

PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

ALLOCATION OF MHCLG HOMELESSNESS GRANT

REPORT OF: Service Director - Regulatory

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Cllr Mick Debenham, Executive Member for Regulatory

COUNCIL PRIORITY: ACCESSIBLE SERVICES

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. The Council has received a multi-year funding settlement from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), ring-fenced for the purpose of supporting the Council in meeting its homelessness duties.
- 1.2. This report details proposals for the allocation of some of this funding in line with grant conditions, national policy and local priorities.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. That Cabinet approves the funding proposals for the allocation of Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse Grant received from the MHCLG as outlined in Table 4 in paragraph 8.11.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1. There is a need to secure housing services for homeless households in the district, including key existing services on the single homeless pathway. Adopting the recommendation at 2.1 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 Regulatory, Cllr Mick Debenham 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 15 May 2026.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1. Historically, the Council has received homelessness grant on an annual basis and in a variety of forms from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) for the purpose of supporting it in carrying out its homelessness duties. Recent reform of the local government finance landscape has replaced this with a multi-year funding settlement which brings together multiple funding streams into a single, ringfenced, Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse Grant (HRSDAG).
- 7.2. Final allocations of the HRSDAG for North Herts Council were announced in February 2026:

Table 1. Final funding allocation for North Herts Council

	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Total
Homelessness, Rough Sleeping & Domestic Abuse Grant TOTAL	£950,409	£959,683	£965,267	£2,875,359
<i>of which, indicative allocations of:</i>				
Funding for homelessness and rough sleeping	£857,188	£894,912	£925,795	£2,677,895
Funding for Renters' Rights Act 2025 New Burdens	£55,440	£26,104	£0	£81,544
Funding for Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Grant	£37,781	£38,667	£39,472	£115,920

- 7.3. The purpose of the HRSDAG is to support local authorities to:
- discharge their homelessness duties under the Housing Act 1996, including support for single homeless households in non-priority need;
 - provide support for rough sleeping;
 - deliver against local homelessness strategies and in line with the government's [National Plan to End Homelessness](#) (published in December 2025);
 - focus on early intervention and prevention activities;
 - cover the additional costs for homelessness services stemming from the Renters' Rights Act 2025;
 - support survivors of domestic abuse in line with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.
- 7.4. The Grant may not be spent on costs directly related to temporary accommodation (with some exceptions, including for provision of supported accommodation). Funding for temporary accommodation has now been separated out from the HRSDAG, to end the tension between councils having to choose between investment in prevention and meeting temporary accommodation costs. Instead, funding for temporary accommodation has been rolled un-ringfenced into the Revenue Support Grant as part of the wider Local Government Settlement and councils will not have a separate named allocation for temporary accommodation.
- 7.5. Alongside the above reforms, the new Grant is more clearly grounded in a needs-based allocation model, informed by local homelessness and rough sleeping data submitted to MHCLG. The Council consistently receives over 1,000 approaches for homelessness and housing advice each year. In addition, table 2 details legal duties that the Council owes to households who formally approach as homeless or threatened with homelessness.

Table 2. Homeless duties owed

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Households owed a prevention duty	196	175	204	189	161
Households owed a relief duty	281	241	267	249	209
Households owed a main housing duty	128	123	130	138	119
of which, single households	53	43	43	67	56

Source: MHCLG published [tables on homelessness](#) (2025/26 from NHC analysis)

- 7.6 Last year (2025/26), the Council owed a legal duty to 370 households who approached us for assistance with preventing or relieving their homelessness. The key reasons behind homelessness are consistently: friends and family being unable or unwilling to accommodate (on average 25% of cases over the past three years); ending of private rented sector tenancies (23%); ending of social rented tenancies (15%); and domestic abuse (11%). 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 2024/25 (the last full year's published data), 64% of households that the Council owed a duty to had a support need and 39% had two or more support needs, including challenges such as poor mental health, substance misuse and offending histories. In October - December 2025/26 (the latest published data), 71% of households owed a duty had a support need.
- 7.7 The Council also owed 119 'priority need' homeless households a main housing duty in 2025/26, 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 3 summarises temporary accommodation (TA) demand.

