

PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION GRANT ALLOCATIONS AND UPDATE

REPORT OF: Service Director - Housing and Environmental Health

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Cllr Dave Winstanley, Executive Member for Housing and Environmental Health

COUNCIL PRIORITY: ACCESSIBLE SERVICES

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. Demand for the Council's housing services remains high with the need to secure additional services for those threatened with, or experiencing homelessness.
- 1.2. The Council has received ring-fenced grant funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to help it meet its legal housing duties and this report details proposals for the allocation of this funding for specialist homelessness services for local people.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. That the Cabinet:
 - A) Approves the funding proposals for the in-year award of Homelessness Prevention Grant for 2024/25 as set out in Table 3 in paragraph 8.3
 - B) Approves the funding proposals for the allocation of part of the 2025/26 award of homelessness grants as outlined in Table 4 in paragraph 8.4

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1. There is a need to secure additional services for homeless households in the district. Adopting the recommendations at 2.1A and 2.1B secures the provision of high-quality local services to help those in need, which is also consistent with the priorities set out in the Council's Housing Strategy (2024 – 2029).

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1. Cabinet could decide against approving the proposed allocations of government funding, however the services highlighted in this report would not be delivered.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1 The Executive Member for Housing and Environmental Health, Cllr Dave Winstanley has been consulted and is supportive of the proposals contained in this report.

6. FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1 This report contains a recommendation on a key Executive decision that was first notified to the public in the Forward Plan on 18 October 2024.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1. As a local housing authority, the Council has legal duties to assist households who are homeless or who are threatened with homelessness, and to provide accommodation for homeless households in 'priority need' – primarily families and vulnerable individuals. The Council no longer owns or manages any housing stock and it therefore works with housing providers (some with allied support services) to meet local needs.
- 7.2. Last year (2023/24), the Council owed a legal duty to 471 households to help prevent or relieve their homelessness and for the first three quarters of 2024/25, 331 households sought this assistance. The key reasons behind homelessness are consistently: ending of private rented sector tenancies (24% of cases in 2023/24); friends and family being unable or unwilling to accommodate (23%); ending of social rented tenancies (19%); and domestic abuse (12%). Ongoing cost of living challenges and scarcity of affordable housing in the district are underlying pressures as well. There is also increasing complexity of cases - in 23/24, 63% of households owed a prevention or relief duty had a support need and 41% had two or more support needs, including factors such as poor mental health, substance misuse and offending histories.
- 7.3 In addition to these prevention and relief duties, the Council also owed 130 'priority need' homeless households a main housing duty in 2023/24, meaning that we had a legal duty to provide suitable accommodation for these households – typically temporary accommodation until an offer of settled accommodation can be made. Table 1 below summarises these legal duties and Table 2 outlines temporary accommodation (TA) usage.

Table 1. Homelessness duties owed

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	Q1-Q3 2024/25
Households owed a prevention duty	275	229	196	175	204	135
Households owed a relief duty	219	385	281	241	267	196
Households owed a main housing duty	65	90	128	123	130	101
of which, single households	14	33	53	43	43	43

Source: MHCLG published [tables on homelessness](#) (2024/25 from NHC in-year analysis)

Table 2. Households in temporary accommodation (snapshot at year end)

	31/3/20	31/3/21	31/3/22	31/3/23	31/3/24	31/12/24
Households in TA	93	136	104	97	105	108
<i>Of which:</i>						
single households	33	72	46	32	26	39
hotel placements	19	58	15	13	19	23

