

CONFIDENTIAL DRAFT

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Single Homelessness Accommodation Strategy – 2020 to 2027

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Introduction

Accommodating single homeless is a significant challenge for any locality. Over recent years this challenge has increased due to the repercussions of the recession/austerity. This has resulted in ongoing funding pressures, changes to benefit regimes, and worsening case complexity. The pressures across SWT are significant. SWT has a high number of complex homeless and rough sleepers. The ongoing Covid emergency, and the government's 'Everyone In' initiative, shined a spotlight on both the challenges of housing and supporting complex clients, but also the opportunities that are apparent.

To plan a way forward, multi-agency workshops (on-line, facilitated by Ark Consultancy) were held during the during Summer 2020. A range of partners were involved, from district council representatives, housing providers, and the commissioners and providers of support services. These workshops highlighted a number of important contextual considerations. These include:

- Locally, we have strong partnership arrangements (strategic, tactical and operational)
- There are not enough units of accommodation both in the social rented and private rented sectors
- The opportunity to improve commissioning and support arrangements through the Homelessness Reduction Board
- Increasing case complexity and the threat of Covid to worsening the current levels of homelessness

A SWOT analysis is provided at Appendix 1.

Partners agreed that now is the time to build on the pace and good will generated by the Covid response/Everyone In.

Commonly agreed ambitions are now to:

- End rough sleeping
- Develop a prevention approach that is client centred
- Provide flexible pathways within a range of accommodation options
- Provide quick and easy access to support services
- Facilitate timely move on to secure and affordable accommodation

The strategy that follows reflects these ambitions. It is also informed by *Better Futures for Vulnerable People in Somerset (Better Futures Programme - SSHG/Ark Consultancy - 2020)*. This is an LGA sponsored multiagency programme that seeks to provide appropriate support to the most vulnerable in society. It also seeks to

close the 'revolving door' that often traps customers in a perpetual 'toing and froing' between services.

Vision

Rough sleeping in SWT will end by 2027, and all single homeless people shall have access to a client centred service that will provide excellent coordinated support within a range of appropriate self-contained accommodation options that can flex according to changing demand

Objectives

Accommodation

- Suitable / self-contained accommodation
- Flexible
 - according to level of need
 - between singles and families where appropriate
 - Between licence and tenancy where appropriate
- More accessible units
- In locations consistent with demand and access to services
- A range of move-on accommodation options

Support

- Prevention first
- No wrong door
- Person centred approach- right client, right place
- Floating support – goes to the client
- Ensuring the right level of support
- Improved working between housing options and providers of accommodation in order to provide
 - Better initial assessment and placement
 - Timely and effective move on
- Working together to ensure tenancy sustainment
- Working together to develop customer skills and access to training and employment

Cost

- Affordable for client
- Affordable for SWT and providers (accommodation, management and support)
- Reduce the use of enhanced Housing Benefit
- Eliminate the need for Bed & Breakfast accommodation / expensive leasing arrangements
- Joint funding

Commissioning

- Support the Somerset Homelessness Reduction Board on the development of strategic integrated commissioning arrangements
- Local (SWT) SLAs and monitoring- improve on commissioning arrangements
 - Co-production
 - Flexible use of budgets

- Client wellbeing –physical and mental
- Monitoring e.g. duration of stay, move on, nomination rights etc

Client Groups and accommodation options

Data and intelligence* tells us that there are a range of client groups that require the availability of specific accommodation options:

1. Short-term assessment accommodation for those believed to be in priority need
2. Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) Accommodation for high risk offenders approved by police and probation
3. Emergency Assessment Accommodation for Rough Sleepers
4. Supported short/medium-term accommodation for medium/high risk individuals
5. Trainer flats – to prepare individuals for independent living
6. Accommodation for those new to the streets
7. Temporary self-contained accommodation for those owed a statutory duty
8. Veteran Accommodation
9. Dry house / abstinence house
10. Move-on (shared and self-contained)
11. Under 25's with additional support needs – P2I service
12. Crash pads for under 25s (emergency provision) – P2I service

*Data and intelligence drawn from SWT housing options service and rough sleeper initiative

More detail can be found at Appendix 2

Demand

Demand for a single person homeless accommodation by client group is shown at Appendix 3. This is a snap shot in time (Autumn 2020) and is fairly typical of the prevailing situation for the previous two or three years.