Table 3. Households in temporary accommodation (snapshot at year end)

	31/03/22	31/03/23	31/03/24	31/03/25	31/03/26
Households in TA	101	97	105	99	88
<i>Of which:</i>					
households with children	56	65	75	65	63
single households	42	32	26	32	23
hotel placements*	15	14	21	15	12

Source: NHC analysis of homelessness case data

* includes other nightly paid accommodation

- 7.8 The Council received £1.09m of homelessness grant funding for 2025/26. This has been used to secure valuable ongoing work on the prevention side (including specialist advice and support services provided by Survivors Against Domestic Abuse, Citizens' Advice, the Black Squirrel Credit Union and Herts Young Homeless) as well as an outreach support service for rough sleepers. Grant funding was also used to support local accommodation options, including the Keystage Housing scheme for single people with complex needs in Hitchin which has been providing a high-quality accommodation and support service for local people since December 2021. The Council has also directed resources into growing its involvement in the private rented sector, enabling a greater number of private rental properties to be

secured for its clients. These decisions were taken at Cabinet on [11 February 2025](#), [19 November 2025](#) and [17 February 2026](#) as well as via a delegated decision of [7 May 2026](#).

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 The Council no longer owns or manages any housing stock, and it therefore works closely with housing providers to meet local needs. Keystage Housing and One YMCA provide specialist accommodation and support as part of the Council's single homeless pathway, providing high quality, self-contained accommodation for single people with complex needs.
- 8.2 The Keystage PAIRS (Provision for Assessment, Intervention and Resettlement Support) scheme, located in Hitchin, opened in 2021 and comprises 21 units of accommodation. The One YMCA scheme, at Anderson House, Hitchin opened at the start of 2025 and currently provides 22 units of accommodation (plus an additional 24 units for young people funded by MHCLG's Single Homeless Accommodation Programme). Both locations have 24-hour support and provide safe living environments in which individuals can develop skills and confidence to sustain longer-term housing solutions. The service providers work closely with Adult Social Care, health services and other agencies to help individuals access appropriate specialist services such as mental health support.
- 8.3 Since the pandemic, single households have become a significant core of demand for homelessness assistance, comprising almost half of all households owed a main housing duty (table 2). The single homeless pathway generally operates at full capacity with a waiting list for accommodation averaging around 30 people at any one time. The pathway enables us to move individuals on from temporary accommodation in a meaningful way, providing them with the support they need, and has reduced reliance on hotel placements to some degree (although these remain a last resort for some people, for example those with restrictions on where they can live, imposed by the criminal justice system).
- 8.4 The Council has provided both Keystage and One YMCA with MHCLG grant funding (normally) on an annual basis in order to ensure that appropriate support levels could be maintained on the single homeless pathway. The receipt of the multi-year funding award from the MHCLG now enables the Council to provide much needed stability for the next three years, and would sustain these services to March 2029, including the first year of the new unitary council, as the anticipated new local government arrangements take shape.
- 8.5 This report contains a proposal to provide a total of £697k worth of grant funding over the next three years to Keystage Housing. Since its opening, PAIRS has supported over 100 placements, with 65 to date having moved on to their own accommodation via the single homeless pathway (42), reconnected with family (12) or into other accommodation to suit support needs.
- 8.6 Keystage are finalising arrangements for their accommodation to be able to access higher levels of Housing Benefit. This is a key funding source that supports the ongoing viability of the services that they provide but still requires the top-up funding detailed in this report due to the support they provide to address the needs of their residents. Keystage have been managing with lower levels of Housing Benefit payments, which has been putting a huge strain on their finances. This was the need for the most recent amount of funding agreed in the delegated decision of 7 May 2026. That delegated funding lasts until the end of June 2026. The Keystage service will be unviable in the medium-term if they do not get the higher level of Housing Benefit funding. The service will become immediately unviable without the regular payment of this HRSDAG funding. To protect the interests of the Council the payment

of grant funding will be made on a monthly basis until it is confirmed that the Keystage provision can access the higher levels of Housing Benefit payments.

