Cabinet

Date: Thursday 14 December 2023
Time: 1.45 pm
Venue: Committee Room 2, Shire Hall

Membership

Councillor Isobel Seccombe OBE (Chair)
Councillor Margaret Bell
Councillor Peter Butlin
Councillor Andy Crump
Councillor Yousef Dahmash
Councillor Kam Kaur
Councillor Sue Markham
Councillor Jan Matecki
Councillor Heather Timms
Councillor Martin Watson

Items on the agenda: -

1. **General**

    (1) Apologies

    (2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

    (3) Minutes of the Previous Meeting   5 - 18
    To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 9 November 2023.

    (4) Public Speaking
    To note any requests to speak on any items that are on the agenda
    in accordance with the Council's Public Speaking Scheme (see
    footnote to this agenda).

2. **2024/25 Budget and 2024-29 Medium Term Financial Strategy -**   19 - 68
    Background Information and Options
    This report makes available the latest financial information that will
    enable Cabinet to develop its draft 2023/24 Budget and 2023-2028
    Medium Term Financial Strategy proposals

    Cabinet Portfolio Holder - Councillor Peter Butlin

Warwickshire County Council

Monica Fogarty
Chief Executive
Warwickshire County Council
Shire Hall, Warwick

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- Declare the interest if they have not already registered it
- Not participate in any discussion or vote
- Leave the meeting room until the matter has been dealt with
- Give written notice of any unregistered interest to the Monitoring Officer within 28 days of the meeting

Non-pecuniary interests relevant to the agenda should be declared at the commencement of the meeting.

The public reports referred to are available on the Warwickshire Web
https://democracy.warwickshire.gov.uk/uuCoverPage.aspx?bcr=1

Public Speaking
Any member of the public who is resident or working in Warwickshire, or who is in receipt of services from the Council, may speak at the meeting for up to three minutes on any matter that features on the agenda. This can be in the form of a statement or a question. If you wish to speak please notify Democratic Services in writing at least two working days before the meeting. You should give your name and address and the subject upon which you wish to speak. Full details of the public speaking scheme are set out in the Council's Standing Orders.

Warwickshire
County Council

Cabinet

Thursday 9 November 2023

Minutes

Attendance

Committee Members
Councillor Isobel Seccombe OBE (Chair)
Councillor Margaret Bell
Councillor Peter Butlin
Councillor Andy Crump
Councillor Yousef Dahmash
Councillor Kam Kaur
Councillor Jan Matecki
Councillor Heather Timms

Others Present
Councillor Sarah Boad
Councillor Barbara Brown
Councillor Jonathan Chilvers
Councillor Jerry Roodhouse
Councillor Tim Sinclair

1. **General**

   (1) Apologies

   Councillors Sue Markham and Martin Watson.

   (2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

   None.

   (3) Minutes of the Previous Meeting

   The minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 12 October 2023 were agreed as an accurate record.

   (4) Public Speaking

   There were four public speakers in relation to item 10 on the agenda, Warwickshire Fire and

Rescue Service Resourcing to Risk Proposals.

Penny Barry stated: "I am requesting the Cabinet reject all of the proposals on the agenda for Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service and ask Chief Fire Officer Ben Brook and Councillor Crump to review and amend the proposed changes. Surge fire stations will be storage sites and will leave the County dangerously inadequate to respond to emergency situations, particularly those living in the south. We must not lose our on-call firefighters. Part-time firefighters are not the answer. It is accepted that Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service must make improvements following the last two HMICFRS inspections. These proposals are not the answer. Furthermore, there is not sufficient information within the proposals, for Cabinet to make an informed decision. I draw your attention to page 9 of the addendum, and I quote "We are not yet at the stage of making a firm recommendation". Therefore, objection to all of the proposals should be your only conclusion. Changes need to happen. I suggest that the Chief Fire Officer, Ben Brook, needs to go back to the drawing board and explore other options which should include keeping on-call to keep the people of Warwickshire safe. Is there a proposed budget cut for Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service and, if so, by how much and is this steering the proposals? These proposals are spurious, the only option to the Council is to reject them now.

Jill Machado stated: "I've lived in Bidford all my life, so I've seen what's gone on and what's not gone on. I went through the last system of what Warwickshire County Council did, which was the closures of the fire stations and I sat with you, whoever was on at that time, I sat with you then and we went through and we fought for Bidford. The main reason why we fight for Bidford is because the area is a high risk area, and which Chief Fire Officer Ben Brook has pointed out is a high risk area. We have two rivers, we have desperate flooding, which has just occurred again. We also have the A46 which comes alongside the back and between Alcester and us towards Evesham – that is an absolute death trap. We've also got the crossroads, an accident death trap. We have all these high risk areas, then we also have to support HMP Long Lartin, just over the border. It happens quite regularly that the Fire Service are called to go and attend with Hereford and Worcestershire on that side. I know there are changes afoot with Hereford and Worcestershire, so Pebworth may not stay the same, so my main point is we need to re-look at these proposals and especially in the case that Bidford is a high risk area, a dangerous area to be."

Elizabeth Uggerloese, Clerk to Bidford-on-Avon Parish Council stated: "The maps in Appendix 6 demonstrate how vulnerable the south of the county will be if most of the stations are relegated to surge stations with a 30 minute to a two hour call time target. How can you ensure that villages in the south of the county will be safe after 10pm when the only cover for the whole of the district will be one appliance based in Stratford. With this in mind, have you considered the current relative response times of existing on-call stations. Bidford's turnout was 69.3% for October and specifically 88.5% from 19:00 hours to 07:00 hours. How can the County Council consider relegating thriving stations like this to unused buildings resulting in the loss of effective stations for filling an important service to their local communities. An example of the fatal cost of these closures in the south of the county is a domestic fire incident which occurred this summer in Bidford in the early hours of the morning. Due to existing cover, the fire was put out with no loss of life. If these proposals had been approved, it would not be one, but three to four dwellings on fire and potential loss of life. Please think carefully about the safety of Warwickshire residents when considering the proposal in front of you which in effect will result in the closure of the majority of on-call fire stations with

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potentially serious safety issues."

Penny Taylor, Chair of Bidford-on-Avon Parish Council stated: "We understand that the Fire Service needs to regularly review ways of working and performance targets but you won't be surprised to learn that the people of Bidford have very serious concerns about the proposals being put forward. Firstly, averages don't work. The statistics in the proposal all refer to averages and I am sure the averages will improve. The average response times, take no account of the time it will take to reach the edges of the county from Stratford overnight. You'll always achieve better average response times if you put your focus on built up areas. It is the distribution curve that matters. How long will it take for appliances 1 and 2 to reach, say, Shipston or Henley or Bidford in the middle of the night? Better averages are no good to you when you are dying in a road traffic accident at 11pm south of Bidford or trapped in a flood or a house fire in a rural area. One of the key issues mentioned in the proposal is turnout. It's clear some fire stations have poor turnout percentages and, of course, this needs to be addressed, but is the solution really to take them all out rather than try and find ways to improve things. As you've heard, Bidford, which has one of the best turnout responses in south Warwickshire, is quoted as averaging 70% but that 70% hides what's happening between 7pm and 7am, as Elizabeth mentioned, when the turnout response is 88.5%. That's Bidford firefighters being at home on call out. Now the number of fire engines: I was unable through the proposals to be clear on this but it certainly appears that seven or eight fire engines or vehicles, depending on the option model, will be surge vehicles. It's not quite clear, but I'd like to know where these are placed. Will they be placed at the surge stations, will they be fire engines, what will they be? If they're fire engines, if there was a fire engine at Bidford station in preparation for a surge call out, surely it makes sense to carry on covering routine call-outs at peak evening and overnight when your call-out firefighters are at home and available? Why stand them down? And if it goes wrong and we need on-call stations again, it would take years to get them back up to where they are now and to get the watch commanders that can do it. In summary, changes are no doubt needed, but surely we need to retain what we've got in stations where it's working, otherwise, the message is don't be involved in a serious incident after 10pm unless you happen to live near Stratford or Leamington. Good average figures don't save lives."