Source: NHC analysis of homelessness case data

- 7.4 In addition, the Council consistently receives over 1,000 approaches for homelessness and housing advice each year, which are resolved without legal duties being owed and therefore do not feature in Table 1.
- 7.5 The Council receives allocations of Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG) from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), which is ring-fenced to support delivery of services to prevent and tackle homelessness. Traditionally, HPG is provided on an annual basis, however the most recent allocation from MHCLG was for two years, 2023/24 – 2024/25, to enable councils to better plan for services and improve stability of provision. In total, the Council received an allocation of £746k over the two-year period. The Council also received an additional allocation of HPG funding of £71k over 2023/24 – 2024/25 to help it meet its duties under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.
- 7.6 The allocation of most of the above HPG funding was agreed at Cabinet on [27 June 2023](#). The majority of funding was allocated to support the continued provision of specialist accommodation and support services for single homeless people. There is £3,865 remaining of this initial allocation of HPG.
- 7.7 Subsequent to that decision, MHCLG announced further top-up amounts of HPG funding for 2024/25 to help local authorities to address ongoing homelessness pressures, with the Council receiving an additional £197,376 of HPG funding for 2024/25. Of this amount, allocations have already been made under delegated authority to increase housing team staffing hours for the final seven months of 2024/25 (£5,735), to Local Partnerships (for a temporary accommodation report £8,775), North Herts CAB (so they can expand their existing housing service £33,958) and Beam (for the provision of a specialist service to help local homeless people into private rented sector accommodation and hopefully employment too – up to £80,000) and there is currently £68,908 remaining of the in-year top-up. This means there is a total of £72,773 HPG remaining unallocated for the current financial year. The Council was also recently notified of another MHCLG award of £19,371 of Rough Sleeper Winter Pressures 2024/25 Funding to help to support people sleeping rough.
- 7.8 In addition, the Council received notification in December 2024 of funding for the next financial year 2025/26, from homelessness and rough sleeping grant funding programmes. This totals £986k, with its main constituents being £816k of HPG and £157k of Rough Sleeping Prevention and Recovery Grant. The Council has also received Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Grant of £36k for 2025/26 to help it meet its duties under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. This report contains proposals for some initial allocations of this funding, with further proposals concerning the remaining funding to be put forward for Cabinet's consideration at a later date.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 For 2025/26, a new ringfence has been introduced for the HPG, to maintain prevention activities during this period. At least 49% of HPG funding must be spent on prevention, relief and/or staffing activity and no more than 51% may be spent on temporary accommodation costs. The Rough Sleeping Prevention and Recovery Grant will also remain ring-fenced for 2025/26 to protect funding for rough sleeping services and LAs are being encouraged to prioritise delivery on prevention and targeting interventions depending on need, including focusing on support to long term and repeat rough sleepers.
- 8.2 MHCLG have announced that they will be launching a formal consultation early in 2025 on a new needs-based formula which will be used for allocations of HPG for

2026/27 and onwards. This is part of plans to develop a long-term approach to tackling homelessness and rough sleeping, which includes a new cross government homelessness and rough sleeping strategy due for publication in summer 2025. As the outcome of this exercise is yet to be known, the multi-year proposals for 2025/26 onwards in Table 4, below, seek to provide a reasonable amount of stability for these services through funding certainty which will hopefully assist providers with staff retention.

- 8.3 Table 3 outlines the proposals for the remaining HPG (£72,773) and the recently received Rough Sleeper Winter Pressures Funding for 2024/25 (£19,371), a total of £92,144. These proposals meet the MHCLG's conditions for use of the grants.

Table 3. Proposals for allocation of remaining grant funding for 2024/25

Discretionary Housing Payments – to cover a projected overspend for the current year	This is managed by the Benefits Team, who consider additional payments for those claiming housing benefit who are experiencing housing difficulties	Up to £20,000 (HPG)
Temporary Accommodation overspend for current year	This is primarily the net cost of hotels that are used as a last resort; the projected overspend is £81k for the current year	At least £52,773 (HPG) although could be higher if above item requires less funding
Temporary Accommodation overspend for current year	To help to support people sleeping rough	£19,371 (Rough Sleeper Winter Pressures Funding)
Total		£92,144*

*There may be a small underspend in that the whole amount of £92,144 may not required to cover these costs; in this case, the remaining amount will be used to offset some staffing costs for 2024/25, with the corresponding amount being added to a homeless reserve for use in the next financial year

- 8.4 Table 4, below, outlines proposals for part of the grant allocation for 2025/26 of £986k (further proposals will be made in due course). Even though the vast majority of housing demands are met directly by the Council's core housing service, each of these proposals complements this, providing high quality support/assistance in specialist areas. In addition, there are some benefits through increased engagement with service users who may be reluctant to approach the Council directly. All of these services are currently in place and these proposals seek to secure their continued provision for the next three years, April 2025 – March 2028 (again, these proposals meet the MHCLG's conditions for use of the grant).

