a household’s health should the property not have sufficient heating or is damp.

There is little shared accommodation in the District so a comparable average rent is not able to be provided, however £67.08 per week or the equivalent of £290 per calendar month will not be enough to obtain private rented accommodation. One bed accommodation rents average just over £430 pcm. This is why there are increasing numbers of single people approaching the Council for housing assistance either as

homeless, wanting to join the Housing Options private rented register or applying to Cannock Chase Housing.

3.10 Housing Needs

Cannock Chase Local Housing Needs Assessment

The Council gathers as much information as possible about housing need in the District to inform the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. A Local Housing Needs Assessment was undertaken in 2019. The main findings from the survey were as follows:

- There is an affordable housing shortfall of 110 units per year in the District;
- Smaller affordable homes of 1 and 2 bedrooms are required within the District, almost one fifth (19%) require flats (1 and 2 bed) and 57% of households require 2 bedroom houses.
- 67% of households requiring affordable housing cannot afford existing social rent levels; and
- Some 76% of households with affordable housing need in Cannock Chase cannot afford 80% market rent (affordable rent level) or the costs of shared ownership.

4. REVIEW FINDINGS

4.1 Recent homelessness trends

The table below presents the number of homelessness assessments made by the Housing Options team in the last three years.

Year	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Total number of households assessed	182	251	180
Total households assessed as owed a duty	182	250	178
Threatened with homelessness - Prevention duty owed	101	83	95
Of which: due to service of valid Section 21 Notice	58	30	10
Homeless - Relief duty owed	81	167	83
Not threatened with homelessness within 56 days - no duty owed	0	1	2

Figure 9 – Homelessness Assessments

Source: MHCLG, Statutory Homelessness Official Statistics.

The total number of households assessed peaked in 2019/20, this was a normal year as the Covid pandemic started at the very end of that year. 2020/21 was a year impacted by Covid and restrictions but the number of assessments dropped back to the level of 2018/19.

The following table shows the reasons for homelessness of the Priority Need homeless households during the last three years, total for 18/19 and for 19/20 and 20/21 total, followed by prevention (p) and relief (r) figures.

Reason for loss of last settled home for households owed a duty:

	2018/ 19	2019/ 20 Total (P/R)	2020/ 21 Total (P/R)
Family or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate	39	59 (18 / 41)	55 (33 / 22)

End of private rented tenancy - assured shorthold	82	74 (47 / 27)	27 (19 / 8)
Domestic abuse	18	32 (4 / 28)	42 (22 / 20)
Non-violent relationship breakdown with partner	16	30 (0 / 30)	25 (9 / 16)
End of social rented tenancy	5	10 (4 / 6)	6 (3 / 3)
Eviction from supported housing	4	7 (2 / 5)	2 (2 / 0)
End of private rented tenancy - not assured shorthold	2	7 (1 / 6)	0 (0 / 0)
Other violence or harassment	3	2 (0 / 2)	4 (3 / 1)
Left institution with no accommodation available	1	2 (1 / 1)	3 (0 / 3)
Required to leave accommodation provided by Home Office as asylum support	0	0 (0 / 0)	0 (0 / 0)
Other reasons / not known ⁶	12	27 (6 / 21)	14 (4 / 10)
<u>Total</u>	<u>182</u>	<u>250</u> <u>(83 /</u> <u>167)</u>	<u>178</u> <u>(95 /</u> <u>83)</u>

Figure 10 - Reasons for Homelessness for those in Priority Need

Source: MHCLG, Statutory Homelessness Official Statistics.

Analysis of the reasons given for homelessness cases can give the Council valuable information that can help to identify the major issues that are affecting the District and inform advice and prevention procedures, support needs and future housing requirements. Figure 10 shows that 'Family and friends unable to accommodate', 'Loss of rented accommodation' followed by 'Domestic Violence and Non-Violent Breakdown in Relationship involving partner' are the most common reasons for homelessness in the past three years.

The Coronavirus Act 2020 provided protection to social and private tenants by delaying when landlords can evict tenants. The provisions in the Act increased the notice periods landlords were required to provide to tenants when seeking possession of a residential

property between 26 March 2020 and 30 September 2021. Between 1 June 2021 and 30 September 2021, notice periods were required to be at least four months except in the most serious cases such as egregious rent arrears or anti-social behaviour.

From 1 October 2021, all notice periods returned to the pre-pandemic position. Anecdotally, the Housing Options team feel there has been a big spike during 2021/22 in the loss of rented accommodation as the courts also started to re-open and landlords return to operating in a more normal climate.

