

**REPORT TO:** Housing and Safer Policy and Performance Board

**DATE:** 9 March 2026

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Executive Director Adult Services

**PORTFOLIO:** Health & Wellbeing

**SUBJECT:** Housing Solutions Performance Update

**WARD(S):** Borough wide

## 1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To update the Board of the Homelessness service provision administered by the Housing Solutions Team, to include performance and contributing factors affecting service delivery.
- 1.2 The report will evidence the statistics during the past three years to demonstrate the gradual increase in homelessness and prevention.

## 2.0 **RECOMMENDATION: That the report be noted.**

## 3.0 **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### 3.1 **Housing Solutions Team**

The Housing Solutions Team are responsible for the homelessness administration and must be fully compliant with the homelessness legislation. The introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 was implemented in April 2018, which changed the administration process and had a vast impact upon the team. The purpose of the Act was to place further emphasis upon prevention and early intervention to reduce homelessness.

- 3.1.1 The legislation also affected the decision-making process, whereby, clients threatened with homelessness are placed under relief for 56 days, subsequently, the officer cannot issue the homelessness decision until after this period. Subsequently, this resulted in an increase in demand for temporary accommodation.
- 3.1.2 The aim of the Housing Solutions Team is to assist and prevent people who are threatened with homelessness in Halton. To provide a community focussed and accessible service to ensure people know where and how they can seek help and assistance to prevent them becoming homeless and receive a quality and confidential housing options service.
- 3.1.3 Each officer within the team has their own specialism and works closely with the designated client group. Each of the officers provide drop-in advice

sessions across the Borough, to ensure the service is accessible and provides a less formal setting for vulnerable clients. It also allows officers to work directly with hard-to-reach clients and break down formal communication barriers. The approach has been recognised as best practice, with many Local Authorities now applying a similar approach.

### 3.2 **Staffing**

3.2.1 The team are managing the increased demand, although the additional prevention activity is time intensive. Nationally there has been an increase in homelessness review appeals and legal challenges, which has been jointly addressed with Legal services. Other issues have impacted the team, including staff sickness absence and recruitment, resulting in some agency staff usage. However, by the end of 2025 all vacancies had been filled and the team are now at full capacity, resulting in no further agency usage.

3.2.2 The team work directly with vulnerable clients and fully utilise the prevention fund to support clients to remain in their homes or secure alternative accommodation. Halton was one of a few Local Authorities that was awarded the highest grant funding across the country for 2025/26 owing to the high level of prevention activity and excellent outcomes achieved.

### 3.3 **Homelessness Performance**

Despite some challenges the service has continued to provide a high-quality offer with excellent outcomes, alongside the continual flow of homelessness presentations. The team have continued to prevent and reduce homelessness, provide specialist advice and support as well as working to reduce the reliance on hotel usage. The team facilitate a number of prevention measures to mitigate tenancy re-possession and enable clients to remain within their home, if safe to do so.

3.3.1 There is a robust process in place to support vulnerable households which has proven very successful. The number of referrals received for clients facing repossession was 395, with 287 being prevented, resulting in 11 evictions, which were mainly due to none engagement.

3.3.2 The table below gives a comparison over the last three years, further illustrating the level of prevention activity achieved.

3.3.3

| <b>YEAR</b>          | <b>2022/2023</b> | <b>2023/2024</b> | <b>2024/2025</b> | <b>Apr 2025 – Dec 2026</b> |
|----------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Presentations</b> | 3156             | 3382             | 3552             | 2925                       |
| <b>Relief status</b> | 1180             | 852              | 890              | 982                        |

|                           |      |      |      |      |
|---------------------------|------|------|------|------|
| <b>Prevention</b>         | 1423 | 1556 | 1969 | 1853 |
| <b>Statutory Homeless</b> | 433  | 660  | 417  | 364  |

### 3.4 Temporary Accommodation

The team have continued to work towards sourcing temporary accommodation options, in order to avoid hotel usage, which is always a last resort. Hotels are on occasion required to meet individual needs or local authority statutory requirements. There is a plan in place to manage the move-on transition from temporary hostel and/or permanent accommodation to free up availability within commissioned services to support.