Table 4. Proposals for homelessness grant allocations for 2025/26 onwards

Survivors Against Domestic Abuse (SADA)	This locally based service provides specialist support for survivors of domestic abuse	2025/26 £49,177 2026/27 £50,652 2027/28 £52,172
North Herts CAB	This increase in capacity of the CAB's housing advice service has been proposed due to the growing numbers of local people approaching them for help	2025/26 £27,837 2026/27 £28,672 2027/28 £29,532
Herts Young Homeless (HYH) – Education Project	HYH's education sessions are run in local schools with the aim of preventing youth homelessness by helping young people to make informed life choices and encourage them to	2025/26 £7,000 2026/27 £7,350 2027/28 £7,800

	access help and support, before crisis	
One YMCA's Outreach Service	This service provides specialist support for people sleeping rough. Its aim to help people off the street in to settled accommodation	2025/26 £45,150 2026/27 £47,408 2027/28 £49,778
Total		£402,528

8.5 The Council agreed its latest Housing Strategy (2024-2029) in March 2024 and the proposals outlined in this report are consistent with the priorities highlighted in the Strategy.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1. The Housing Act 1985 Section 1 (1) confirms that the District Council is the Local Housing Authority (LHA).

9.2 LHAs' homelessness duties are contained within the Housing Act 1996 Part VII, as amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 which placed significant new duties on English local housing authorities to prevent homelessness.

9.3 LHAs have a legal duty to provide interim (also known as emergency) accommodation to homeless applicants, if, at any point during their enquiries, there is a reason to believe that an applicant may be:

- homeless
- eligible for assistance, and
- in priority need

If an LHA fails to provide interim accommodation, or if the accommodation provided is unsuitable for the applicant, this can be challenged by way of judicial review.

9.4 The LHA also holds the 'Relief Duty' which applies when a council is satisfied that an applicant is homeless and eligible for assistance; it requires the Council to take reasonable steps to help the applicant secure that suitable accommodation becomes available for the applicant's occupation for at least six months. This therefore requires the Council to work with the applicant to help them find and retain accommodation to meet this legal duty.

9.5 The Cabinet's Terms of Reference provides at paragraph 5.7.15; "To oversee the provision of all the Council's services other than those functions reserved to the Council".

9.6 When agreeing the Adoption of a new Housing Strategy (2024-2029) in March 2024, the Cabinet also resolved the following:

For matters that are not reserved for Cabinet, delegated to the Director of Housing and Environmental Health in conjunction with the Executive Member for Housing and Environmental Health, the power to decide on the specific allocation of homelessness funding received from central government in order to meet homelessness priorities, for the duration of the Strategy.

9.7 In approving the funding proposals the Cabinet would therefore be acting in accordance with its statutory requirements and in accordance with the Council's constitution.

9.8 Should the Cabinet agree the proposals in this report, appointment of the providers will be made in accordance with the Council's Contract Procurement Rules.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The Council received a Homelessness Prevention Grant top up of £197,376 for 2024/25 from MHCLG which is ring fenced for homelessness prevention and relief work.
- 10.2 The Council has also received confirmation of additional ring-fenced MHCLG homelessness grants of £986,463 for 2025/26.
- 10.3 Should the Cabinet agree the multi-year proposals for 2025/26 onwards (contained in table 4 in paragraph 8.4), should MHCLG spend conditions require actual expenditure to occur in the financial year 2025/26 only, the remaining grant amount for 2025/26 will be used for the housing service staffing costs incurred in 2025/26 and the resultant underspend on the salary budgets will be used to increase the homelessness reserve so that the various schemes can be funded in future years.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Although the MHCLG grant allocation for 2025/26 is to be welcomed, there is uncertainty as to the funding position from April 2026 onwards due to the MHCLG review of the formula that determines individual grant allocations for local authorities. Multi-year proposals have therefore been made on some key services for local people to secure their availability for the next three years.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1. In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 12.2. An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and is attached as Appendix 1. The assessment notes the potential positive impacts this decision will have for some of the most vulnerable members of the community in North Hertfordshire.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1. The Social Value Act and “go local” requirements do not apply to this report, however, the proposals contribute to social value by providing community benefits that would otherwise not be realised.