Age of main applicants owed a prevention or relief duty:

	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19
16-17	1	1	1
18-24	38	59	27
25-34	57	72	68
35-44	43	49	44
45-54	19	41	29
55-64	14	19	10
65-74	4	8	3
75+	2	1	0
Not known ⁸	0	0	0

Figure 11 – Age of accepted homeless applicants
Source: MHCLG, Statutory Homelessness Official Statistics.

Analysis of the age of applicants in recent years can show that the majority came from the 25-34 years age group, closely followed by the 35-44 and 18-24 years age groups. These age bands are the largest in population number, so it would be expected. Those in older age groups generally have more settled housing patterns.

Household type of households owed a prevention duty:

	20/21	19/20	18/19
Single parent with dependent children - Male	3	0	2
Single parent with dependent children - Female	43	31	47
Single parent with dependent children - Other/gender not known	0	0	0
Single adult - Male	13	9	18
Single adult - Female	16	24	18
Single adult - Other / gender not known	1	0	0
Couple with dependent children	12	9	10
Couple / two adults without dependent children	5	7	3

Three or more adults with dependent children	0	2	1
Three or more adults without dependent children	2	1	2
Not known ⁸	0	0	0

Figure 12 – Household type of accepted homeless applicants
Source: MHCLG, Statutory Homelessness Official Statistics.

Figure 12 demonstrates the household type of accepted homeless applications. The table shows that the majority of applicants are female lone parents with dependant children, on average over 50% of all acceptances are female lone parents. This is followed by one person households (male and female) and couples with dependant children.

BME Groups

BME applicants range from 3% to 7% (or 7-13 in number each year) of all applicants in the last three years. The BME population in Cannock Chase according to Census 2011 statistics is 2.2%, however this may be seen to have increased in Census 2021 figures.

Ethnicity of main applicants owed a prevention or relief duty:

	20/21	19/20	18/19
White	161	232	158
Black / African / Caribbean / Black British	4	2	0
Asian / Asian British	2	4	3
Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups	7	2	3
Other ethnic groups	0	0	1
Not known ⁸	4	10	17

Figure 13 – Ethnicity of main applicants
Source: MHCLG, Statutory Homelessness Official Statistics.

4.3 Analysis of Homelessness Trends in Cannock Chase

- The loss of private rented accommodation had become the most popular reason for homelessness in Cannock Chase at the last review and continues to be a major cause. A slight dip occurred in 2020/21 due to the Coronavirus pandemic as the restrictions on evictions was in place and the courts were shut. Anecdotally, they are the major reason in 2021/22 for homelessness cases.
- Violent breakdown of relationship involving partner (domestic violence) and Parents/family unwilling to accommodate were also common reasons for homelessness.
- Homelessness due to parents being unable to accommodate was historically the most popular reason for homelessness but this has decreased in recent years and

could be put down to the successful mediation work now done by the Housing Options Team;

- The number of domestic violence cases has risen, with 18 priority need homeless households in 18/19 increasing to 42 in 20/21. Anecdotally, DV cases in 2021/22 have remained high.
- The majority of cases involved younger people, those in the 25-44 were most common closely followed by 16-24 age groups. Most homelessness cases involved lone female parents of dependant children.
- The demand and limited supply of private rented accommodation in the District has meant homelessness due to the end of assured shorthold tenancies has become a more common, as landlords have very little trouble finding new tenants.
- Homelessness cases peaked in 2019/20 at around 250 cases, dropping back during the Covid year of 2020/21 to the level in 18/19. In 2020/21 216 cases were taken, the year was partly interrupted with Covid restrictions but appears to be returning to more normality and the levels seen in 2019/20.

5. HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION AND RELIEF

5.1 Reasons for prevention and relief duty ending:

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Total	66	65	69
Secured accommodation for 6+ months	49	43	46
Homeless (including intentionally homeless)	8	13	13
Contact lost	4	6	6
56 days elapsed and no further action	1	1	0
Withdrew application / applicant deceased	3	2	3
No longer eligible	0	0	0
Refused suitable accommodation offer	1	0	1
Refused to cooperate	0	0	0
Not known ⁶	0	0	0

Figure 14

Source: MHCLG "Statutory homelessness: Detailed local authority-level tables"

The majority of prevention cases resulted in accommodation being secured, but unfortunately a small proportion ended up homeless and subsequently the majority become relief duty cases.