The analysis of demand includes those whom the council has a 'statutory duty' to support, together with those the council may offer a 'voluntary duty'. The analysis indicates that there is demand for 374 units of accommodation for people who fall into the single homeless category of whom 287 have their accommodation needs met through the council or its partners.

There is an accommodation gap of circa 87 units for this client group. This gap is largely accounted for by the chronic shortage of move-on accommodation (see item j) below.

The study also identifies that some of the single homeless are housed in accommodation which is unsuitable for one of the following reasons:

- Bed and Breakfast – which is not ideal for the customer due to its very temporary nature, and high cost to the Council

- Shared accommodation
- Accommodation where management practice and support services do not appear to be helping customers stabilise their lives and develop skills to sustain tenancies
- Accommodation which insufficiently reflects the diversity of the client group, low, medium and high support needs, female and male customers, arson risk, registered sex offenders, drug and alcohol, mental and physical health needs
- Accommodation location that does not sufficiently match locations of need of customers
- To reflect anticipated loss of accommodation currently available (such as temporary units in Sneddon Grove, Taunton due for regeneration).

It is estimated that there are 74 units of accommodation that are deemed 'unsuitable' and that need to be decommissioned / considered for alternative use. See section f) below

In addition to the above, it is also recognised that there is often a failure of partner services to provide the necessary support to the customer. This impacts on the ability of the housing provider to stabilise and work with vulnerable clients. This is an issue for all accommodation settings, although good progress has been made at Canonsgrove and Lindley House with the development of hub arrangements. There are also good practices being developed where the service is able to flex and come to the client (physically/digitally).

Single homeless Headline summary of demand for units of accommodation	
All demand	374
Current provision	287
Current provision - unsuitable*	74
Gap	87
Need (unsuitable + gap)	161

*Some of which can be reconfigured into more suitable accommodation

Meeting the demand

Below are described the essential elements that comprise this Single Homeless Accommodation Strategy. The *Better Futures Programme* is an important reference point, and will complement and support our local aspirations

a) Early help

Early help means taking action to support a person or their family as soon as a problem emerges. It can be required at any stage in a person's life and applies to any problem or need that the family can't deal with alone. It requires agencies (health, housing, education, social care, DWP, police etc) to be linked and to understand each other's role, and to understand the valuable contribution that can be made by the local community and voluntary sector assets, including sports,

leisure and recreation. The Better Futures Programme has established a working group that will define the approach, set direction, influence others and monitor impact. This early help initiative is critical. It will eventually work to stem the flow of people falling in to homelessness

b) Creating a robust referral and allocation process

Notwithstanding the Early Help project, there will be those who will be unfortunate enough to fall into homelessness and/or rough sleeping. For these individuals, it is essential that we develop an informed and consistent process of referral and allocation. Through the *Better Futures Programme* it has been agreed that the most effective way of ensuring that customers obtain the most appropriate accommodation and support is to form an allocations panel comprising of representatives from housing providers, social care providers and support providers. This panel will assess a person's needs, and identify the most appropriate accommodation solution having regard to the level of support required.

More detail is provided at Appendix 3

c) Units of accommodation - flexible approach

There is a limited supply of accommodation and, at present, clearly not enough. Adopting a flexible approach is essential to meet the demand. This includes flexibility within the current stock, even that which is defined as suitable within the current analysis.

d) Mixing units of accommodation

It is considered that the following accommodation types could be mixed within the same building

- Short term-assessment accommodation
- Emergency assessment accommodation
- Supported short/medium-term accommodation for medium/high risk customers
- Could also include Trainer flats, but these could also benefit from being dispersed

The above could be in one place and closely linked with support provision/hub arrangements. This would aid with specialist assessment and access to those services that are most needed by this client group.

e) Accommodation that needs to remain separated

The following need separate accommodation solutions and cannot be mixed with others

- MAPPA

- Under 25s – currently provided by the P2I service
- Dry house / Abstinence
- Women Only

