

Health and Wellbeing Board

13 June 2023

Walsall Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-2028 - for information

1. Purpose

- 1.1 Walsall Council's Cabinet approved the 5-year Homelessness Strategy in March 2023 (**Appendix A**). This Strategy helps some of our most vulnerable households and contains actions that require a multi-agency approach. Many of the partner agencies on the Health and Wellbeing Board were consulted as part of the strategy development, and this report seeks to raise further awareness of the Strategy, and assistance from Board members in its delivery.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Health and Wellbeing Board notes Walsall's Homelessness Strategy 2023 - 2028 and consider how it can assist in the delivery of the associated Action Plan.

3. Report detail

- 3.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 requires that all local authorities review and publish a revised Homelessness Strategy every five years and Cabinet approved a refreshed strategy on 22 March for the period 2023 to 2028. It is a statutory requirement for every local authority to have such a strategy that sets out the authority's plans for the prevention of homelessness and for ensuring that sufficient accommodation and support will be available for people who become homeless or who are at risk of becoming homeless. The refreshed strategy is enclosed at Appendix A.
- 3.2 Endorsed by the multi-agency Walsall Homelessness Steering Group, the Strategy enables the Council and its partners to deliver a coordinated approach to tackling homelessness in the borough and sets out the strategic objectives and actions specific to Walsall to help prevent homelessness and support those who are homeless. Underpinned by the action plan the five strategic drivers of the Strategy are;
1. Preventing homelessness
 2. Meeting the needs of young people
 3. Securing accommodation for people who are homeless
 4. Supporting people who are, or have been, homeless
 5. Ending rough sleeping
- 3.3 It is fully recognised that the delivery of the strategy requires multi-agency cross working and in response to this the strategy has been formulated in conjunction with an extensive programme of consultation involving both

service providers and service users. For the former the consultation has captured the views and input including from Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Public Health and the Adult Safeguarding Board.

- 3.4 The consultation has also involved extensive service user consultation through a series of focus groups, interviews and the workshops held at the 2022 Walsall Homelessness Conference. The focus groups targeted young people (including care leavers), women impacted by domestic abuse, a more generic group of people who had experienced homelessness and one group centred on newcomers. Interviews were also undertaken with people who had previously experienced rough sleeping and had benefitted from the Housing First programme.

4. Implications for Joint Working arrangements:

- 4.1 *Legal Implications:* The Homelessness Act (2002) requires local authorities to produce a Homelessness Strategy and action plan, which then must be reviewed, revised and republished every five years. In full legislative compliance, the revised strategy has been informed by a comprehensive Homelessness Review¹ and has incorporated the requirements as set out by the current Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities

- 4.2 *Financial Implications:* There are no specific financial implications directly associated with the Strategy. The priorities contained within the Strategy will be funded through existing budgets, grant income and future grant bids. It will also be supplemented by partners' resources committed to their own activities that contribute to the achievement of the Strategy objectives. The Strategy is likely to maximise the amount of housing related external funding the Council may achieve.

- 4.3 *Other resource implications:* Any actions in the Strategy that may have procurement implications would be the subject of separate reports to Cabinet where necessary. In addition, any actions in the Strategy that may have property implications would be the subject of separate reports to Cabinet where necessary and there are no direct staffing implications contained within the Action Plan.

5. Health and Wellbeing Priorities:

- 5.1 The broad range of health, well-being and wider socio-economic inequalities impacted on people effected by homelessness are well documented. The homelessness strategy will impact primarily on two of the Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) over-arching priorities namely; Mental Health and Wellbeing (and the HWB acknowledgement of its impact on mental health), and secondly Children & Young People. In addition, the prevention of homelessness will contribute to enabling the HWB fulfil its Marmot life course approach applied to the said priorities by providing a robust platform to galvanise resources to provide the security of a stable home and healthier environment from which to build a stable, inclusive and active life.
- 5.2 The central purpose of this report is to identify as to how the Board, in the delivery of its own priorities can assist in the delivery of the actions set out in

¹ 2022 Walsall Homelessness Needs Review, [Publications - Walsall Insight \(walsallintelligence.org.uk\)](https://www.walsallintelligence.org.uk)

the homelessness strategy. Whilst not limited to these specific actions, those specifically relating to health and young people include:

- 1) To continue to review and promote the Duty to Refer arrangements, including referrals from health teams.
- 2) To explore and improve joint working arrangements with health partners, e.g. Public Health, Walsall NHS Health Care Trust, Walsall Together and Primary Care Networks
- 3) To complete a Homelessness and Health Needs Assessment with Public Health Services
- 4) To improve and enhance access for rough sleepers to addiction treatment services
- 5) Undertake research to identify the specific causes of homelessness attributed to young person's experiencing homelessness aged 16 and 17 and 18 to 25.
- 6) Explore opportunities to introduce housing options education in local schools and colleges.
- 7) Re-commission housing and support options for homeless young persons or young persons at risk of homelessness
- 8) Review young person's housing protocols – care leavers and 16 & 17 year olds

5.3 Since the strategy was formerly adopted work has commenced on delivering the actions outlined in the Action Plan, for example the development of a Temporary Accommodation and Procurement Strategy and the commissioning of a Temporary Accommodation Options Appraisal. Completion of this latter piece of work will enable the authority to make informed decisions around temporary accommodation (TA) provision including meeting the challenge of minimizing the number of families with children in bed and breakfast accommodation and ensuring self-contained TA is available to meet demand. From a health perspective, the strategy has already been presented to the Walsall Population Health & Inequalities Steering Group which has a strong 'health' presence, and a positive commitment was given to support the health actions set out in the strategy.

Appendices

Appendix A: Walsall Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023 – 2028

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