- 3.4.1 The table illustrates the reliance upon hotel usage during the past three years. The figures are higher for 2022, as a result of the ‘everyone in’ approach during covid, which was predominantly for single clients. There also continues to be an increase in families being placed in hotels, which is due to the increase in Section 21 ‘no fault notices’ being issued by landlords. However, due to the prevention activity mentioned above, there has been a decrease.

| <b>YEAR</b>      | <b>2022/2023</b> | <b>2023/2024</b> | <b>2024/2025</b> | <b>Apr 2025 – Dec 2026</b> |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Placement</b> | 114              | 68               | 110              | 74                         |
| Total Families   | 47               | 28               | 62               | 53                         |
| Total Singles    | 67               | 40               | 48               | 21                         |

- 3.4.2 Halton has taken a robust approach to tackling homelessness and meeting the needs of vulnerable homelessness clients. The main objective is to continue to review the housing provision available within the Borough to ensure increased demand can be met. Details of commissioned and leased temporary accommodation provision within the Borough is as follows.

### 3.4.3 Commissioned Services

|                          |  |                                  |
|--------------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| Brennan Lodge, Widnes    | 39 self-contained units                        | Single Clients                   |
| Halton Lodge, Runcorn    | 66 self-contained units<br>Inc 3 sit up spaces | Single Clients<br>Rough Sleepers |
| Grangeway Court, Runcorn | 14 self-Contained units                        | Families                         |

|                                    |                             |                            |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Maya Court, Widnes                 | 12 self-contained units     | Victims of Domestic Abuse  |
| NSAP Market & Lacey Street, Widnes | 4 self-contained apartments | Rough sleepers / Offenders |

#### 3.4.4 **None Commissioned**

|                               |                              |   |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---|
| Columba Hall, Widnes          | 16 self-contained apartment  | Families                                      |
| Shared Accommodation, Runcorn | 3 shared house units         | Singles<br>3 Males                            |
| Shared Accommodation Widnes   | 8 shared house units         | Singles<br>4 Females<br>4 Males               |
| Victoria Street               | 11 Self-contained apartments | Move on accommodation<br>Singles and Families |

#### 3.5 **Rough Sleeping**

Halton is committed to providing accommodation for all homeless clients that are rough sleeping or at imminent risk of homelessness. The Local Authority commission Whitechapel to deliver the outreach service and conduct early morning area checks daily to verify rough sleepers. The support officers also support the cohort with move on options, which has proven successful in retaining low rough sleeper figures.

3.5.1 The Local Authority has also increased the temporary crash pad provision for rough sleepers from three units to seven. The purpose is to identify rough sleepers and encourage them to move into commissioned services. The officers provide additional support to clients to engage with agencies and make positive lifestyle choices to help secure move on accommodation to provide stability. Halton has been identified as best practice for the applied process and positive partnership working to achieve successful outcomes.

#### 3.6 **Future Challenges**

The Local Authority like most Authorities across the country continue to face challenges around homelessness.

##### 3.6.1 S21 Notice Seeking Possession / Eviction

Due to economic pressure, some households struggle to afford to remain within their properties and therefore, can be threatened with homelessness. However, the introduction of the Renters Rights Act, which is due to be implemented in May 2026, will abolish section 21 notices, with further grounds that landlords will need to comply with prior to issuing Section 8 notices. This should have an impact on the level of private sector evictions, which will support officers to engage with landlords to seek positive resolutions for clients.

### 3.6.2 Private & Social Housing

During the past twelve months the Local Authority has seen an increase in the level of clients approaching the Housing Solutions Team for support and assistance, as many landlords pursue legal possession of their properties. The table below illustrates the level of repossession notices issued within the social, private, and home ownership sectors during past two years.

| YEAR                              | 2023/2024 | 2024/2025 | Apr 2025 – Dec 2026 |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|-----------|---------------------|
| <b>Home Ownership</b>             | 42        | 52        | 69                  |
| <b>Private Rented</b>             | 336       | 384       | 399                 |
| <b>Registered Social Landlord</b> | 271       | 499       | 395                 |

3.6.3 Within the Housing Solutions Team there is a designated officer who is actively involved in the court process. The officer works directly with lenders to reach an agreement that will allow the clients to remain within their home. The Mortgage Rescue Scheme and possession process has been identified as a priority within the prevention funding identified below, which will be allocated to assist homeowners and tenants. There has been a recent example in which a Halton resident was supported by Housing Solutions, Occupational Therapy and Social work team to find suitable accommodation due to mortgage rescue. Working with Property Pool Plus a Halton Housing property was identified and adapted to meet his complex needs. He has recently moved into the new property is delighted with his new home and support he was given from the teams in HBC.