The Chair thanked the speakers for their comments but noted there may have been a misunderstanding regarding the purpose of the report later on the agenda and there would be some reassurance during the debate.

2. Council Plan 2022-2027 Integrated Performance Report Quarter 2 2023/24

Councillor Yousef Dahmash, Portfolio Holder for Customer and Transformation, noted that the report summarised the Council's performance in Quarter 2 against the strategic priorities, and Areas of Focus, set out in the Council Plan 2022-2027. Once again, the wider national context remained a critical frame within which to view the Council's performance including the legacy impact of the Pandemic, global conflict, and high inflation which all presented specific challenges and impacted the Council's ability to deliver services. However, the Council was rising to the challenges and doing far better than most.

Of the 105 Key Business Measures (KBMs) detailed in that Performance Management Framework (PMF), 91 were available for reporting in this quarter. 65% of KBMs were reported as On Track and 35% Not on Track with further detail in the report. The remaining 14 were new measures not

due for reporting until Quarter 3 or Year End. The overall position was comparable to that reported at Quarter 1 continuing a reasonably consistent, strong performance delivered against the PMF. Councillor Dahmash highlighted positive elements of the report in relation to performance and noted the key main performance challenges, also as set out in the report. Turning to HR, Councillor Dahmash noted that vacancies had reduced again since the last quarter, and sickness absence had decreased slightly over the last quarter. In terms of Risk Management, Councillor Dahmash pointed out that during Quarter 2, a risk working group was convened to review and refresh the strategic risks that face the Council in the pursuit of its priorities. In conclusion, Councillor Dahmash noted a positive picture with awareness of the challenges being faced and sought Cabinet's support for the recommendations.

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse noted that paragraph 2.5 of the report discussed the emerging themes of performance and he wished to highlight special educational needs, education and health care plans (EHCP) and associated performance. He had looked at Power BI in this regard and had concerns that this was an ongoing and pressing area of challenge. He queried whether it was necessary to review the Terms of Reference of the SEND Members Panel to address the challenges. His understanding was the focus needed to be on pre-school aged-children in nurseries, early years and family support help as, by the time children were of school age, it was too late for an EHCP. This demonstrated the cross-over between education and early years and the two chief officers for this area and he considered that the two should be brought together. As the SEND Members Panel tended to be more education focussed, he considered that expanding the remit would also be helpful. Due to the challenges and increasing costs involved his view was that the issue needed to be tackled now.

In response, Councillor Kam Kaur, Portfolio Holder for Education, noted concerns about the rising number of EHCPs and the data given on Power BI. She noted that education and early years colleagues met regularly and were working together under one directorship, in a way that was much improved upon from the past. It was agreed that Councillor Kaur and Councillor Roodhouse would discuss the issues after the meeting.

Councillor Barbara Brown also noted a growing need in this area, which she considered was likely to continue, and urged a more radical take on a solution which considered the issue more broadly.

Councillor Secommbe noted the interdependencies that existed across a number of service areas and partnerships and that the Council did seek new approaches to challenges. It was recognised that SEND was a key area of demand and she welcomed discussions on this topic.

Resolved

That Cabinet:

1. Notes the Quarter 2 2023/24 organisational performance.
2. Refers the report to Overview and Scrutiny Committees to consider, in detail, the information relevant to their individual remits.

3. 2023-24 Financial Monitoring Report - Forecast Position as at Quarter 2

Councillor Peter Butlin, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Property explained that the quarter 2 position headline was an overspend of £16.3m, however, taking account of funding and reserves

already set aside the net residual overspend was £4.9m which was within tolerance levels. However, this was a £4m increase in the net overspend since Quarter 1. The net overspend would be funded from Directorate and General risk reserves, which at 1.2% difference to budget was within the +-2% acceptable tolerance limit. The net overspend masked the fact that there was a £26.5m net service overspend, off-set by a reduced £21.6m corporate services underspend, which had reduced since Quarter 1 due to an increased overspend on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). Councillor Butlin explained that the DSG deficit on the High Needs Block was solely responsible for the worsening position since Quarter 1 and overspends were being seen in all areas of SEND provision due to significant increases in the number of Education, Health and Care Plans, but most significantly in independent school places at an £8m overspend due to a lack of sufficient mainstream provision. The £26.5m service overspend, was broadly the same in overall terms since Quarter 1, but with some material changes at a service level as detailed in the report. Councillor Butlin explained that savings continued to be significantly under-delivered at 44%, £6.6m forecast to be delivered, although this was a 2% increase on Quarter 1. The most significant shortfalls related to difficulty delivering demand reductions in Social Care & Support and Children & Families.

Councillor Butlin also explained that in respect of Capital, the Quarter 2 controllable budget sat at £190.8m, with the Quarter 2 forecast showing £162.1m as deliverable. The main movements relating to project reprofiling and delays (net £30m reduction), mainly related to the Education (£13.1m reduction) and Environment, Planning and Transport Programmes (£14.3m reduction), as set out in Appendix B to the report. Councillor Butlin concluded that the overall reduction in the current year capital programme avoided the need to externally borrow, which was contributing to the in-year capital financing revenue savings throughout.

Resolved

That Cabinet:

1.   Notes the forecast overspend of £4.856m (1.3%) that would need to be funded from the Directorate and General Risk Reserves at the end of 2023/24;
2.   Notes the forecast delivery of savings for 2023/24 of £6.609m, and the consequent shortfall against the target;
3.   Notes the action plan developed by Corporate Board, to address service overspends in 2023/24 and mitigate their medium-term impact;
4.   Notes the forecast capital spend for 2023/24 of £162.117m; and
5.   Notes and approves the movement in the forecast spend on the capital programme of £28.664m from 2023/24 into future years and notes the carry forward of Corporate schemes of £0.150m and S278 contributions of £6.830m.

4. Treasury Management Half Year Monitoring Report

Councillor Peter Butlin, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Property introduced this report, noting that with the continued increase in interest rates and volatility of gilt rates, this six-monthly review of the Council's treasury management activity was more exciting than usual. Since last reported at the 2022/23, outturn there had been a net cash outflow from the organisation of £67m, mainly due to the repayment of £49m of the Council's long-term borrowing. Consequently, long term borrowing had reduced to £272m at the 30 September 2023, and the repayment returned a £1.93m net

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discount, which could be released over the next 10 years and was part of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy savings. The repayment also reduced the Council's debt repayment concentration period in the 2050's and returned some debt headroom. High interest rates had also returned £8.89m against a budget of £1.8m, which was also fundamentally helping offset the service overspends highlighted in reports. This was anticipated to continue into the second half of the year but would potentially start to reduce from 2024/25 as cash balances and interest rates inevitably reduced, but a level of shorter-term benefit was built into the Medium Term Financial Strategy refresh from higher interest rates. Councillor Butlin went on to explain that as a result of the high interest rates, a decision was taken not to make an early pension fund payment, as more could be earned by the Council investing the money itself, compared to the discount rate offered by the pension fund. This also meant the Council maintained a level of flexibility over cashflow as well, as it was not locked in for three years, which would have been the case with a pension fund early payment option. Councillor Butlin added that non-treasury investments were well below where they were expected to be by this point in the year due to agreed Warwickshire Recovery Investment Fund investments not having been physically made, but approvals were in place to use the current year's PIF and BIG pillar allocations, subject to the final deals being signed.

Councillor Andy Crump welcomed the report and expressed gratitude to the team for providing this contribution to the budget and freeing up resources to fund services. Similarly, Councillor Seccombe welcomed the news ahead of what was a challenging budget.

Councillor Butlin expressed his own thanks to the team and indicated that the reason reserves had been available for allocation was due to their excellent management, enabling the Council to balance the budget for the year. Looking ahead, with due diligence, the Council would manage the Medium-Term Financial Strategy going forward.

Resolved

That Cabinet notes the update on Treasury Management activity and performance in respect of the first 6 months of the 2023/24 financial year.