- 8.7 We are also currently in discussion with One YMCA to finalise their proposals for funding their support service over the same period - three years - and this is likely to be presented for Cabinet consideration in September 2026. In the meantime, One YMCA are looking to scale up their capacity at Anderson House in line with the conditions of their planning consent and 'doubling-up' the number of units for some of the flats, eventually increasing the occupancy from 46 to 71 people. This involves replacing internal doors with fire doors on some flats, creating a further 17 units, and then also using the two (ex-warden) houses as step down accommodation for another eight people. One YMCA's funding proposal is for £81,600 for the fire doors which are being procured by a framework agreement, and this does not include the significant cost of compartmentation of each of the thresholds, that need to be attached to the concrete.
- 8.8 Prevention work is central to the government's new approach to tackling homelessness, contained in its National Plan to End Homelessness. The Council has long invested in prevention activities including working with specialist providers where necessary. Herts Young Homeless (HYH) has provided an education service for secondary school age pupils in local schools for many years, running sessions which aim to help young people make informed life choices and encouraging them to access help and support before crisis point. In 2025/26, HYH educated almost 1,000 young people in North Herts, with 376 vulnerable students receiving more than one education session.
- 8.9 HYH are expanding this service to primary school pupils aged 10-11 years (with age-appropriate content) and this report proposes to allocate £8,000 of HRSDAG for this purpose in 2026/27. This includes funding to secure the continuation of HYH's Keeping Families Together service, which provides wrap-around support (mediation, counselling and wellbeing services) for young people referred from the education service, aiming to reduce the risk of family relationship breakdown. Last year, HYH supported over 100 young people and their families across Hertfordshire through their Keeping Families Together Service.
- 8.10 HYH also delivers against domestic abuse priorities, with domestic abuse being the second largest cause of youth homelessness. Their education and mediation services both aim to teach young people and their parents to manage anger and conflict in a healthy, non-violent way. The HYH service is well placed to signpost and refer any VAWG issues for appropriate intervention and safeguarding.
- 8.11 Table 4 below summarises the funding proposals for Keystage ,One YMCA and HYH:

Table 4. Proposals for homelessness grant allocations for 2026/27 onwards

	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Total
Single homeless scheme (Keystage Housing)	£186,063*	£251,591	£259,139	£696,793
Single homeless scheme (One YMCA)	£81,600			£81,600
HYH primary education service	£8,000	-	-	£8,000
Total	£275,663	£251,591	£259,139	£786,393

Unallocated HRSDAG	£674,746	£708,092	£706,128	£2,088,966 [^]
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* Interim funding of £58,200, from the 2026/27 HRSDAG allocation, was allocated to Keystage in a delegated decision taken on [7 May 2026](#) therefore the figure in the above table is the remaining amount of their funding proposal for 2026/27.

[^]Further proposals regarding the unallocated HRSDAG amounts above will likely be presented for Cabinet consideration in September 2026.

8.12 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

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 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.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The Council has been notified of total allocations of £2,875,359 in Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse Grant, covering the three-year period 2026/27 – 2028/29. Grant is ring-fenced to support delivery of services to prevent and tackle homelessness including amongst those sleeping rough and survivors of domestic abuse.

10.2 The proposals in this report put forward an initial tranche of proposals for how this grant should be allocated. Further proposals will be brought to Cabinet later in the year.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Good Risk Management supports and enhances the decision-making process, increasing the likelihood of the Council meeting its objectives and enabling it to respond quickly and effectively to change. When taking decisions, risks and opportunities must be considered.
- 11.2 Affordable accommodation remains extremely challenging to source in North Herts. The Keystage and One YMCA schemes form a fundamental part of the Council's single homeless pathway and without funding to support the ongoing operation of these schemes, the pathway will have significantly reduced capacity to accommodate our most vulnerable clients, those with complex needs (such as mental and physical ill health and histories of rough sleeping and substance abuse).

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 None.