3.6.4 The Home Ownership possession numbers are low in comparison with other housing sectors. However, we do anticipate that affordability for many homeowners and households will prove to be a major factor to clients losing their homes. The level of prevention activity has been successful, with a vast reduction in evictions. Eg, Homeownership referrals were 69, with 53 being prevented and the remainder suspended at court, resulting in zero evictions. The tables illustrate the level of prevention activity within appendix 1.

3.6.7 Staff are working with clients and landlords in registered social landlord properties to address issues and utilise the prevention fund to offset arrears, save the tenancy and prevent homelessness, ultimately preventing the repossession.

3.6.8 Further discussions are ongoing with the private rented sector to encourage them to work directly with the Local Authority, to increase the accommodation options available and offer clients choice. There are a number of prevention incentives available, to offer reassurance to the landlords and to strive to address and reduce future homelessness.

- Bond Guarantee Scheme
- HBC will act as guarantor.
- Discretionary Housing Payments
- Prevention Fund – Rent in advance, Deposits. Credit Check

- GIFT – Furniture package.

3.6.9 The Local Authority also holds a private landlord forum on a quarterly basis, which is well attended. Within the team there is a Landlord Accreditation Officer who is liaising with private landlords and letting agents to encourage engagement, which to date has resulted in a number of landlords approaching the service looking to work with the Local Authority to offer up accommodation for vulnerable households.

### 3.7 Registered Social Landlords

There is a robust process in place with the registered social landlords that notifies the housing solutions adviser at an early stage of pending action. The process has proven successful with the officer achieving positive outcomes to reduce evictions and have further negotiations to enable the client to remain within their home. The Level of activity during April 2025 – Dec 2026 contained within Appendix 1

3.7.1 The CAB Debt Advice officer has also been a positive addition to the Housing Solutions Team. The debt officer works closely with the housing solutions adviser who deals with social rent arrears, homeowners, and court action. Both officers address the arrears, housing, and debt management issues in order to support the client to sustain their tenancies. To date, the CAB officer has achieved the following outcomes.

| Actions                                   | Achievements                                  |
|---|---|
| Clients Helped                            | 310   |
| Social Landlord debts written off         | £562,704                                      |
| Homeowner saved homes – written off debts | £727,947                                      |
| Total Debts written off                   | £1,602,322<br>Average of £4,651.15 per client |
| Former Tenancy arrears written off        | £43,620                                       |

### 3.8 Discontinuation Notices

The Local Authority continues to see an increase in the discontinuation notices being issues by the Home Office to asylum seekers/refugees. There is a designated officer who liaises directly with Serco to ensure all client referrals are registered at the earliest stage of the notice. The officers work to ensure all asylum seekers awarded positive refugee status are supported and advised accordingly, to source accommodation and access all housing options and services available.

3.8.1 The main challenge is that asylum seekers who receive a positive decision to remain do not necessarily meet the homelessness criteria, but this is not always understood. It can cause confusion for clients and therefore it has been raised with the Home Office and Serco. The commissioned British Red Cross officer works across all agencies, to assist and support asylum seekers within

the Borough. The Housing Solutions officer conducts weekly drop-in advice sessions within the voluntary sector, to offer early intervention measures and coordinate the level of agency engagement. This has increased communication and partnership working, which has reduced crisis led presentations. The officer will advise clients accordingly to access all housing options and services and support them throughout the process.

### 3.9 Funding

The Government confirmed the allocation of a key element of the overall investment: funding through the Homelessness Prevention Grant, which is available to local authorities in 2026/2027 to support and deliver services to prevent and tackle homelessness. The purpose of the Homelessness Prevention Grant is to give local authorities control and flexibility in managing homelessness pressures and supporting those who are at risk of homelessness, and to deliver the following priorities:

| Funding Grant       | Initiative                                | Total Award          |
|---------------------|---|----------------------|
| Homelessness Grant  | Homelessness Prevention<br>Domestic Abuse | £730,000<br>£150,000 |
| Rough Sleeper Grant | Accommodation / Support                   | £169,700             |
| Trailblazer Grant   | Early Intervention Officer                | £39,000              |
| AFEO Grant          | Offender Co-ordinator                     | £60,000              |

3.9.1 The AFEO funding introduced a new co-ordinator post in 2021/22 to work across offender services and improve service delivery. The post has achieved successful outcomes, resulting in a vast improvement in communication, partnership working and a consistent approach as Local Authority services. Subsequently, no offender has been released back to Halton without a full pathway plan and accommodation route. The service has been deemed best practice, and the remaining Liverpool City Region Local Authorities have recently introduced the same approach.