5. Annual Education Sufficiency Update (Ages 0-25) 2023

This report was presented by Councillor Kam Kaur, Portfolio Holder for Education, who stated that the Council had a statutory duty to ensure that sufficient early years, childcare, primary, secondary and post-16 education places were available for their area, including places appropriate for pupils with Special Educational Needs/Disabilities (SEND). She advised that the Annual Education Sufficiency Update (Ages 0-25) 2023 was supplementary to the County Council's Education Sufficiency Strategy and outlined the Council's approach to this duty, including pupil number forecasts from September 2023, compared against school capacities. Details of any pressures expected during that period were included, along with proposed solutions such as school expansions. Sufficiency of early years, childcare, post-16 and SEND places were also assessed. Council Kaur noted that across the county as a whole, there was sufficient capacity to provide early years and childcare places to all that required it. There was also a sufficient number of places for Post-16 students. Demand for early years places was expected to increase in some areas of high housing development.

She noted that the trend in Warwickshire was for increased demand for specialist education provision. Provision in Specialist Resourced Provision and special schools was being expanded and a 'deep dive' review was taking place, as part of the Delivering Better Value Programme, which would lead to recommendations on whether any further special school provision should also be commissioned.

Eleven new schools had opened in Warwickshire since 2010, as well as several permanent school expansions contributing to an overall increase of over 10,000 new permanent school places in the last 10 years.   During the next fifteen-year period it was expected to deliver at least another seven new schools, alongside several expansion projects for both mainstream and specialist settings. In the longer term, if all proposed housing development across the county was built as suggested, this figure could rise to as many as 24 new schools being required to meet the need for school places. Early years places and Specialist Resourced Provision would be provided in all new schools where appropriate.

Councillor Kaur highlighted the forecast mainstream pupil numbers as set out in the report and noted that the forecasting methodology used was based on DfE guidance. Councillor Kaur went on to state that demand for primary places in all year groups could be accommodated in existing schools in most planning areas. Areas of high housing development including Nuneaton, Rugby, Kineton, Kenilworth and South of Leamington were forecasting a need for additional primary school places and this was addressed in the Update.

Councillor Kaur noted that all areas of the county were experiencing pressure on Secondary school places in some year groups, as a combined result of larger resident cohorts moving through these year groups and new housing development in the county bringing new families during the school year. In addition to new schools opening and permanent expansion of existing schools as detailed in the Update, to meet the increasing need for places during the school year, Secondary schools would be required to take a small number of pupils over capacity in most year groups and in most areas by the end of 2023. The local authority was working with Secondary schools to support the introduction of temporary expansions/additional places and the Fair Access Protocol would continue to be used as appropriate.

Councillor Kaur provided reassurance that proposed additional school expansions and new schools would be subject to the usual processes of governance prior to submission for Council approval, including of capital expenditure.

Councillor Isobel Seccombe, Chair and Leader, noted that there was a theme to the challenges being discussed around demand for SEND and she considered that this meant changes for schools and how they continued to meet the needs of the community. Councillor Seccombe considered that this required a serious discussion with schools, including academies.

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse expressed his concern regarding SEND that the age that children required support was becoming younger, impacting family centres and nurseries and this would continue to increase demand in future years. He welcomed the proposed deep dive and looked forward to the outcome of the report. He considered that some Member oversight was required to support a culture shift towards a more corporate approach. Councillor Roodhouse indicated he was not supportive of academisation which limited the prospects for a strategic approach. He explained that he had spoken to a primary school headteacher in the days before the meeting and praised the exceptional work she had been doing to ensure the school played its role in the

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community but he noted a different approach from secondary schools. In his view, the pressures coming through the system were increasing and would continue to do so with self harm, alcohol, and suicide now being noted in younger age groups. He asked how long the feasibilty work with regarding to Rugby North would take.

Councillor Kam Kaur agreed with sentiments expressed around culture but, as could be seen from the report, a lot of work was taking place and the sufficiency team were constantly planning and forecasting. She noted the rise in the need for education, health and care plans and the need to plan now for how schools could support the Council to meet those challenges, bringing the Warwickshire family of schools into a more collaborative way of working.

Councillor Margaret Bell noted that the report did not go into detail on the proportion of in-year places required and whether these were rising. Councillor Kaur responded that in-year applications were having a big impact and there were challenges around schools capping their admission numbers.

Resolved

That Cabinet endorses the Annual Education Sufficiency Update (Ages 0-25) 2023 at Appendix 1 to the report and confirms its support for the development of design, feasibility and detailed costings for the proposed projects identified in the report.

6. Fair Access Protocol

Councillor Kam Kaur, Portfolio Holder for Education introduced this report, explaining that the changes sought to address the challenges highlighted by the previous agenda item (Annual Education Sufficiency Update (Ages 0-25) 2023). The existing Fair Access Protocol was not user-friendly and readers struggled to comprehend its content. After a consultation process which took opportunities to reach out to a wide variety of forums, including the Head Teachers Conference and Educational Head Teachers Board, the aim of the new Fair Access Protocol was to ensure that children were placed more promptly. The Protocol was a more fair, cohesive and transparent document which provided for more frequent Panels and ensured that the most appropriate places were granted using a bank of supportive information and pool of head teachers to operate objectively on behalf of the sector, supported by multi agency panel representation.

Councillor Peter Butlin expressed his support for the proposals which he considered would see children placed in the most appropriate schools and thereby create a saving on the home to school transport budget.

Resolved

That Cabinet approves the introduction of a new Fair Access Protocol for Warwickshire Schools from January 2024 to support a more efficient and effective way of placing children where we have been unable to secure a school place.

7. Sustainable Futures Strategy

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Councillor Heather Timms, Portfolio Holder for Environment, Climate & Culture thanked officers and others who had taken part in the formulation of the strategy which was the culmination of 12 months' hard work by officers, partners and other stakeholders with a major part to play in supporting the Council's commitment to become a net zero organisation by 2030 and as a county by 2050. The Strategy had been designed to support the local economy and create a workforce with the skills required for a thriving Net-Zero Warwickshire. A series of broad expert panels covering the key themes set out in the report had been held over Summer 2023 with experts from business, public sector, academia research and development, agriculture and horticultural sectors, district and borough councils and the West Midlands Combined Authority. All Overview and Scrutiny Committees had also been consulted.

Councillor Timms advised that the Strategy was accompanied by comprehensive delivery and activity plans which set out how the Council would achieve each of the key aims and established a framework towards a sustainable future for Warwickshire. She noted that the strategy would need financing far beyond the resources of the Council and that potential opportunities for innovative methods of funding had been set out in the Strategy. Engagement and collaborative working would be critical as the strategy and delivery plan was developed further.

Councillor Seccombe reflected on the economic changes and opportunities that would be provided as a result of the move to net-zero and considered that it was important to start to map those and provide guidance on upskilling for a future which would require new skills and provide new career paths.

Councillor Tim Sinclair thanked the Portfolio Holder and officers involved in developing the strategy for actively taking on board the comments of overview and scrutiny.

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse welcomed a well-presented Strategy which provided a good steer towards net zero and working with Warwickshire's district and borough council on their climate emergency strategies. He noted that services would need to adapt to a changing world and he welcomed the adaptations to meet these challenges but considered that these needed to be accelerated going forward.

Councillor Jonathan Chilvers welcomed the analysis section of this well-presented document and he considered it reflected his views on being ambitious regarding off-setting. He considered there was a lot of work to do to align transport aims with assets like cycling facilities. He thanked those involved in the process of developing the Strategy.

In conclusion, Councillor Timms stated that that the strategy was a framework which was inter-dependent with other strategies such as the Local Transport Plan (LTP4), the Energy Strategy, Food Strategy and emerging Economic Strategy and its success would require a collaborative approach.

Resolved

That Cabinet approves the Sustainable Futures Strategy and the supporting delivery plan.

8. Petitions Scheme

Councillor Yousef Dahmash, Portfolio Holder for Customer and Transformation, explained that at Council in March 2023, it was resolved that the Council would review its Petitions Scheme and develop a protocol surrounding how the Council responded to petitions. It was no longer a statutory requirement for Councils to have a Petitions Scheme but the Council had no intention to removing the facility. The aim of the review was to consider how the Council could ensure an engaging and responsive experience for those people presenting petitions, and in reviewing the scheme officers had considered examples of practice nationally, alongside the views expressed by members at the Council meeting in March 2023. Appendix 2 set out the proposed approach which maintained a 'menu-based' approach to petitions, rather than a 'rules based' approach which provided some flexibility and greater consideration of how the Scheme was applied in practice.   If Cabinet endorsed the proposals, they would be recommended to Council and, if approved, an amendment to the standing orders in the constitution would be required.