16. APPENDICES

- 16.1 Appendix 1 – Equality Impact Assessment

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

- 17.1 Jo Doggett, Director - Regulatory 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 Luke Franklin, Service Accountant, luke.franklin@north-herts.gov.uk; ext 4163
- 17.4 Ian Couper, Director – Resources, ian.couper@north-herts.gov.uk; ext 4243
- 17.5 Daisy Harris, Policy and Strategy Officer, daisy.harris@north-herts.gov.uk; ext 4209

18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 18.1 [MHCLG's Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse Grant Determination 2026 to 2027](#)

Appendix 1 – Equality Impact Assessment

1. Name of activity:	Allocation of MHCLG homelessness grant			
2. Main purpose of activity:	<p>To fund specialist services to support the Council in meeting its legal homelessness duties, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support and accommodation services for single homeless people with complex needs (provided by Keystage Housing and One YMCA); • an education service for young people (provided by Herts Young Homeless) 			
3. List the information, data or evidence used in this assessment:	<p>MHCLG Statutory homelessness local authority level tables 2024-25 Review of Homelessness in North Hertfordshire NHC analysis of case level homelessness data 2025/26 Shelter analysis homelessness and BAME community Centrepoint LGBTQplus safe spaces</p>			
4. Assessment				
Characteristics	Neutral (x)	Negative (x)	Positive (x)	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. Negative: What are the risks? Positive: What are the benefits?
Community considerations (i.e. applying across communities or associated with rural living or Human Rights)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	x	Negative
				Positive The Council's homelessness services provide support and accommodation for local people in need across the district. 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.
A person living with a disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	x	Negative
				Positive 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 39% had two or more support needs in 2024/25 (the latest published whole year data). These include poor mental health (36% of households in 24/25), physical ill health (28%) and learning disability (14%). The proposed funding for the Keystage service will enable it to continue to provide a high level of support to individuals with a

				range of needs from learning disabilities, enduring mental health and complex needs.
A person of a particular race	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	x	Negative
				Positive
				Minority ethnic groups are more likely to experience homelessness with black people in particular more than three times as likely to. Locally, 19% of applicants owed a homelessness duty in 2024/25 were of a minority ethnic group, despite comprising 12% of the North Herts population overall. The proposed additional funding for local homelessness services including an expansion of accommodation options via the private rented offer therefore likely to benefit this group in particular (although absolutely numbers remain small).
A person of a gay, lesbian or bisexual sexual orientation	<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 LGBTQ+ people applying as homeless in the district (15 in 2024/25, although a significant proportion – 20% - of applicants chose not to provide this information).
A person of a particular sex, male or female, including issues around pregnancy and maternity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	x	Negative
				Positive
				Domestic abuse is a major cause of homelessness nationally and in North Herts, with on average 11% of households owed a homelessness duty citing domestic abuse as their reason for homelessness. 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 Herts Young Homeless service aims to prevent domestic abuse from occurring through education and signposting as appropriate.
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 Herts Young Homeless education project to primary school age children will specifically benefit children aged 10-11 years. 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 only a very small number of people (7 in 2024/25) owed a homeless duty by the Council are of a different gender to their sex at birth.

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, providing security of funding for the next 3 years. 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"/>	In general, homelessness services by their design will benefit those groups who are most likely to experience homelessness e.g. ethnic minority groups and LGBTQ+ people. The HYH service is specifically targeted at young people. Service providers in receipt of grant funding 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"/>	x	

6. Consultation, decisions and actions

If High or very high range results were identified who was consulted and what recommendations were given?

The EqiA uses local data, trend information and service demand evidence well to identify the specific need within the district. It highlights protected characteristics who are more vulnerable to homelessness and will benefit from this funding. Key organisations have been consulted to ensure targeted service provision is being delivered to those most at risk.

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: Tiranan Straughan	Signature** T F Straughan	
Validated by		
Name: Martin Lawrence	Signature** M S Lawrence	
Forward to the Corporate Policy Team		
Signature** Daisy Harris		
Assessment date: 02/06/26	Review date: 02/06/27	

**** 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.