3.9.2 Engagement with partner agencies is ongoing; to support and advise all client groups to source suitable accommodation. The aim is to assist clients to achieve positive outcomes and promote lifestyle change. Communication and teamwork between service agencies is excellent, enabling a quick response and implemented action to address crisis issues.

3.9.3 The Government recognises that there is not one single solution to end homelessness, and a strategic approach to tackling the causes of homelessness and the health and well-being of vulnerable client groups is as important as the supply of affordable homes and supported housing.

### 3.10 Homelessness Priorities 2026/27

The MHCLG expect the funding allocation to be specifically used to maximise upstream homelessness prevention for low-income clients to secure and retain suitable accommodation. The funding priorities for 2026/27 will be allocated to meet the needs of all clients as detailed below.

| <b>PRIORITY</b>   | <b>REASON</b>                            | <b>PURPOSE</b>   |
|-------------------|--|--|
| <b>Priority 1</b> | Homelessness Prevention                  | Prevention Incentives<br>Social / Private Rent arrears support<br>Rent in Advance / Deposits<br>LA Guarantor service<br>Create new tenancy agreement. Etc                            |
| <b>Priority 2</b> | Reduce Temporary accommodation           | Reduce hotel usage.<br>Ensure families are not placed within hotels for more than 6 weeks.<br>Increase suitable temporary provision for vulnerable households                        |
| <b>Priority 3</b> | Reduce Rough Sleeping                    | Provide suitable short/long term accommodation provision.<br>Efficient outreach support services<br>Access to health provision<br>Move on accommodation – sustainability and support |
| <b>Priority 4</b> | Affordability                            | Assist vulnerable households to maximise income.<br>Support social, private and homeowners with accrued arrears to retain tenancies / property.                                      |
| <b>Priority 5</b> | Exceptional Circumstances, e.g. Hoarders | Hoarding - Fund clean-up process to support vulnerable clients and save tenancies.<br>Hospital Discharge – Early intervention<br>Reduce arrears.                                     |

### 3.11 **Property Pool Plus**

The Property Pool Plus (PPP) Housing Allocations Scheme is a jointly administered scheme across the five Local Authority areas of Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, and Wirral. The scheme has been in operation since July 2012.

- 3.11.1 The scheme is a sub-regional scheme which enables people seeking social and affordable housing to register on-line. Applicants are required to meet a range of eligibility and qualification criteria relating to issues such as immigration status, local connection, previous tenancy conduct, acceptable behaviour, home ownership, and savings.
- 3.11.2 PPP operates on a Choice Based Lettings model whereby properties becoming available for letting are advertised online for registered applicants to express an interest (bid), subject to meeting the property eligibility criteria e.g. property size.
- 3.11.3 The volume of work that HH have undertaken on our behalf, during April 2025, is detailed below. Of the successful allocations, 411 were accommodated

within HH properties, the remainder were allocated places in a number of different housing associations across the Borough.

| <b>Housing Register</b>         | <b>Total</b> |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| LCR Received Applications       | 3,.009       |
| HH Registered Active for Period | 7819         |
| Rehoused                        | 705          |
| Rehouse into HH Properties      | 411          |

#### 4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

There are no policy implications associated with the information within this report. Although the potential solutions for some of the issues highlighted may lead to changes in the future.

#### 5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 Financial implications have been identified, due to the reliance upon hotel usage, which will have a significant impact upon local budgets.

#### 6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

##### 6.1 **Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence**

Protect the most vulnerable households, as many are reliant upon accessing social housing to meet their housing needs. Facilitate a choice-based lettings scheme to promote access to suitable social housing, to promote stability, thus improving health and wellbeing, resulting in greater independence!

##### 6.2 **Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy**

Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity.

##### 6.3 **Supporting Children, Young People and Families**

Housing support services provided to young people, within both supported accommodation and their own home, ensure they are empowered to access, maintain existing education, training, health services, and support networks.