Councillor Sarah Boad welcomed the proposals as providing a good method of democratic engagement with the public and expressed the view that it was important that the public engaged with Members on the issues that were important to them and it was equally important that they received a considered response.

Resolved

That Cabinet endorses the proposed changes to the Council's Petitions Scheme as set out at Appendices 1 and 2 to the report and recommends them to Council for adoption.

9. **Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service: HMICFRS Inspection Overview**

Councillor Andy Crump, Portfolio Holder for Portfolio Holder for Fire & Rescue and Community Safety explained that this report was presented following Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service's (WFRS) most recent inspection and sought endorsement for the action plan addressing the issues raised in that Inspection Report. He went on to explain that the report summarised the findings of the Inspection Report and the areas in which significant improvement had been made since the previous inspection. WFRS had one Cause of Concern and 26 Areas for Improvement which were outlined in the report. Much of the report explained the improvement that had taken place since the previous Inspection, with two out of three Causes of Concern being addressed and the number of Areas for Improvement reducing from 41 to 26, almost a 40% reduction. The report detailed the progress made.

Councillor Crump commended the measured response from the Service which had acted positively to criticism from HMICFRS and had either made adjustments in those areas or had a robust plan in place to do so, acknowledging that reaching the standards might take further time but once changes were embedded, the Service would not only be fit for the present but will also continue to keep the county safe well into the future.

Councillor Sarah Boad, a member of the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) Assurance Panel, noted that the Inspectorate was now engaged with the Panel and peer support had also been provided by Justin Johnston, Chief Fire Officer at Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service, who was skilled in those areas which WFRS was required to improve upon and she was pleased to see that this was resulting in good progress.

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Councillor Crump confirmed the engagement with the CRMP Assurance Panel referred to by Councillor Boad and added that he was pleased with the progress that had been made to date and the direction of travel as a result of the hard work that had taken place.

Resolved

That Cabinet notes the HIMCFRS Inspection Report for Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service (WFRS) (Appendix 1 to the report) and confirms its support for the Action Plan returned to HMICFRS regarding the Protection Cause of Concern (Appendix 2 to the report), and the internal action plan developed to address the Areas of Improvement identified during the Inspection (Appendix 3 to the report).

10. Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service Resourcing to Risk Proposals

This report was introduced by Councillor Andy Crump, Portfolio Holder for Portfolio Holder for Fire & Rescue and Community Safety who thanked the public speakers who had engaged earlier in the meeting.   Councillor Crump explained that the report set out a proposal to enter into a meaningful consultation over a 13 week period. Whilst there was speculation regarding station closures and budget cuts, this was not part of the proposals and it would, therefore, be important to ensure that accurate information was provided as part of the consultation.

Councillor Crump explained that the HMICFRS Inspection Report, considered at item 9 of the agenda, was a key driver for the proposals as it highlighted the need for Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service (WFS) to make the best use of its resources. Councillor Crump quoted from the report, emphasising that the workforce model did not allow WFRS to carry out its core functions effectively and efficiently and that the Inspectorate welcomed review of the mix of crewing and duty systems, including analysis of its response cover. Councillor Crump went on to explain that there were two further key drivers for the proposals, one regarding on-call availability and attendance times. Statistics regarding these two points were set out in the report.

Councillor Sarah Boad considered that it was important for the Fire Service to look at the best way to serve its communities and the issues that the proposals were seeking to address had previously been raised at overview and scrutiny. She had been clear as part of her position on the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) Assurance Panel that a full consultation was crucial, involving public meetings for communities to ask questions. She hoped that all County Councillors could engage in the consultation activities to talk to their residents about the proposals.

Councillor Isobel Seccombe also stressed the importance of ensuring that the consultation was as user-friendly as possible to avoid any misunderstanding or misinterpretation.

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse sought clarification on the commencement and length of the consultation.

Councillor Crump advised that the communication strategy would ensure that there was no ambiguity in the consultation and that legal advice would be sought on the proper length of the consultation. Councillor Seccombe indicated her understanding that the consultation would commence in December 2023 and end in March 2024, with the main body of engagement taking place in the new year.

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Councillor Heather Timms noted her experience working with the Citizens Advice Bureau which had developed a different way of attracting and training volunteers to deal with the additional demands of the cost of living and related this to the difficulties set out in the report. Councillor Crump agreed that there were potential opportunities to engage more volunteers and attract more diversity as well as improving availability.

Councillor Jan Matecki referred to the points made during the public speaking session and reiterated the need for meaningful data and statistics. He also noted that the safety of residents was a primary driver for improving the system. However, he acknowledged that Cabinet was being asked to approve a consultation and urged local residents to engage in that process.

Councillor Isobel Seccombe recalled the tragic events in Atherstone 16 years ago and how volunteer firefighters were often drawn from several generations of a family. She recognised how blessed the Council was to be able to call upon these volunteers who sought to keep their communities safe but she also recognised that there were changing circumstances which meant that fewer volunteers were available and HMICFRS was asking WFRS to review the position in order to keep residents safe. A full and thorough consultation would take place and she urged people to keep an open mind and not just assume there would be fire station closures.

Councillor Andy Crump echoed comments regarding a reluctance for people to volunteer, not just because individuals were busy with work pressures, but also that their employers found it difficult to release staff to be on-call. He reiterated that there were not proposals to close fire stations and reflected on the changing climate and how that impacted on the requirements for a more reactive and efficient fire service. In proposing the recommendations, he emphasised that Cabinet was being asked to endorse a consultation on the plans in the paper and was not approving any of the options.

Resolved

That Cabinet:

1. Supports the adoption of the resourcing to risk model for Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service as set out in the report.
2. Supports proceeding to staff, stakeholder and public consultation on Delivery Model 2a and authorises the Chief Fire Officer, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Fire & Rescue and Community Safety to take such steps as are necessary to undertake the consultation, and to report back to Cabinet in due course.

11. Reports Containing Exempt or Confidential Information

Resolved:

That members of the public be excluded from the meeting for the items mentioned below on the grounds that their presence would involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1972.

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12. Exempt Minutes of the 14 September 2023 Meeting of Cabinet

The exempt minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 12 October 2023 were agreed as an accurate record.

13. Warwickshire Recovery Investment Fund (WRIF) Bid for Approval

Councillor Peter Butlin, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Property presented this exempt report

Resolved

That the recommendations as set out in the exempt report be approved.

14. Proposals for Investment Zone for West Midlands Combined Authority and Warwick District

Councillor Peter Butlin, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Property presented this exempt report.

Resolved

That the recommendations as set out in the exempt report be approved.

The meeting rose at 3.43pm

…………………………
Chair

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Cabinet

14 December 2023

2024/25 Budget and 2024-29 Medium Term Financial Strategy – Background Information and Options

Recommendations

That Cabinet:

(1)   Develop its draft 2024/25 Budget and 2024-29 Medium Term Financial Strategy proposals, taking into account the information and advice of Corporate Board, as presented in this report; and

(2)   Authorise Corporate Board to begin any preparatory work necessary to deliver the budget proposals, prior to the final full Council decision on the budget on 8 February 2024.

1.   Introduction and Background

1.1   The Council's financial strategy requires the annual budget to be set in conjunction with a 5-year Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), aligned to the Authority's Council Plan. This rolling approach to resourcing the Council's activities and services allows longer-term issues and objectives to be catered for financially at the same time as balancing funding with the immediate budget pressures and delivery requirements.

1.2   At its meeting of 13 July 2023, Cabinet considered a report titled "A Financial Framework for the 2024/25 MTFS Refresh". The report outlined the emerging financial position within which the 2024/25 budget and 2024-29 MTFS would be developed and approved the approach and framework within which the necessary work would be undertaken.