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1. There are no known Environmental impacts or requirements that apply to the proposals in this report.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 No impact.

16. APPENDICES

- 16.1 Appendix 1 – Equality Impact Assessment

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

- 17.1 Jo Doggett, Service Director of housing and Environmental Health jo.doggett@north-herts.gov.uk; ext 4470
- 17.2 Martin Lawrence, Strategic Housing Manager martin.lawrence@north-herts.gov.uk; ext 4250
- 17.3 Douglas Traill-Stevenson, Property Lawyer, acting Legal Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer; douglas.traill-stevenson@north-herts.gov.uk; ext 4653
- 17.4 Reuben Ayavoo, Policy and Community Manager reuben.ayavoo@north-herts.gov.uk; ext 4212
- 17.5 Georgina Chapman, Policy and Strategy Team Leader, georgina.chapman@north-herts.gov.uk; ext 4121
- 17.6 Jodie Penfold, Group Accountant jodie.penfold@north-herts.gov.uk; ext 4332
- 17.7 Anne Banner, Benefits Manager anne.banner@north-herts.gov.uk; ext 4610

18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 18.1 DLUHC's Homelessness Prevention Grant allocations: [Homelessness Prevention Grant: 2023 to 2025 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)
- 18.2 MHCLG's HPG 2025/26: [Homelessness Prevention Grant allocations: 2025 to 2026 - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)
- 18.3 MHCLG's Rough Sleeping Prevention and Recovery Grant allocations: [Rough Sleeping Prevention and Recovery Grant allocations 2025 to 2026 - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)
- 18.4 MHCLG's Rough Sleepers Winter Pressures 2024/24 Funding Allocations: [Rough sleeping winter pressures 2024-25 funding allocations - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)

Appendix 1 – Equality Impact Assessment

1. Name of activity:	Homelessness Prevention Grant Allocations			
2. Main purpose of activity:	<p>To fund the continued provision of specialist homelessness services to help the Council meet its legal homelessness duties, including provision for the following groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support and accommodation services for victims of domestic abuse (provided by SADA) • general support with housing issues for local people (provided by CAB) • outreach support for rough sleepers (provided by OneYMCA) • education service for young people (provided by Herts Young Homeless) 			
3. List the information, data or evidence used in this assessment:	<p>MHCLG homelessness statistics 2023/24 Review of Homelessness in North Hertfordshire Shelter analysis homelessness and BAME community Centrepoint LGBTQplus safe spaces</p>			
4. Assessment				
Characteristics	Neutral (x)	Negative (x)	Positive (x)	<p>Describe the person you are assessing the impact on, including identifying: community member or employee, details of the characteristic if relevant, e.g. mobility problems/particular religion and why and how they might be negatively or positively affected.</p> <p>Negative: What are the risks? Positive: What are the benefits?</p>
<p>Community considerations (i.e. applying across communities or associated with rural living or Human Rights)</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	x	<p>Negative</p> <hr/> <p>Positive</p> <p>The Council's homelessness services provide support and accommodation for local people in need across the district. The proposals include funding for the continuation of the district's outreach service which pro-actively seeks to engage with rough sleepers, wherever they are identified across the district. The proposed continuation of the specialist domestic abuse service includes work in the community to improve engagement and awareness and works with partners including schools and police. Preventing and tackling homelessness has positive effects not just for the individual but also for the community as a whole, including reduced anti-social behaviour, reduced poverty and increased social cohesion as well as reduced burdens on public services such as health and social care.</p>
A person living with a disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	x	<p>Negative</p> <hr/> <p>Positive</p>