As with prevention cases, the majority of relief cases were resolved through accommodation being secured for 6 months or more. Around 10-20% of cases did exceed the 56 days due to enquiries not being fully completed in time (mainly because of non-engagement) or the applicant was going on to be offered accommodation, also contact was lost with around 10% of applicants too.

Reason for households' relief duty ending:

	2018/19	2019/20	2021/21
Total	60	122	103
Secured accommodation for 6+ months	43	71	53
56 days elapsed	6	28	25
Contact lost	7	14	10
Withdrew application / applicant deceased	1	4	13
Refused final accommodation	2	2	2
Intentionally homeless from accommodation provided	0	1	0

Local connection referral accepted by other LA	1	1	0
No longer eligible	0	1	0
Notice served due to refusal to cooperate	0	0	0
Not known ⁶	0	0	0

Figure 15

Source: MHCLG "Statutory homelessness: Detailed local authority-level tables"

5.2 Type of accommodation secured for households at end of prevention and relief duty:

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Total	49	43	46
Social rented sector, of which:	12	23	34
<i>Council tenancy</i>	11	10	11
<i>Registered Provider tenancy</i>	0	5	12
<i>Supported housing or hostel</i>	1	8	11
Private rented sector	30	16	7
Staying with family	7	2	2
Staying with friends	0	2	2
Owner-occupier	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0
Not known ⁶	0	0	1

Figure 16

Source: MHCLG "Statutory homelessness: Detailed local authority-level tables"

The majority of prevention and relief cases that were accommodated were within the social rented sector, with most into Council tenancies.

Type of accommodation secured for households at end of relief duty:

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Total			
Social rented sector, of which:	12	17	8
<i>Council tenancy</i>	8	14	5
<i>Registered Provider tenancy</i>	2	1	3
<i>Supported housing or hostel</i>	2	2	0
Private rented sector	3	6	1
Staying with family	3	0	0
Staying with friends	0	0	1
Owner-occupier	0	0	0

Other	0	0	0
Not known ⁶	25	48	43

Figure 17

Source: MHCLG "Statutory homelessness: Detailed local authority-level tables"

Under the relief duty there are a number of cases where final accommodation is unfortunately not known this is due to losing contact, applications being withdrawn etc. cases which are not priority cases and the households tend to find accommodation themselves.

The Council have tried to ensure that families are only placed in bed and breakfast accommodation when absolutely necessary and even then, for no longer than 6 weeks. During the period from April 2021 to March 2022 bed and breakfast accommodation was used in 39 cases with an average stay of 32 days, the majority of which were single person households.

5.3 Resources for tackling homelessness and rough sleeping

In recent years the Government has made much more funding available to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping, below are the funding pots received in 2021/22:

2021/22 HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION GRANT ALLOCATION: £254,496

Allocated to:

Tenancy Sustainment Officer post until 12/8/21

Housing Options Officer post

Housing Options Assistant post

Housing Options Assistant Additional Hours

Spring Housing/Lichfield DC Project

ROUGH SLEEPING INITIATIVE: 2021 TO 2022 FUNDING ALLOCATIONS: £60,000

Allocated to: temporary interim accommodation for rough sleepers.

NEXT STEPS ACCOMMODATION PROGRAMME: SHORT TERM FUNDING: £42,000.00

Allocated to: Everyone In/Protect Plus – Emergency Accommodation

NEXT STEPS ACCOMMODATION PROGRAMME: LONG TERM ACCOMMODATION AND SUPPORT: £115,000

Allocated to: Purchase of 2no. one bed flats for use as part of Housing First/Rough Sleeping and Homelessness Pathway Project (Spring Housing).

DA DUTY 2021/22 ALLOCATION: £31,739

Allocated to: domestic abuse link worker 2 days per week = £14,220.00 (partnership Stafford BC, South Staffs DC & Stafford Womens Aid)

PROTECT PLUS GRANT DETERMINATION (2021-22): £21,449

Allocated to: TA and support via Spring, grant paid in arrears for 2020-21.

COLD WEATHER FUND GRANT DETERMINATION (2021-22): £3,740.00

Allocated to: TA and support via Spring, grant paid in arrears for 2020-21.

HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION GRANT - WINTER 2021 EXCEPTIONAL TOP UP ALLOCATION FOR 2021-22: £53,362

Allocated to: supporting vulnerable renters (private and social) with rent arrears to reduce the risk of them being evicted and becoming homeless.