1.3   This report is the next step in the process of setting the 2024/25 budget and the framework for the 2024-29 MTFS. It makes available the latest financial information that will underpin the 2024/25 budget and MTFS and the views of Corporate Board on that information in an approach that will enable the Council to respond effectively to current circumstances while maintaining a longer-term focus on the Council's financial sustainability. The report sets out the process

that will lead to the agreement of the budget and the setting of the 2024/25 Council Tax in February 2024.

1.4   Corporate Board's recommendations in this report provide the background, basis and context for political groups within the Council to develop their budget proposals for discussion and decision at full Council in February, based on the latest information available.

1.5   The information presented in this report is structured over the following areas:
- the financial context within which the budget and MTFS will be agreed (section 2);
- the budget strategy recommended by Corporate Board (section 3);
- proposed permanent and time-limited revenue funding allocations (section 4);
- the sustainability of spend funded from the Dedicated Schools Grant for providing support for pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and the consequent impact on the MTFS (section 5);
- resultant proposals for balancing the revenue budget and MTFS (section 6);
- the level of the Authority's reserves and the scope for the effective use of those reserves to support the delivery of the MTFS (section 7);
- summary revenue budget position and any remaining flexibility (section 8);
- proposed capital strategy and resultant capital programme (section 9); and
- requirements on the organisation to deliver a balanced budget in 2024/25 (section 10).

1.6   The report will then go on to consider the timetable and next steps between now and when the final decision on the 2024/25 budget is made on 8 February 2024.

2.   Context

2.1   The context for the 2024/25 MTFS refresh is extremely challenging and continues to be dominated by fundamental financial uncertainties as the Council's costs are increasing more quickly than its resources. These arise from prolonged, significant inflationary and market pressures (labour, supplies and services) as a result of a range of factors, not least the war in Ukraine and shortages of labour. Low levels of economic growth are predicted, with consequential impact on the resources available to fund services the Council delivers. Most fundamentally, there is rapidly rising demand and unit costs for statutory services as households and communities struggle with the impacts of the Pandemic, high inflation and interest rates, and the rising cost of living.

2.2   The Autumn Statement 2023 set out the Government's approach to reducing the level of additional borrowing at the same time as meeting ongoing need to invest in recovery to achieve the growth required to repay the fiscal deficit after the Pandemic. Added to this there are significant uncertainties around Government policy in terms of the delayed Fair Funding review for local government, funding reforms for both business rates and Council Tax, the future of the major reforms to the funding of adult social care, the Government's Net Zero strategy and planning reform, as well as the roll-out and resourcing of the Government's policies around levelling up.

2.3   The uncertainty about the delayed adult social care reforms, and associated funding, is especially material; initial work on the reforms suggested a potentially material and unaffordable financial risk to the Council arising from the Fair Cost of Care exercise and changes to the care cap and means test, reflecting the findings of numerous national studies.

2.4   At a national level the UK avoided recession in 2023 with growth of 0.6%. The Office of Budget Responsibility (OBR) forecasts suggest that in 2025 the UK will return to pre-Pandemic levels of growth. Inflation in October 2023 was 4.7%, with the Bank of England expecting inflation to be back to around 2% by the end of 2025. Interest rates remain high, at 5.25% with the Governor of the Bank forecasting interest rates will remain at this level until the third quarter of 2024 before gradually falling to 4.25% by the end of 2026.

2.5   Local government spending is 11% higher than previously forecast according to the OBR figures. However, this is driven by additional business rates relief and compensation to local authorities for the under-indexing of business rates. No additional funding for Local Government was announced in the Autumn Statement, with the only increases in the figures reported coming from Council Tax. Overall public spending will increase by 1.0% in real terms over the medium-term, which implies real-terms cuts for unprotected services, such as local government. The OBR forecasts that for unprotected service areas, spending will fall by between 2.3% and 4.1% in real terms each year from 2025/26. These fiscal projections represent a significant uncertainty and risk over the course of the current MTFS.

2.6   This means at a local level our economic situation remains hugely challenging over both the short and medium-term, with the continuing inflationary risk, shortages in the labour market and the demand for services rising more quickly than our resources. The pay award for this year was 6% (against a 4% provision in the budget) and the 9.8% increase in the National Living Wage (NLW) from April 2024 will materially impact on our contract prices in the adult social care market in particular, adding around £3.5m to our previous forecast pressures.

The direct and indirect impacts of these factors on the County Council, as well as our partners, remain unknown and highly volatile.

2.7 In this context, the County Council needs to achieve a balance of ambition, prudence and robustness in setting this MTFS. There are clear differences between ensuring that there is a robust base budget and having sufficient reserves. Reserves can only be spent once and therefore it remains important to maintain a more commercial approach to time-limited investment to help deliver transformative change, achieve financial benefits and release resources that can be reinvested for the benefit of those who live in, work in and visit Warwickshire.

2.8 With the exception of business rates there were no additional announcements in relation to local government funding in the Autumn Statement 2023 (AS23) or in the Local Government Finance Policy Statement 2024/25 published on 5 December 2023, therefore the announcements from the Autumn Statement 2022, used as the basis of the July Cabinet report, remain. These are:
- a core Council Tax referendum limit of 2.99% in 2024/25 reverting to 2% thereafter;
- the option to levy an additional adult social care precept of 2% in 2024/25 only;
- a £4.2bn funding increase for the social care sector in 2024/25, which includes:
  o £0.5bn which will be distributed through the Better Care Fund to help get people out of hospital faster into care settings;
  o £1.9bn which will be distributed to local authorities for adults and children's social care (this is the repurposed reform grant funding);
  o £0.68bn which will be distributed through a grant ringfenced for adult social care to support local authorities to continue to move paying a more sustainable rate for care;
  o an estimated £1.3bn from the additional adult social care precept.
- the schools' budget will receive £2.3bn of additional funding in each of 2023/24 and 2024/25; and
- capital spending will be maintained over the medium-term at current levels in cash terms.

2.9 For business rates, following the royal assent of the Non-Domestic Rating Act 2023, AS23 announced that the Government will freeze the small rates multiplier for 2024/25 whilst the standard multiplier will rise in line with inflation (6.7%). Local authorities will be fully compensated for the loss of income and will receive new burdens funding for administrative and IT costs.

2.10 Table 1 below sets out our base revenue resource forecasts through to 2028/29. By 2028/29 the Council is estimated to have £650.430m revenue resource available to support the budget, based on a starting assumption of Council Tax increases remaining at the level assumed in the MTFS approved in February 2023 (that is a 2% annual increase in Council Tax and taking the 1% adult social care levy in 2024/25). This approach has been adopted because it recognises that setting the Council Tax is a political decision.

2.11 The Council does currently have the option of taking a further 1% core Council Tax plus a further 1% on the adult social care levy in 2024/25. Each 1% increase/decrease in the council tax would change the level of resources available by an estimated £3.672m. The Local Government Finance Policy Statement for 2024/25 provided clarity about the grant figures and Council Tax referendum limits for 2024/25, which remain unchanged, but made no mention of any potential for Council Tax flexibility beyond 2024/25. The Statement provided no medium-term clarity beyond next year to support more effective financial planning across the sector than is possible with repeated short-term funding announcements and settlements.

2.12 The report comes back to the issue of Council Tax increases when considering Corporate Board's recommended budget strategy in Section 3 and when considering the options for balancing the budget in Section 6.

Table 1: Revenue Resource Forecasts 2024-29					
	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m	2028/29 £m
Council Tax (2% annual increase plus adult social care levy of 1% in 2024/25)	379.673	394.615	410.536	427.105	444.347
Business rates	87.809	89.565	91.356	93.183	95.047
Better Care Fund, iBCF and other social care grants	80.205	78.297	78.297	78.297	78.297
Public Health Grant	25.396	25.396	25.396	25.396	25.396
Other Government Grants	8.383	7.375	7.368	7.343	7.343
Total Base Resource Level	**581.466**	**595.248**	**612.953**	**631.324**	**650.430**

2.13 There may be further changes to the figures summarised in the table once there is clarity around the distribution methodology to be for adopted some of the Government grants. These will be subject to confirmation as part of the provisional 2024/25 Local Government Finance Settlement (expected on 19 December) and the final taxbase figures will be provided by the District/Borough Councils by the end of January 2023. All changes will be reported to Members in the 2024/25 MTFS Update report to Cabinet in January 2024.