The Housing Solutions Team have a statutory duty to accommodate people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. There is a designated youth officer within the Housing Solutions Team, who works directly with young people, to address their needs and refer into the relevant services. The officer will strive to ensure that young people are supported, safe and accommodated within a secure environment.

##### 6.4 **Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need**

The services in place will tackle inequality and further identify that those most in need will be awarded priority and support to secure social housing.

##### 6.5 **Working Towards a Greener Future**

None at this stage

6.6 **Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community**  
The local authority has a statutory duty to administer homelessness and support clients threatened with homelessness. The process and service options allow clients choice to secure social housing, therefore promote community stability within the Borough.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**  
None at this stage

8.0 **EQUALITY & DIVERSITY ISSUES**  
The equality implications have been identified and mitigated.

9.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**  
None at this stage

10.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

| <b>Document</b> | <b>Place of Inspection</b> | <b>Contact Officer</b> |
|-----------------|----------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>N/a</b>      |                            |                        |

## Appendix 1

### Repossession Notice Activity

#### Homeowners Statistics Apr 2025 – Dec 2026

| <b>Action</b>                                       | <b>Total Prevented</b> |
|---|------------------------|
| Referrals   | 69                     |
| Evictions Prevented                                 | 53                     |
| Sold Properties to prevent eviction                 | 0                      |
| Rehoused prior to eviction                          | 0                      |
| Successful court action<br>Adj/SPO to save property | 16                     |

#### Social Housing Referral Statistics Apr 2025 – Dec 2026

| <b>Action</b>                                     | <b>Total Prevented</b> |
|---|------------------------|
| Referrals   | 395                    |
| Prevention Eviction                               | 287                    |
| Evictions   | 11                     |
| Funding Applications                              | 117                    |
| Total costs                                       | £97,718                |
| Successful court action<br>Adj/SPO save tenancies | 97                     |
| Total Eviction Loss                               | 11                     |

## Appendix 2

|  | Urgent/ highest priority housing need (eg Band A or 1) | High priority housing need (eg Band B or 2) | Medium priority/ identified housing need (eg Band C or 3) | Low priority/ no housing need (eg Band D or 4) | No assessed Need / Reduced Priority |
|--|--|---|---|--|-------------------------------------|
| <b>Name of Band (eg 1, 2, A, B)</b>                          |  |   |   |  |                                     |
| 2018-19<br>Total number of allocations                       | 124  | 411   | 210   | 44   | 97                                  |
| 2018-19<br>Number in band at end of financial year           | 89   | 839   | 896   | 598  | 672                                 |
| 2019-20<br>Total number of allocations                       | 209  | 431   | 129   | 23   | 44                                  |
| 2019-20<br>Number in band at end of financial year           | 154  | 1029  | 937   | 662  | 629(E) +81(F)                       |
| 2020-21<br>Total number of allocations                       | 262  | 296   | 65  | 19   | 34                                  |
| 2020-21<br>Number in band at end of financial year           | 232  | 1292  | 1150  | 733  | 771(E) + 71 (F)                     |
| 2021-22<br>Total number of allocations                       | 254  | 239   | 35  | 6  | 26                                  |
| 2021-22<br>Number in band at end of financial year           | 278  | 1284  | 1071  | 754  | 710 (E) + 57 (F)                    |
| 2022-23<br>Total number of allocations                       | 319  | 222   | 45  | 14   | 20                                  |
| 2022-23<br>Number in band at end of financial year           | 227  | 1246  | 1113  | 803  | 749 (E) + 45 (F)                    |
| 2023-24<br>Total number of allocations                       | 337  | 233   | 45  | 9  | 5                                   |
| 2023-24<br>Number in band at end of financial year           | 320  | 1134  | 1258  | N/A New banding structure (A- C)               | Band D refusals to be implemented   |
| 2024-25<br>Total number of allocations                       | 311  | 222   | 42  | 2  | 2                                   |
| 2024-25<br>Number in band at end of financial year           | 348  | 1052  | 1139  | N/A New banding structure (A- C)               | Band D refusals to be implemented   |
| <b>Apr – Dec 2025<br/>Total number of allocations so far</b> | At end of Q2 – 88                                      | At end of Q2 - 71                           | At end of Q2 - 20   | N/A New banding structure (A- C)               | Band D refusals to be implemented   |
| <b>2025<br/>Current number in band</b>                       | 311  | 1030  | 1102  | N/A New banding structure (A- C)               | Band D refusals to be implemented   |