PROTECT AND VACCINATE GRANT DETERMINATION (2021-22): £46,289

Allocated to: placing households in emergency accommodation and activities to encourage vaccination uptake.

Historically the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (the former ODPM, and in recent years DCLG)/MHCLG) have allocated local authorities a certain amount of grant funding to enable Council's to tackle homelessness and its associated problems in their area. From 2014/15 the homelessness grant funding was rolled into the Business Rate Retention Scheme (BRRS) and so the amount was no longer ring-fenced for homelessness prevention.

The Council determined a budget of £38,640 for 2021/22; this was distributed between the following initiatives:

Safe As Houses

The Safe As Houses Scheme is based on the London Borough of Harrow's 'Sanctuary Project'. This scheme was launched in 2002 with the aim of providing security measures to victims of domestic violence and hate crime to enable them to remain safely in their home. Their scheme has proved to be very successful and is a recognised area of good practice that was recommended to local authorities by the former ODPM, now DLUHC.

Every 'Safe As Houses' project is different to meet the needs and circumstances of the individuals involved and appropriate security recommendations are made by the Police.

During 2021/22: 21 households received adaptations to their properties in the private sector (owner occupier or private rented) at a cost of £21k. There were also a further 40 council tenanted properties that received target hardening security adaptations at a cost of £19k funded additionally under the Safe As Houses scheme.

Staffordshire Womens Aid

Contribution to Staffordshire Womens Aid towards the Refuge accommodation in Stafford that we access and the floating support they provide.

Citizens Advice Bureau – Fast-track Money Advice

Contribution made to allow the continued use of fast track money advice project which allows people to receive specialist debt and financial advice within seven days of referral.

5.4 Other Initiatives supported by the Council

Private Property Register

The Housing Options Team operates a Private Property Register which applicants can apply to register their interest (and need) for private rented accommodation in the District. Private Landlords with property in the District also sign up to the scheme and inform the Housing Option Team when they have a vacant property (or room if House in Multiple Occupation) and then households that have registered their interest for property can be referred by the Housing Options Team to the Landlord to consider offering a tenancy to.

Private Landlord's Forum

Cannock Chase Council holds a regular Landlord's Forum that attracts a good cross section of Landlords, with a varying portfolio of property. The Forum aims to encourage landlords to adopt good working practices, which in turn improves the quality of accommodation available and encourages the owners of empty properties to consider letting them out for residential purposes. The Forum is also an excellent vehicle for the dissemination of information concerning changes to legislation, for example alterations to Housing Benefits.

Importantly, the Forum enables the Council to establish a line of communication and consultation with the private sector, which it recognises, can make a significant contribution to meeting housing need in the District. These have recently been held online but have still attracted a good attendance.

Housing Options Checker

The Council's Housing Service has recently introduced a new website www.cannockchasehousing.co.uk which promotes self service to current tenants, prospective tenants and other people in housing need. The website allows people to check their housing options online and quickly get basic information about what options are available to them and what actions they are recommended to take. This has proved popular and well used by clients.

5.5 Other activities contributing to reducing homelessness.

Housing Options Team

As previously mentioned, the Housing Options team provide valuable advice to people at risk of homelessness. A Housing Options Officer will conduct an interview with the person/household member and advise them of their options, more often than not a solution can be found.

Debt and Financial Advice

Early intervention to prevent the loss of your home is crucial. Cannock Chase Council supported a number of initiatives during the last 5 years that offered advice and assistance on all matters relating to repossession of your home. Both the Labour and Coalition governments responded to the 2008 economic downturn by introducing initiatives to strengthen the safety net from repossessions: Support for Mortgage Interest (SMI), which helps some low income households with their mortgage costs, was made more generous; the Preventing Repossession Fund enabled local authorities to help households struggling with arrears; and the Mortgage Rescue Scheme gave people a route out of ownership when it had become untenable, as well as improving access to much-needed advice.

The Council also offer tenants who are struggling to pay their rent advice on how to pay their rent and manage their arrears. We can also offer advice on Local Housing Allowance and Council Tax benefits to see if tenants are claiming the correct benefits to help cover their rent and Council Tax.

The Citizens Advice Bureau offer comprehensive advice on legal, financial, debt and welfare issues. The Chase Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) has seen an increase in numbers approaching them for advice and assistance from the last few years.