				<p>Almost two-thirds of households in the district owed a homelessness duty (because they are homeless or threatened with homelessness) have a support need, and 41% had two or more support needs in 2023/24. These include poor mental health (38% of households in 23/24), physical ill health (27%) and substance dependency (13%).</p> <p>The proposed funding for local homelessness services provides for continued support for such vulnerable households, including the provision of emergency accommodation (which includes hotel placements).</p>
A person of a particular race	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	x	<p>Negative</p> <p>Positive</p> <p>Minority ethnic groups are more likely to experience homelessness with black people in particular more than three times as likely to. Locally, 18% of applicants owed a homelessness duty in 2023/24 were of a minority ethnic group, despite comprising 12% of the North Herts population overall. The proposed additional funding for local homelessness services is therefore likely to benefit this group in particular (although absolutely numbers remain small).</p>
A person of a gay, lesbian or bisexual sexual orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	x	<p>Negative</p> <p>Positive</p> <p>National evidence points to LGBTQ+ people being more at risk of homelessness, however local data suggests a very small number of LGBTQ+ people applying as homeless in the district (18 in 2023/24, although a significant proportion – 20% - of applicants chose not to provide this information).</p>
A person of a particular sex, male or female, including issues around pregnancy and maternity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	x	<p>Negative</p> <p>Positive</p> <p>Domestic abuse is a major cause of homelessness nationally and in North Herts. In 2023/24, 20% of homeless households were fleeing domestic abuse. The vast majority of victims of domestic abuse are women, many of whom will have children and with some forced to flee their home for fear of violence. The specialist domestic abuse service funded by the Council are open to both women and men but service users will be predominantly women.</p>

				Proposed extensions to the service will therefore particularly benefit this cohort.
A person of a particular religion or belief	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Negative
				Positive
A person of a particular age	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	x	Negative
				Positive
				The proposed funding to extend the existing Herts Young Homeless education project will specifically benefit children of school age, to whom the intervention is targeted. The primary focus of this intervention is prevention.
Transgender	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	x	Negative
				Positive
				National evidence points to LGBTQ+ people being more at risk of homelessness, however local data suggests a very small number of people applying as homeless in the district are of a different gender to their sex at birth (2 in 2022/23 although non-response rate of over one-third).

5 Results

	Yes	No	
Were positive impacts identified?	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	Additional funding for specialist homelessness services in the district will stabilise provision locally, some for the next 3 years (including domestic abuse and outreach services). Service users include some of the most vulnerable people in the district who, without assistance, will continue to face ongoing barriers to positive life outcomes (including repeated homelessness, exclusion from society, poverty and ill health) and lack of opportunity to address support needs.
Are some people benefiting more than others? If so explain who and why.	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some of these interventions – domestic abuse and young persons’ services - are targeted at specific cohorts. Others, such as ethnic minority groups and LGBTQ+ people are more likely to experience homelessness and may therefore be more likely to benefit from the homelessness services which the accompanying report proposes to fund. Service providers are required to monitor and report on key measures of performance including outcomes by protected characteristics.

Were negative impacts identified (what actions were taken)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
6. Consultation, decisions and actions			
If High or very high range results were identified who was consulted and what recommendations were given?			
Describe the decision on this activity			
List all actions identified to address/mitigate negative impact or promote positively			
Action	Responsible person	Completion due date	
Regular and close working with service providers through formal and informal contacts will highlight any issues in a timely way.	Contract managers	ongoing	
When, how and by whom will these actions be monitored?			
Ongoing and regular dialogue with service providers; formal monitoring and reporting as per funding agreements. Separate MHCLG monitoring and reporting requirements also apply to grant funding received by NHC. Also regular internal monitoring of housing and homelessness activity.			
7. Signatures			
Assessor			
Name: Tiranah Straughan	Signature** T F Straughan		
Validated by			
Name: Martin Lawrence	Signature** M S Lawrence		
Forward to the Corporate Policy Team			
Signature** Reuben Ayavoo			
Assessment date: 28/01/25	Review date: 28/01/26		

**** Please type your name to allow forms to be sent electronically.**

A copy of this form should be forwarded to the corporate policy team and duplicate filed on the council's report system alongside any report proposing a decision on policy or service change.