2.14 The level of volatility and uncertainty when developing budget proposals is significantly higher than it has been in recent years. In particular, the Local

Government Finance Settlement is not expected until 19 December 2023, which will set out how some of the funding is to be distributed between councils and provide more information to support officers' recommended assumptions. Inflationary pressures remain high and volatile. Consequently, there is an on-going risk that some assumptions or estimates may need to change between now and the Council's budget meeting in February 2023.

3. Corporate Board's Proposed Budget Strategy

3.1 It is within this context that the budget for 2024/25, as the first year of a 5-year rolling MTFS, will align the resources of the Authority to the objectives and ambitions set out in the Council Plan.

3.2 Warwickshire remains a financially resilient authority, with a robust approach to the Council's financial sustainability. Our strong financial position is driven by:
- a balanced budget with no unidentified savings targets;
- healthy reserves to manage financial risk/shocks and invest in the future, in particular a return to a growing local economy, resulting in buoyant local taxbases;
- strong cashflow and high levels of liquidity;
- relatively low levels of borrowing compared to our asset base, giving a strong balance sheet; and
- a strategy in place to deliver a financially sustainable Warwickshire over the longer-term.

3.3 Our strong position means we have been able to resource the higher in-year cost and demand pressures than when the budget was approved in February 2023. The decisions taken to address the short-term challenges we faced have not undermined our financial sustainability over the medium term; however, unless national solutions to the areas of high cost and demand pressures of adults and children's social care, home to school transport and, most significantly of all, SEND are put in place this will result in increasingly difficult decisions each year being needed to balance the budget. Difficult decisions and choices will still need to be made as part of agreeing the 2024/25 budget and 2024-29 MTFS refresh. The guiding principle remains to balance the MTFS without oversteering, maintaining flexibility to invest/transform and deal with future pressures.

3.4 Corporate Board's approach in preparing this report has been to present Members with options for delivering a sustainable MTFS. The initial objective was to do this within the levels of future Council Tax agreed in February 2023. However, this has not proved to be possible and Corporate Board are of the view that Members need to take the maximum 4.99% Council Tax allowed in

2024/25 to ensure a robust and sustainable MTFS. This is because the forecast overspend in 2023/24 means that there are insufficient reserves available to resource any timing differences between when spending need arises and the delivery of savings. Without the additional Council Tax income material levels of additional budget reductions would need to be approved and implemented from April 2024.

3.5   Reflecting this, Corporate Board's strategic approach to the budget has been to:

- present options, based on sound assumptions, which enable Members to agree a financial plan that shows how income can equal expenditure over the short and medium term, providing for a balanced budget and avoiding unidentified savings;
- remain robust, ambitious and prudent, given current and persistent economic uncertainties, ensuring the Authority can maintain sufficient reserves to manage financial risk/shocks;
- integrate the budget and MTFS with the Council Plan through the integrated planning approach which has been adopted to ensure the direction set out in the Council Plan translates into a sustainable financial strategy;
- as far as possible maintain the capacity to invest by retaining the capital and revenue investment funds, continuing to push outcome-focussed activity in specific and limited areas;
- deliver on the key strategic principles approved by Cabinet in July 2023:
  - o provide for the step change in costs, recognising the inflationary uplift is not a temporary phenomenon, with prices only expected to revert to increasing by 2% over the medium term;
  - o within the scope of the factors the Council can influence and control, sustainably tackle the major financial/demand challenges we face, particularly Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), support for children and families, including children with disability, and home to school transport;
  - o set a very high bar for new permanent allocations, with 'choice' options that would have come forward from services for Members' consideration in previous years not being brought forward at this time;
- operate with a clear expectation that existing levels of planned budget reductions will be delivered; and
- be flexible in responding to the changing economic and political environment both to seize opportunities and deal with pressures, ensuring there is reasonable flexibility in future years to handle most plausible scenarios, whilst recognising it is impossible to guarantee this in such a volatile, complex and uncertain external environment.

3.6   There remains a significant degree of uncertainty about the level of resources estimated for next year and over the medium-term. It is estimated that next year 65% of our core funding (excluding Dedicated Schools Grant) will come from Council Tax and therefore the decisions around the level of increase in Council Tax (including the adult social care levy) are central to the Council remaining financially resilient and sustainable. The OBR anticipates over 95% of all upper tier local authorities raising the maximum core Council Tax of 2.99% plus an additional 2% adult social care levy in 2024/25.

3.7   Taking all of the increased flexibility in levying Council Tax would place the Authority in the strongest possible financial position. Balancing this is the adverse impact on taxpayers of tax increases, particularly whilst inflation remains high and many households are struggling with cost of living pressures. It is the Government's assumption that local authorities take the maximum Council Tax uplift allowed under the referendum limits. Levying the maximum permitted Council Tax is also assumed in the allocation of Government grants to reflect authorities' differing ability to generate income from Council Tax. Maximising the Council Tax base also helps mitigate the risk of the continued emergence of further uncertainties and inflationary pressures.

3.8   The OBR's forecasts include an assumption that on average Council Tax will increase nationally by an average of 4.3% a year. This suggests that further Council Tax flexibility beyond 2024/25, either core or through the extension of the adult social care levy, is expected. However, this is yet to be confirmed. It was not included as part of the Local Government Finance Policy Statement. The next opportunity will be the provisional 2024/25 Local Government Finance Settlement expected on 19 December. If this does happen it will provide Members with more flexibility in their medium-term Council Tax strategy and greater choice between levels of Council Tax and future budget reductions. **Appendix A** sets out the impact of each 0.5% future variation in the Council Tax for Members to use as a ready reckoner when considering their Council Tax strategy.

3.9   However, based on the resource information currently available a minimum council tax increase of 4.92% will continue to be needed in 2024/25, irrespective of any future Council Tax flexibility unless additional resources are made available either as part of the Local Government Finance Settlement or the final 2024/25 taxbase being higher than expected.

3.10   In considering their Council Tax strategy, Members should note that not taking the maximum Council Tax increase in any year is a more risky strategy, given that any permitted increase not taken cannot be caught-up in future years, while deciding how much of the extra flexibility to utilise is a decision that can be reviewed each year as part of the MTFS refresh, depending on the financial

position of the Authority at that time. In such an uncertain environment for Councils, both in terms of funding and demand for statutory services, this is another factor behind Corporate Board's recommended strategy.

4. Proposed Revenue Funding Allocations

4.1 In developing these proposals Corporate Board has been guided by the following priorities for the 2024/25 budget to:

- ensure the budget proposals deliver the long-term financial sustainability of services;
- provide the funding needed to meet the step change in the cost of services as a result of the continued high levels of demand and inflation;
- continue to drive forward the implementation of the Council's change agenda to ensure our core services, infrastructure and resources can be used flexibly and effectively to meet future challenges and deliver for residents, businesses and communities; and
- deliver investment in projects and programmes that will support the ambitions and objectives set out in the Council Plan.

Inflationary Costs

4.2 The MTFS approved in February 2023 provided for an annual general inflationary uplift to ensure budgets remain sustainable in real terms with a 2% increase in pay (4% for 2024/25), prices and contract costs partly offset by assuming an equivalent increase in all fees and charges. This provision was in line with the medium-term target rate set by the Government for the Bank of England.

4.3 However, with the continuing international economic instability and national political uncertainty there has been increased inflationary pressure across most sectors. The forecasts for inflation, as set out in AS23, are for an average of 7.3% this year, 3.6% next year before settling back to nearer the long-term trend of around 2% for the rest of the MTFS period. Forecasts for next year are above the 2% assumed in the MTFS. It is the view of Corporate Board that it is not possible for all Services to generate sufficient additional efficiencies to absorb the increased inflationary cost, while many areas are also seeing increased demand. Positive action by Services has managed the impact of inflation in 2023/24. For some Services to remain sustainable there is a need to provide funding for excess inflationary costs in 2024/25. All other Services will be asked to manage the inflationary impact across the service within the 2% general provision. There is a material risk about the Council's ability to continue to absorb cost increases that are higher than resources year-on-year and could

lead to additional budget pressures in future years. This risk will be managed in 2024/25 through the use of reserves (see Section 7).