5.6 Rough Sleepers

Local authorities are required by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to submit an annual figure indicating the numbers of people sleeping rough in their area. This can be done by means of an estimate or a formal count. Due to the geographic size and population of the District and reports of rough sleeping throughout the year, the Council has undertaken an estimate exercise for a number of years. Whereby the Council asked a number of organisations (including housing associations, drugs treatment services, Probation Service, Children's Services, Housing Services, Youth Offending Service, voluntary sector etc.) to provide an estimate of rough sleepers on an agreed given night. The Council collates the information received and follows up any reports of rough sleeping to ascertain they are correct, before reporting to DCLG.

The table below shows the number of rough sleepers estimated for the past 5 years.

Year	No. of Rough Sleepers	Agreed Date
2021	4	20/10/21
2020	8	04/11/20
2019	1	14/11/19
2018	2	14/11/18
2017	5	15/11/17

Figure 18: Rough Sleepers Estimates
Source: CCDC, Rough Sleeper Returns

As Figure 18 shows there is only a small number of rough sleepers identified on the given night for the past 5 years, whilst there is an increase in numbers it is from a very small baseline.

Since December 2018 we have been able to utilise rough sleeper outreach provision. P3 were contracted to provide temporary outreach support and did some very good work on the ground with rough sleepers in the area.

A joint partnership between Cannock Chase DC, Lichfield DC and Spring Housing commenced in April 2019 providing a rapid rehousing pathway. The Pathway outreach service is a fundamental element of reducing rough sleeping in the Cannock Chase District. Historically we have low numbers of RS, prior to pandemic annual rough sleeper count indicated 1 RS, however under the Government’s ‘Everyone In’ campaign during the pandemic, we accommodated 19 RS resulting in rough sleeper count for 2020 indicating 8 RS. Due to interventions of the service the figure for 2021 reduced to 4.

Regular engagement and needs assessments with rough sleepers to source and prepare them for move-on into accommodation either through the pathway’s Housing First accommodation or into other supported accommodation in or outside the district. Specialist intensive support for those with substance/alcohol misuse and mental health is also provided by Spring. Of the 10 individuals currently occupying the 8 units of longer term accommodation, 9 have a dual diagnosis.

The service is identifying and supporting all rough sleepers who are made known to the local authority from all sources, sourcing temporary accommodation, supporting access into and sustaining the temporary/emergency accommodation until move-on to supported or Housing First accommodation.

The complex needs support provided by the Rough Sleeper & Housing Pathway Project has enabled all but one of the Housing First residents to maintain their initial accommodation allocation with the longest tenancy now over 18-months. The Housing First properties have provided accommodation to entrenched rough sleepers known to

the local authority prior to Everyone-In. As at the end of April 2022 we have 8 properties accommodating 10 Rough Sleepers (2 couples).

Two organisations offer some services to homeless persons and rough sleepers in the District. Whilst some of the services offered work in partnership with the Rough Sleeper Pathway project and our other day to day activities, a more co-ordinated and planned approach is required, particularly to verify rough sleeper data.

6. ACCOMMODATION AND SUPPORT PROVISION

6.1 Accommodation Provision

A mapping exercise has taken place of all types of accommodation in the District that is available for homeless people to utilise. This includes hostels, Registered Providers (Housing Association) stock and Council dwellings. This also includes specialist and/or supported accommodation.

The table below details the accommodation provision in Cannock Chase that is known to be available to households who are homeless or those at risk of homelessness.

- Cannock Chase District Council Festival Court, Cannock: Cannock Chase Council has 1 no. 3 bed flat that is kept specifically for emergency homeless accommodation.
- Cannock Chase District Council and Spring Housing Association Housing First Pathway Project, 8 self contained 1 bed flats (7 of which owned by CCDC) providing accommodation to rough sleepers, supported and managed by Spring Housing, managed by Spring.
- Rugeley Foyer, YMCA, Aelfgar House, Church Street, Rugeley. Foyer project for young homeless people 16-25 years, male and female. Offers 26 supported units.
- YMCA – Shared accommodation project: One flat share to help meet the needs of single persons under age of 35 (due to limited LHA rates for singles under 35) YMCA manage property and offer the support.
- Heantun Housing Supported Accommodation, Cannock: Daily support is provided to homeless, male ex-offenders (not sex offenders) aged 17 plus. An individual support plan is devised and includes life skills, budgeting skills, social skills and training advice. Tenants can stay for up to 12 months but are able to stay longer if support needs remain unfulfilled. Referrals to the project are made through probation. The 4 unit scheme is owned by Heantun Housing Association.
- Avalon House, Cannock, Sanctuary HA: The project now provides 6 units of accommodation and support for people with learning disabilities (previously mental health). It comprises of six self-contained flats, with a communal area which contains a kitchen, laundry room and office. Avalon House is staffed from 9am-9pm, Monday to Friday and there is a 24 hour call system for any housing related issues. Residents have six month assured shorthold tenancies, which are renewable. Staff at the project assists the residents in maintaining their tenancies and maximising their benefit entitlements.
- Beau Court, Cannock. Derventio Housing Trust. 6 unit (12 bed spaces) Accommodation scheme and support for single homeless people managed by Derventio Housing Trust. Adullam Homes currently lease the scheme to Derventio, and are looking at extending the lease after end of March 2017.
- Pye Green Christian Centre: 11 units of Accommodation and support for people vulnerable to homelessness or are currently homeless.