Some women will actively benefit from female only accommodation options. At present we have none, other than the refuge for victims of domestic abuse. This matter needs active consideration (including catering for the needs of pregnancy and children) to assess the level of need. As a broad estimate – of the 50 beds at Canonsgrove we have had between 5 and 10 women resident at any one time

f) Units of accommodation that need to be decommissioned

The following existing units are unsuitable and need to be decommissioned

- Arc crash pads (but could be used for something else) – reconfiguration currently in progress
- B&B
- MAPPA – i.e. current provision which is 'out of area'
- Temporary Accommodation units (Wheatley Crescent/Sneddon Grove)
- Homes in Multiple Occupation i.e. Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI)/No First Night Out (NFNO)

g) Location

Convenient access to services is a fundamental consideration. Accordingly, provision will need to be met primarily in Taunton and its environs, with some also being met at Minehead and Wellington. The table at Appendix 3 provides more information, by client group.

For any new provision, impact on adjoining neighbours / communities will be an important consideration.

h) Standard of Accommodation - Aims

Canonsgrove is a temporary facility at Trull on the south-west fringe of Taunton. It has capacity for approx. 60 individuals designated as complex homeless/rough sleepers. It was provided in response to Everyone In. The Canonsgrove project reflects much of what is now regarded as best practice for hostel accommodation. There are a number of factors that have made it a success:

- Partnership working – all main services working collaboratively
- Self-contained units (and the ability for segregation in the presence of covid)
- On-site provision of housing management and support services (e.g. mental health, drugs and alcohol)
- Surrounding green space providing opportunities for relaxation, recreation and sport
- Communal areas within the building
- Engaging activity
- A sense of community

Many of these features are replicated at other provision. For example, Arc have recently opened an on-site GP surgery at their Lindley House facility.

However, there are issues. It can be difficult to segregate the most challenging individuals from those who are less complex and require less intensive support. This can have the effect of holding back progress for some individuals. This raises questions over the size of the facility and the ability to segregate the different levels of need and complexity. These are problems that have challenged housing services for many years.

Hostels are the most common homeless accommodation projects in the country and will continue to have a role locally. However, the recent Covid situation as emphasised that we (providers and support services) need to enhance the quality of the offer. We have undertaken best practice research on Homeless Hostels. This research is invaluable. A useful summary of recent research in this area was provided by Homeless Link in their report 'The Futures Hostel (2018).

Summary from Homeless Link "The Futures Hostel" (2018)

- Hostels account for 90% of all homeless accommodation projects
- Most provide medium level support.
- Key metrics are successful move on; unplanned moves, plus other measures (Outcome Star); employment & training participation rates etc
- Important to help develop skills, abilities, resources and personal development for independence

We should aim for:

- *Supportive staff with positive, engaging culture who can build trust. Interventions to be personalised and responsive to individual needs, goals, and aspirations.*
- *Strong partnership working with agencies (housing, addiction services, mental health services, financial support, physical health, training etc). The more integrated these services are, the better.*
- *Accepting dogs (otherwise this becomes a barrier for some homeless)*
- *Good range of engaging activities for the tenants*
- *Support for tenants to engage with mental health support, including emotional support, counselling and advisory.*
- *Floating Support to follow tenants during and after Move-On is key. This needs to be part of local housing pathway*
- *Some flexibility around rules and regulations. Alternatives considered and residents involved in developing (e.g. communal space for visitors)*
- *Good quality and range of food offered*
- *A lack of affordable housing is the main issue and needs to be addressed.*
- *Hostels should see their role as time limited, and should focus on supporting people to move towards independence*

- *Consider the benefits of Trauma-informed care and Psychologically Informed Environment*

*Homeless Link are the national membership charity for organisations working directly with people who become homeless in England

These aims are recommended for all future hostel provision across SWT. They are also consistent with the aspirations of the *Better Futures Programme*. This will ensure that our future homeless provision complies with what is seen as best practice. We will require reporting and monitoring that evidences the outcomes and successes described. See item l) below

- i) *Standard of accommodation – other considerations*

DETAILS TO BE INCLUDED ON THE FOLLOWING

Preference for units of self-contained accommodation / en-suite

Minimum unit sizes (these could vary according to type)

There is demand for accessible units of accommodation (see Appendix 3).
Financial assistance is available (see Finance Model below)

- j) Replacing Canonsgrove

At any one time there are approximately 50 residents at Canonsgrove. Of this, approximately 30 can be regarded as having complex needs. Approximately 20 have less complex needs, and should ideally be in other accommodation options including move-on, if there was capacity in the system.