4.4   Services have included, within their savings proposals, options for contract management savings, reductions in third party spend and the delivery of small-scale efficiencies to absorb the impact of inflation on their budgets. Therefore, in making this inflation provision it is acknowledged that the allocation to Services for inflation is an approximate cost. It is important to recognise that some costs will increase above the standard inflation rate, and some below, and that once the overall allocation has been agreed a Service should retain the ability to allocate the funding provided to reflect where inflation will impact at a service level.

4.5   There are areas of the Authority's activity where it is known the provision for general price inflation will be insufficient and where prices are increasing well above the level of CPI. There are five service areas where contractual commitments above this level are known to exist. In 2024/25 these are:
- provider costs in adult social care which are also particularly impacted by the 9.8% increase in the National Living Wage from April 2024 (£12.994m);
- street lighting energy and traffic signals contract costs (£0.443m);
- highways and bridge maintenance contract costs (£0.553m);
- utilities costs (£1.400m); and
- home to school transport for SEND and mainstream pupils and children in care (£1.419m).

Combined with the provision for a 2% general inflationary impact the total provision for price inflation in 2024/25 in the MTFS is £22.600m, bringing the total indicative inflation provision for price inflation over the period of the MTFS to £62.240m.

4.6   In addition to price inflation the MTFS also needs to include a sustainable provision for pay inflation. The effect of inflation and labour shortages on average earnings and on wages and salaries has been significant. There is a growing demand that public sector pay should be maintained in real terms, with a risk of the delivery of services being impacted by industrial disputes, and also that if pay does not maintain broad parity with the private sector and other public sector bodies who do not have statutory duties to balance their budget their ability to offer more generous salaries will further impact on turnover and recruitment difficulties. Given the pressures on recruitment and retention, the level of pay settlements being agreed for other public sector bodies as well as the advice from West Midlands Employers, it is the view of Corporate Board that the provision for pay inflation of 4% in 2024/25 should be retained, before reverting back to the general 2% annual uplift to ensure the MTFS remains

robust and sustainable. However, pay levels for the Authority's workforce are dependent on the outcome of a number of different national pay negotiation arrangements and therefore Corporate Board recommend that this provision is held centrally in the first instance. This will ensure any unused provision can be redirected to support the delivery of the MTFS in future years. The impact of this is a provision for pay inflation of £9.269m in 2024/25 and a total indicative provision over the MTFS period of £27.659m.

Other Permanent Revenue Budget Adjustments

4.7 Corporate Board have identified six areas where additional budget allocations are required to meet known spending pressures to ensure services' financial position at the end of the MTFS period is sustainable.

4.8 The six areas where additional budget allocations are required are:
- right-sizing budgets to correct for current structural overspends, primarily in relation to placements and transport costs for children in care, adult social care, home to school transport and the maintenance of traffic signals;
- allocations to meet the continued growth in demand for services as a result of both demographic change and housing growth, with the main areas of demand growth:
  - o the adult and children's population requiring care as well as increases in the complexity of need (£13.280m for 2024/25 covering new demand and right-sizing);
  - o the increased cost of waste management as a result of housing growth (£0.300m in 2024/25);
  - o the provision of home to school transport, particularly in relation to children with SEND, reflecting the rapid increases in demand for SEND provision (£8.189m covering new demand and right-sizing in 2024/25); and
  - o the impact of the need for additional capacity in support services as a result of the growth in demand (£0.639m in 2024/25);
- allocations to meet the conditions of the additional ring-fenced social care grants announced in AS22 (£3.715m in 2024/25);
- allocations to increase capacity in services following service reviews including the coroners service, fire protection activity and the attendance service;
- allocations to meet additional capital financing costs based on the planned borrowing requirement to fund the capital programme (£8.741m across the five years of the MTFS; and
- investment to maintain the core operational infrastructure of the Authority.

4.9 There are no investments brought forward for consideration where there is a choice for Members as to whether to support them.

4.10 In addition to the specific allocations Corporate Board are also strongly recommending an allocation is set aside as a provision of £1.000m in 2024/25, £9.000m in 2025/26 and then £6.000m for the remaining three years of the MTFS for future currently unknown and unquantified spending need, such as further increases in the National Living Wage and extra pay and price inflation. In 2024/25 the level of permanent pressures (including inflationary pressures but excluding additional ring-fenced Government grants) requiring funding is £26.280m above the provision in the MTFS approved in February 2023. The recommended provision is deemed the minimum level required, considering affordability, and is lower than recent patterns of net annual pressures (around £3m more than the provision annually). This will require improved control of costs over the period of the next MTFS.

4.11 Maintaining such a provision will mitigate the need to identify further options for balancing the budget as new spending requirements are identified over the period of the MTFS and provide further resilience in a highly uncertain context. Without this provision the Council's general risk reserve may need to increase which further ties up resources and reduces flexibility. Any of these provisions not required can be released in future years.

4.12 The additional permanent spending allocations identified total £27.652m for 2024/25 and a further £38.302m for indicative allocations over the remainder of the MTFS period, bringing the total permanent allocations proposed to £65.954m. **Appendix B** provides brief details of the proposed permanent budget allocations recommended for approval. All allocations beyond 2024/25 are indicative at this stage and will be subject to review as part of the rolling MTFS.

Time-Limited Revenue Allocations

4.13 Time-limited investment in key areas of activity provides the opportunity for the Council to be ambitious in its plans whilst not risking its overall financial sustainability, as well as pump-priming the investment in change needed to deliver budget reductions. There are also a number of one-off costs the Council needs to fund to ensure the continued effective delivery of services.

4.14 Corporate Board have identified five areas where additional time-limited allocations are required to meet known spending pressures to ensure Services' financial positions at the end of the MTFS period are sustainable.

4.15 The five areas where additional time-limited allocations are required are:
- an allocation to meet the impact of inflation on wholesale utility costs on the assumption costs will fall back to the underlying trend over the medium term;

- the up-front investment needed to deliver budget reductions included in the MTFS;
- the provision of temporary capacity to fund the continued growth in demand for services including business and customer support and recruitment;
- the resource to fund temporary structural overspends in services whilst capital investment and transformation projects to reduce costs to a sustainable level are delivered; and
- the need to fund a range of costs that will impact on the Authority as a result of past decisions and previously agreed approaches such as the resourcing of the DSG deficit, embedding the Outdoor Education and Learning Strategy, funding of community pantries, school admissions, resourcing the Coventry and Warwickshire Growth Hub, and the development of the core IT infrastructure of the Authority.

4.16 Corporate Board are recommending that the time limited allocations of £23.503m in 2024/25, of which £18.000m relates to resourcing the DSG deficit (see Section 5) and a further £4.611m over the remainder of the MTFS period are funded, a total of £28.114m.

4.17 **Appendix C** provides brief details of these proposed time-limited spending budget allocations.

Future Government Grants
4.18 Spending announcements made as part of AS22 included a number of areas where some, or all, of the resulting activity will be delivered by and through local authorities. At this point we do not know how much of this funding the County Council will receive and we do not know whether any further temporary allocations will be announced as part of the 2024/25 Local Government Finance Settlement.

4.19 However, given the tightness of the Authority's overall financial position, Corporate Board is recommending that a clear position about how any additional funding received will be managed is set out in advance.

4.20 The proposed approach is:
- there is no presumption that new grant funding will be automatically allocated to services;
- as far as possible any grants received should fund activity we are already planning to do, that has been funded through the MTFS or through allocations from the Investment Funds; and
- if additional spending has to be incurred to deliver new activity, the priority is to direct resources at activities that drive progress in the Delivery Plans or deliver future MTFS savings.

Summary Spending Need

4.21 Bringing all these elements together indicates that the Authority has a spending need of £626.832m to be financed in 2024/25, increasing to £727.313m by 2028/29. A breakdown of this is shown in Table 2 below. The increased spending need shown here is greater than the increase in resources over the MTFS period shown in Table 1.