Support Provision

There are a number of support services available in the Cannock Chase area that can provide advice, assistance and specialist help for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Since the last Homelessness Review in 2009 the number of support services that are still in existence has reduced significantly. The economic recession from around 2008 forced the cessation of a number of support services in the area during the strategy period and the recent removal of Supporting People funding from the County has also meant a number of services were unable to continue operating in the District.

Support services are a vital component in the network of measures that are undertaken to try and prevent people becoming homeless. Specialist advice and support can enable people to be fully aware of the services available to them and hopefully enable people to access adequate housing or maintain the tenancies they already have. It is vital that homeless people fully understand their rights so they can make informed choices. Any advisory or support service should also be aware of its own limitations and be informed enough themselves to refer people to other agencies if necessary. The Council will continue to ensure that its own advisory service provides high quality, free and accurate information on a number of issues including homelessness.

The following table identifies the advice and support services which are known to be available in Cannock Chase District, from local knowledge and Support Staffordshire's directory. These services have been divided into sub-groups as appropriate.

Generic Housing Related

- Cannock Chase Advice Centre - Free Confidential Advice given on: Welfare benefits; All disability benefits; Housing benefit; Council Tax; Consumer matters; Personal family advice; Open for visitors and telephone enquiries – Mon, Tues and Fri 10am -2pm; Home visits can be arranged.
- Citizens Advice Bureau (Staffordshire South West): A free, independent service that offers confidential, impartial advice on a number of issues including housing, homelessness and debt advice. Will deal with everything from simple enquiries to representing clients at law courts and tribunals.
- Cannock and District Foodbank: The Foodbank provide three days' nutritionally balanced emergency food and support to local people who are referred in crisis. Part of a nationwide network of foodbanks, supported by The Trussell Trust, working to combat poverty and hunger across the UK. The foodbank is a project founded by local churches and community groups, working together towards stopping hunger in the local area.
- Pye Green Christian Centre: General homelessness advice, support and accommodation.

- Council for Voluntary Service (CVS): The CVS represent local voluntary and community groups and develop networking opportunities with voluntary and statutory agencies. They also provide advice on various subjects.
- Street Link: Nationwide service that enables the public to alert local authorities in England and Wales about rough sleepers in their area. Funded by the Government as part of its commitment to end rough sleeping. Street Link aim to offer the public a means to act when they see someone sleeping rough, and provide the first step someone can take to ensure people sleeping rough are connected to the local services and support available to them.
- Chase Lighthouse: A group of volunteers that meet weekly in Cannock town centre with the Community Group, Chase Lighthouse provide food, drinks and essential living items for the local homeless and vulnerable adults in our community. They signpost to local services where and when necessary. They also support vulnerable adults and/or homeless individuals into accommodation and have contacts in the area that can help supply basic furniture to help set them up too.
- AFGHANISTAN AND CENTRAL ASIAN ASSOCIATION: Aim to promote and facilitate the integration of newly arrived refugees, asylum seekers and BAME residents through an array of services. These include a dedicated advice clinic to help with matters of housing, immigration, employment, welfare and referrals to legal representation. Staffordshire areas.
- BEAT THE COLD: Fuel poverty, and affordable warmth charity.
- REVIVAL: Revival Brings Homes to life. We provide holistic support people to help people live independently at home and provide repairs and home improvements services. Staffordshire areas
- TRANS-STAFFORDSHIRE: Support group for anyone outside the gender binary. Staffordshire areas

Armed Forces

- HELP A SQUADDIE: Supporting military and ex-military with various challenges. Offer therapy, advice and training, and housing support. Staffordshire areas
- SSAFA: We exist to relieve need, suffering and distress amongst the Armed Forces, Veterans and their families in order to support their independence and dignity. Staffordshire areas

Drug and Alcohol

- Humankind: Staffordshire Treatment and Recovery Service – STARS. Humankind offers services covering drugs and alcohol, clinical services, housing related support, housing, employment, training and education, health and well-being, children, young people and families, women, criminal justice and community and offender rehabilitation.