The Canonsgrove facility will be stood down during the early part of 2023. This gives us two years to find alternative capacity. There are two options:

Option A: A single facility of at least 30 units (possibly more) with the ability to segregate different clients groups e.g. possibly different wings of a building, or separate buildings within a ground. It must also have the ability to flex the accommodation e.g. rooms that could flex from accommodating complex clients, to trainer flats, to move on (i.e. can flex according to demand). This option (due to its critical mass) will have a better chance of securing on-site hub/support arrangements. The possible downside is the potential difficulty of separating the different client groups.

Option B: Three or four smaller facilities (10 bed units) that can be specifically pitched at certain levels of need, from the less complex to the more complex. This has the advantage of having individuals with similar needs at one locality, and so potentially easier from a housing management perspective. The disadvantage is the difficulty of delivering support services to dispersed facilities. This will need careful consideration. Dispersed facilities in close proximity may be a solution

SWT will consider proposals for both options. Whatever is proposed, we expect the best practice aims (item (h) above) to be adhered to, and this will be established within commissioning / contractual arrangements.

Housing First – Pilot. In addition to the above two options, we shall also actively explore Housing First. 'Housing First' is a recovery-oriented approach to ending homelessness that centres on quickly moving people experiencing homelessness into independent and permanent housing and then providing additional supports and services as needed. The fundamental ethos of Housing First asserts that housing is not contingent upon readiness, or on 'compliance' (for instance, sobriety). Rather, it is a rights-based intervention rooted in the philosophy that all people deserve housing, and that adequate housing is a precondition for recovery. We see the potential for a pilot project. This option will only cater for a small number of people – possibly four to six in the first instance, as we would wish to test the application of the model before making any further commitments.

k) Move on

Lack of affordable single rented accommodation is a national problem and key issue to resolve in this accommodation strategy. Simply put, without an adequate supply of suitable and affordable accommodation for single people, both supported housing accommodation and the council's temporary accommodation becomes silted up. Locally, average rent exceeds local housing allowance levels exacerbating the issue.

Homeless Link have published a report "Moving on from homelessness – how services support people to move on" which found that nationally 30% of people ready to move on are unable due to lack of supply. Lack of move-on accommodation was our main issue from the rough sleeping workshops held in June and July 2020.

Different Housing Providers and services refer to Move On in a number of ways however for our purpose we mean a home to move into from supported housing, be that a room in a HMO or self-contained accommodation. An important element of move on is the ability of individuals to sustain accommodation and ensuring they are supported appropriately to avoid repeat homelessness.

Our strategy to increase move on includes the following:

- Increasing the capacity and focus in our homeless team to work with the private rented sector to increase supply for our client group
- Explore case for a Housing Company to procure units of single accommodation available for our client group
- Provision of floating support to increase supply from nervous landlords and to improve sustainability of tenancy across all tenures.
- Encourage social landlords using schemes such as tenancy accreditation to take a greater proportion of homeless directly from supported accommodation
- Utilise shared HMOs with lower support e.g. Arc satellite accommodation

- Engage with supported housing, registered provider and other partners to increase supply locally through lease arrangements

Appendix 2 provides more commentary on move-on. This includes the financial considerations, together with key success factors for those individuals placed within move-on accommodation

l) Floating Support

Floating Support is key to improving the sustainability of a tenancy once homeless clients have moved on from supported accommodation. P21 in Somerset has adopted this approach and evidenced success. It was also raised as important by the Supported Housing Providers at the Rough Sleeper workshops facilitated by Ark Consultancy on behalf of the Council during Summer 2020. It is also a fundamental component of the *Better Futures Programme* (work stream 5)

The St Mungo's research paper 'Home for Good: The role of floating support in ending rough sleeping (December 2018)' describes floating support (or tenancy sustainment) as helping people, who might otherwise struggle to cope, to live independently in their own home. It helps prevent vulnerable people from losing their home and can prevent a return to the street, for those who were rough sleepers. Support is delivered by skilled case workers who visit people in their homes or meet them somewhere close by.

Benefits include improved outcomes for their customer group, increased independence and more homes available for vulnerable people to rent, by providing more reassurance for landlords. The St Mungo's report also highlights that funding cuts to 'Supporting People' has led to a reduction in this support across the country.

Further information on best practice relating to floating support is provided at Appendix 2.

SWT regards floating support as an essential component of this single homeless accommodation strategy. It is as important as any other element and without it the strategy will fail. Ideally floating support should be provided in collaboration with partners, as all elements of the housing, health and care sectors have a vested interest in keeping clients secure and stable. The resourcing and commissioning of floating support will require cross sector conversations within the auspices of the Homeless Reduction Board. However, this may take a couple of years to develop. Before then SWT will invest in the provision of floating support

m) Commissioning

Commissioning operates at two levels, strategic and local

(this needs further work – key elements are below)

Strategic commissioning: Need to reference the MoU, HRB and *Better Futures programme* (and fingers crossed... the Changing Futures Programme), and the drive towards strategic integrated commissioning. Within this remit comes conversations around P2I, Positive Lives and Step Together. Also a fundamental review of systems and services across the health, care and housing sectors, looking at how we can close the revolving door, and invest in prevention based services e.g. floating support. Unitary conversations tie in with this.

Local commissioning: This relates to the contractual arrangements that SWT has with local providers. Again the *Better Futures programme* is highly relevant here, alongside the best practice sighted within the strategy (Homeless Link / St Mungos). The Better Futures Programme has devised a set of metrics that have been agreed among partners. These are a key reference point, in helping to shape and monitor contracts, and are included at Appendix 5

Equalities considerations

Equalities considerations are important to the provision of new accommodation options. The recently adopted Somerset Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy is supported by a comprehensive Equalities Impact Assessment which highlights the following issues:

Gender

- Currently no specific accommodation / service for females

Age

- Significant issues for under 35s and young adults – rising incidence of case complexity, care leavers and access to supported accommodation and move-on accommodation, overcrowding, sofa-surfing, reluctance to use / lack of awareness of Homefinder
- Need to consider ageing population. We are seeing more presentations from older homeless clients with age related health issues

Armed Forces Veterans

- Case complexity, need for support services, access to Homefinder

Disability

- increasing complexity of mental health problems for rough sleepers/complex homeless, lack of accessible/adapted properties for physical and mental disabilities;

Rurality

- Distance from services, lack of accommodation options, & lack of transport options.

Note: further commentary and consideration required. The strategy has picked up specific consideration of the following: female only accommodation, armed forces veterans (no additional presenting need at the moment); accessibility; and meeting

the needs of those with complex mental health issues. We need to say a bit more about age related considerations.

Finance model

To enable the delivery of the strategy will require a significant financial investment, utilising external grants, SWT funding, partner funding and a review of current commissioning arrangements for support services. A mix of capital and revenue funding is required. Capital is required to secure properties, while revenue is critical for the maintenance and development of support services. Capital is much easier to secure as it is usually a one-off payment, and can sometimes bring a return on investment, Revenue funding is much harder to secure being a commitment to year-on-year financial investment. A strategic review of commissioning arrangements for support services (health, care and housing) should identify opportunities to develop holistic system-wide prevention based services, with coordinated funding arrangements for support services. This will be driven by the *Better Futures Programme* (and hopefully Changing Futures) within the auspices of the Homelessness Reduction Board.

Key to the success of the strategy, and beyond the control of SWT and local partners, is the current housing benefit regime, including Local Housing Allowance. There is pressure on HB spend (particularly enhanced HB that is used to support tenants with complex issues), with MHCLG encouraging councils and their partners to deliver targeted and financially sustainable models of support. As noted elsewhere, local rents exceed LHA rates, which presents an additional challenge.

Some of the key funding streams /opportunities are explained in the table below. Financial considerations will impact significantly on the timetable for the delivery of certain aspects of this strategy.