- BAC O'Connor Centres. Burton (Cannock): The BAC O'Connor Centre provides rehabilitation and support to people with a drug and / or alcohol misuse problem. (The majority of clients are funded through health, social services and partnership programmes with probation, health & social services.) The main residential centre is in Burton but in Cannock there is a residential unit for people who have already completed rehabilitation and are alcohol and drug-free and would like to return to live in their home area. There is also a tea room (Langan's) that employs people who have completed their rehabilitation.

Domestic Violence – Women, Children and Men

- New Era: Offering help to all those affected by domestic abuse in Staffordshire or Stoke-on-Trent, New Era provides free and confidential support for victims, perpetrators and their families.

Mental Health / Learning Difficulties etc.

- CHANGES HEALTH AND WELLBEING: Provision of a range of mental health services based on peer-support groups, psycho-educational programmes and recovery focused activities. Catering for a wide range of mental health needs, i.e. from prevention, improving wellbeing to assisting recovery and social inclusion. Staffordshire areas
- BRIGHTER FUTURES: Mental Health Recovery and Wellbeing support, supported housing and accommodation, homelessness and outreach services, employment, education and training. Staffordshire areas
- NORTH STAFFS MIND: Counselling service covering Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent. Staffordshire areas
- CREATIVE SUPPORT LTD: National not-for-profit provider of support services for individuals with a broad range of needs including a learning disability, autism, mental health needs, physical disability and older people. Staffordshire areas
- Autism West Midlands: Floating support service for people / families with a range of autism issues.
- Bid services: Support service for deaf, deaf blind, deafened and hard of hearing individuals, providing housing related support.

Family and children

- Cannock Children Centre: Outreach family support team for vulnerable young families and hard to reach families. Home visiting and individual support for families with a variety of needs. Family Support Workers and Social Workers link with other professionals to provide information and support for parents of young children both practically and emotionally.
- South Staffordshire Family Mediation Service: Mediation is for any couple, whether married or not, who may or may not have children and have separated or have decided to separate. The mediator's role is to ease communication about

arrangements for children and/or property and finance. Mediation is free to many on state benefits or low income.

- **Relate:** Offers a confidential counselling service to people who are experiencing relationship difficulties.
- **Staffordshire Victim Support :** Linked with New Era. Victim Support is a national charity offering free, confidential support to people affected by anti-social behaviour in Cannock Chase District. The service provides personal support from the Anti-social Behaviour Victim and Witness Champion and specially trained volunteers. They will also provide information from other organisations and specialists and support with mediation.
- **PSS MIDLANDS SHARED LIVES:** PSS Shared Lives is a bit like fostering, but with the big difference that its for people over 16 who want to live as independently as possible. Its a completely flexible support service that can work for people from all walks of life, with all levels of need. Staffordshire areas

7. SUMMARY

Homelessness is a complex issue with no easy solution. Homeless people have extremely diverse needs and the available services need to be able to meet these needs. Prevention work plays a crucial part in tackling homelessness and should be the primary focus of present and future initiatives.

Major Issues

In compiling the review we have identified the following issues:

- **Shortage of affordable housing** – well documented issue, annual need calculated as 110 additional units. Whilst this has been achieved in two out of the past five years, Right to Buy sales have reduced the number of available homes and with the need growing each year, affordable housing remains in short supply.
- **Level of domestic violence and violence generally causing homelessness** – level of homelessness applications and acceptances during the past few years has remained high due to domestic violence. Again, the economic climate and legacy of the pandemic could create a more pressured home environment for some households with the level of domestic violence and violence increasing as a result;
- **Accommodation and support provision** – the pandemic has meant the reduced delivery and in some cases closure, of services and put pressure on the few services that are able to continue providing housing and homelessness related accommodation and support.
- **Access to the Private Rented Sector** – Landlords are leaving sector due to tax implications, limits to welfare benefits, landlords themselves experiencing financial changes and needing to sell, resulting in fewer options in particular single people. The demand for accommodation is high and there is no incentive for landlords to rehouse on LHA rates, work to sustain tenancies or offer longer terms.
- **Sofa surfing** – sofa surfing is least visible form of homelessness, the majority of those sofa surfing already have insecure housing situations and are known to also rough sleep from time to time. Affordability is also an issue with LHA rates in the PRS and they often have a lack of support for their individual needs. There is a distinct lack of supported housing locally and the individual will often refuse to move out of the district and away from any support networks they have with friends and family.
- **Ex-Offender housing and related support** - There is a distinct lack of accommodation for those individuals who are prolific offenders. It is difficult to find placements into emergency accommodation due to their criminal background and suitability.

Gaps in provision

We have identified the following gaps in provision:

- **Lack of direct access accommodation** - we are reliant on using emergency accommodation locally which consist of 1 hotel which has self-contained rooms including cooking facilities, other hotel is out of district with lack of cooking facilities. Need to create a pathway from the emergency/temporary accommodation to enable provision of enhanced support;
- **Lack of accommodation for the winter months** – to facilitate further opportunity to engage and support the individual;
- **Lack of floating support** - particularly for those with low/medium level needs i.e. those requiring support in maintaining PRS tenancy, support for those in lodgings, sofa surfing or living with family where they are threatened with exclusion;
- **Lack of access to PRS** – landlords currently experiencing much demand for their properties, so not liaising as much with the Council in taking our clients.
- **Lack of move-on accommodation** – limited stock, which is much in demand, to move those receiving support into settled accommodation.
- **Lack of temporary accommodation in the District** – very little accommodation in the District that we can utilise – currently using only 2 hotels, one in the District and one outside the District – has resulting in clients being offered supported accommodation in Birmingham.

Potential Future Issues

With the current political climate as it is (Covid recovery, Ukraine/Russia, cost of living, Brexit etc.) there hasn't been many recent policy announcements around homelessness. The Government has pledged to end rough sleeping by 2024, so if not completely eradicated there may be some policy changes after 2024 for rough sleeping and wider homelessness policy with a new parliament or Government.

In the Queen's Speech in early May 2022 the Government re-committed (it was initially included in the 2019 Conservatives manifesto) to introducing a Renters Reform Bill during the 2022/23 parliament. At the time of writing '*A fairer private rented sector*' white paper had just been released which provided a little more detail around the main aims to:

- abolish 'no fault' section 21 evictions and strengthen landlords' rights of possession;
- delivering on the levelling up mission to halve the number of non-decent rented homes by 2030; and
- create a rental market that is fairer and more effective for tenants and landlords.

Further promises were included in the white paper to:

- accelerate quality improvements in the areas that need it most, by running pilot schemes with a selection of local councils to explore different ways of enforcing standards and work with landlords to speed up adoption of the Decent Homes Standard.
- only allow increases to rent once per year, end the use of rent review clauses, and improve tenants' ability to challenge excessive rent increases.

- strengthen tenants' ability to hold their landlord to account and introduce a new single Ombudsman that all private landlords must join.
- target the areas where there are unacceptable delays in court proceedings.
- introduce a new Property Portal to make sure that tenants, landlords and local councils have the information they need.
- strengthen local councils' enforcement powers and ability to crack down on criminal landlords by seeking to increase investigative powers and strengthening the fine regime for serious offences.
- legislate to make it illegal for landlords or agents to have blanket bans on renting to families with children or those in receipt of benefits and explore if similar action is needed for other vulnerable groups, such as prison leavers.
- give tenants the right to request a pet in their property, which the landlord must consider and cannot unreasonably refuse.

All of these may reduce the number evictions and subsequent homelessness cases in the District, however changing landlord's possession rights may negate any net reduction in evictions from the former. Measures would hopefully improve conditions in the rented sector and create a more stable market. However further detail is needed to be able to assess the likely impact.

The Council will work with the Home Office on any Refugee and Asylum Seeker Dispersal programmes as appropriate, but it is currently unknown the upcoming impact, in particular with the ongoing war in Ukraine, the continued arrivals from Syria and Afghanistan and the Government's implementation or otherwise of their Rwanda asylum plans.

Next Steps

Cannock Chase Council and its partners already do a great deal to prevent homelessness including the proactive work of the Housing Options team and third sector partners such as the Citizens Advice Bureau and Spring Housing.

The next step will be to consult partners on this review document and then the production of a new Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for the 2023-2033 period. This review has endeavoured to demonstrate the major issues and gaps in provision regarding homelessness in the District and the Strategy will build further upon these and detail plans to deal with homelessness in Cannock Chase for the next five to ten years.