Capital funding

Source	Amount	Year	Purpose	Comment
MHCLG - NSAP	£1M approx	20/21, with further funding available to bid for in 21/22	18 bedroom accommodation at Minehead	
HPC Housing Fund	£112k	21/22	Temporary Accommodation (West Somerset)	
SWT investment*				See comment below
Disabled Facilities Grant	Up to £x per property	Ongoing	Grants available for improving	

			access in and around homes	
Voluntary sector investment**	To be determined	Ongoing	Our provider partners continue to invest in property	See comment below

*SWT/SWT Corporate Company – SWT to explore investment through the new corporate company or alternative new corporate company to build/purchase and manage up to 40 units of 1 bed units as Private Rented Sector homes to increase the provision of move on/permanent new supply of 1 bed units. The pace at which the company are able to support the new supply would depend on achieving an appropriate net yield for the council and company.

**Voluntary sector investment – Existing partners and potential new partner have investment models which use their own borrowing strength to purchase accommodation. Each partner has its own business model. Sometime the voluntary sector would welcome capital grants to support their investment however revenue costs tend to be a greater consideration. Existing partners are also being asked to consider their current provision to better achieve outcomes and in some cases this will divert capital investment away from new supply.

Revenue funding

Source	Amount	Year	Purpose	Comment
MHCLG - NSAP	£167,000	20/21		
MHCLG - RSAP	?	21/22		
MHCLG - RSI	£337,220	20/21	Coordinators, outreach workers, tenancy sustainment, etc	
SWT revenue funding			Floating support	To repurpose homelessness funding
HPC Housing Fund	£150k	21/22	Complex needs	
Public Health - Positive Lives	£70k pa (approx.)	Until 22/23 when it will be reviewed	To support complex adults	
Others partners				Ongoing discussions to provide support staff
Enhanced Housing Benefit*			To support complex clients	See appendix x

Local Housing Allowance			Rental support for those in the private rented sector	Does not cover local rents
Strategic commissioning		Conversations to start this year		To deliver early help, prevention and system redesign and coordinated support

Timescales and Delivery Plan

The Council will create a detailed single homeless accommodation delivery plan to support the ambitions of this strategy. The delivery plan will outline how the additional 87 units of accommodation will be achieved by 2027 and clarify the existing and new partners who will be engaged in delivery. The delivery plan will be used by a panel of officers reporting to the Director of Housing and Communities and Portfolio Holder for Housing to help prioritise and promote the most beneficial purchases and leases. This panel will help ensure new supply fits the needs of the customers and its property specification. The panel will also allow the Council to align grant opportunities through the MHCLG and Homes England with new supply opportunities. The delivery plan will be supported by a live database of accommodation opportunities which has been set up.

Summary

In summary there are several key elements to this strategy. We shall work with our partners to meet the demand for single homeless accommodation and to end rough sleeping by 2027. We shall do this in accordance with the *Better Futures programme* and by delivering the following:

- A more effective regime of early help and prevention
- A new assessment and referral panel and procedures
- Flexibility of provision within our accommodation choices
- Very high standards of accommodation
- The decommissioning of Canonsgrove and replacement with suitable alternatives (we have identified two options)
- The stabilisation of residents through working collaboratively with support services
- The provision of additional move-on accommodation through the activity of a SWT housing company. We shall also look to other providers to help with the provision of move-on accommodation
- The provision of enhanced levels of floating support (SWT to take the lead)
- The delivery of specialist accommodation

- MAPPA
- Trainer Flats
- NFNO
- Women only
- Housing First – pilot
- Others
- The successful establishment of a Homeless Reduction Board, working with partners to undertake a fundamental review of strategic commissioning arrangements
- To deliver effective local commissioning within an appropriate monitoring regime

Areas that require further work

- Accommodation standards relating to self-contained (or ensuite)/ space standards
- Youth housing (P2I) – this needs consideration
- Commissioning and monitoring arrangements (linked to Better Futures person centred / community/ service outcomes)
- Equalities considerations – including further work to clarify the need for accessible units of accommodation, female only accommodation, age specific matters
- Social value – we need to demonstrate that working with providers can deliver other benefits e.g. employment and skills – this needs to be worked in to contractual arrangements (there are also specific opportunities for SWT)
- Finance model including contribution of SWT capital and revenue support
- Timetable/delivery plan (including comprehensive database of new supply)
- Appendices