Table 2: Summary of 2024-29 Spending Need					
	Allocation	Cumulative Indicative Allocations in Future Years			
	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m	2028/29 £m
Base Budget	543.808	543.808	543.808	543.808	543.808
Inflation	31.869	46.110	60.982	75.293	89.899
Additional Permanent Spending Need	27.652	44.387	57.591	74.715	93.606
Additional Time-Limited Spending	23.503	4.295	0.184	0.132	-
Total Spending Need	**626.832**	**638.600**	**662.565**	**693.948**	**727.313**

5. Sustainability of Spend Funded from the Dedicated Schools Grant

5.1 At the same time as the Local Government Finance Settlement is announced the Department for Education are expected to also announce details of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for 2024/25 to provide funding for services to schools and pupils. A full report seeking approval for the allocation of the DSG will be brought to Cabinet for consideration in January 2024 and any decisions made will need to be included as part of the budget resolution to be agreed by Council in February 2024.

5.2 Until the details of the DSG Settlement are announced we will not know how much of this additional funding is allocated to the various elements of the DSG – schools, early years, high needs and central costs. Any updated figures that impact on the MTFS will be included in the January 2024 MTFS Update report to Cabinet.

5.3 However, even in the absence of more up-to-date figures, the underlying strategic position remains extremely serious in terms of the potential impact on the long-term sustainability of the Council's financial position. There continues to be a growing structural deficit in the High Needs DSG, with the accumulated deficit forecast to be £34m by the end of 2023/24. The Authority has a Special Educational Needs (SEND) and Inclusion Change Programme in place and in recent months has been working with the Department for Education (DfE) as

part of their "Delivering Better Value" in SEND programme with authorities across the country to identify options for bringing about the required change to delivering statutory duties within allocated resources.

5.4   Initial results from the evidence gathering stage in Warwickshire have been completed and a range of opportunities to mitigate partially the annual deficit have been identified and reported back to the DfE. As with the outputs from this work in other authorities the proposed interventions, if successfully delivered, will not remove the significant structural deficit and will not generate sufficient underspends to repay the accumulated deficit, which is forecast to continue to grow unsustainably. It is therefore the view of Corporate Board that a national solution is urgently required, but that it is unlikely this will be in place before the 2024/25 budget is approved. This report therefore sets out Corporate Board's advice in the intervening period as the impact of the SEND forecast deficit remains integral to the overall financial sustainability of the Council's finances.

5.5   The Government has put in place a statutory override until March 2026 that means that authorities do not have to make good their accumulated deficit until this point. It remains the professional advice of the Executive Director for Resources, supported by Corporate Board, that to ensure the Authority remains financially sustainable funding should be set aside the £18.000m needed to make good the forecast deficit for 2024/25. The accumulated deficit will continue to grow until March 2026, and the provision ensures the Council would not be exposed to any request from Government to cover those costs.

5.6   However, unless there are material levels of additional resources provided by the Government and fundamental system changes at a national level, it appears unaffordable for the Authority to continue to make provision for the deficit beyond 2024/25 at this point in time. The financial assumption in this report is that the Authority will take advantage of the statutory override from April 2025 onwards and commit to implementing the options available to make good the accumulated deficit (such as taking out additional borrowing or raising the council tax) when the statutory override is lifted. In the continuing absence of a clear policy to address this longstanding issue and provide a mechanism for a financially sustainable solution this would represent a step change in the Authority's underlying financial risk.

6.   Options for Balancing the Budget

6.1   As we progressed through the Pandemic it became clear that the negative financial impact of Covid-19 would continue to be felt for a number of years. The impact would be felt in terms of the demand for services and growing inflationary risk. The national and international economic and political instability has meant

that significant inflationary risks, in particular, have continued longer than initially anticipated. The result has been the need to identify significant levels of additional savings proposals that could balance the budget on top of those already included in the February 2023 MTFS.

6.2   The focus remains on the identification and quantification of options to broadly maintain, and where possible improve, services to residents through better procurement, improvements in efficiency, increased income and reductions in demand. However, the level of savings needed means that some service reductions would also be needed.

6.3   Proposals totalling £69.414m have been identified as being deliverable over the next five years. The cumulative impact of these on an annual basis are summarised in Table 3 below, with further detail shown in **Appendix D.**

Table 3: Summary of Proposals for Budget Reductions 2024-29						
	2024/25 £m	Extra in 2025/26 £m	Extra in 2026/27 £m	Extra in 2027/28 £m	Extra in 2028/28 £m	Share of Total Saving
Better procurement	3.413	1.973	1.371	1.446	0.896	13%
Demand management	5.562	6.138	4.916	3.507	3.320	34%
Income generation	4.764	2.543	2.185	2.104	2.329	25%
Rightsizing of budgets	0.616	0.353	0.273	0.675	0.295	3%
Service delivery redesign	2.343	3.667	4.556	3.900	2.849	25%
Service reductions	-	1.220	-	1.300	0.900	5%
In-year Savings Options	**16.698**	**15.894**	**13.301**	**12.932**	**10.589**	**100%**
Cumulative Savings Options	**16.698**	**32.592**	**45.893**	**58.825**	**69.414**	

6.4   The detailed work on these proposals will continue in the run-up to February with Corporate Board focussed on the pace of delivery to ensure any capacity is released at the earliest opportunity and that there is no overlap/duplication, which is good practice to ensure the robustness of the overall proposals. Any changes identified as a result of this work will be reported to Cabinet in January 2024 in the 2024/25 Budget and MTFS Update report.

6.5   Almost 60% of the budget reductions are to be delivered through demand management and the redesign of service delivery. This is a material risk given the majority of pressures are in statutory service areas where markets are working sub-optimally. The maintenance of timely delivery, an on-going focus on the transformation of services, investment in digital/automation opportunities, process improvement and the impact of Community Powered Warwickshire initiatives are essential if the required financial benefits of more effective demand management and more efficient approaches to service delivery are to be achieved. This will need to be the focus of attention for Members and Corporate Board moving forward. The utilisation of performance information, to

monitor trends and identify any areas of concern at the earliest opportunity, will be critical.

6.6   A further third of budget reductions are from increased income generation and better procurement. Delivery of increased income and cost efficiencies delivered through procurement processes at these levels will require a rigorous commercial approach to decision-making that ensures the default position of funding additional services is not to rely on the council taxpayer.

6.7   The options include a level of service reductions, and it is recognised that the list includes some difficult decisions, including some options Members have rejected in previous years. The Council has delivered £130.0m of savings since 2014 and has to find up to another £68.2m by the end of 2028/29 to balance the MTFS with a 4.99% council tax rise in 2024/25. In the context of high inflation and demand pressures, this means there are few straightforward savings options left and there are questions about the organisation's capacity to deliver any additional savings while handling high and rising demand. Corporate Board will continue to work to identify further transformation and digital/automation opportunities, to identify opportunities for additional income generation as part of taking forward outcome-driven investments, including those driving economic growth, in the run-up to the February 2024 budget and throughout 2024/25 with the aim of providing, where possible, additional options and flexibility should circumstances change. However, in order to present Members with realistic, deliverable options that would deliver a sustainable and balanced MTFS it is necessary to recognise that savings may be needed unless alternatives can be identified.

7.   Flexibility in the Budget – Reserves

7.1   The Authority has a robust reserves position, with reserves forecast to be £195.743m at the end of 2023/24. As part of the MTFS agreed in February 2023 Council reconfirmed its reserves strategy with the objective of ensuring we are using all our resources effectively, providing increased transparency and accountability around reserves and ensuring the framework is in place to align decision-making around the use of reserves with the Council Plan.

7.2   The primary purpose for holding reserves is to manage financial risk and promote financial sustainability. At the same time, we need to control the amount of scarce resources held in reserves to ensure we are using taxpayers' money to deliver services to residents and communities. Therefore, as required by the strategy over the last few months a targeted review of reserves has been undertaken.

7.3   The outcomes from the review are that it is recommended that £3.712m of specific project/volatility reserves can be closed and the resources released to the Available for Use Reserve and therefore available to Members to support the delivery of the MTFS and invest in the delivery of the Council Plan. This brings the total amount in the Available for Use Reserve to £47.751m.

7.4   However, as was set out in the latest financial monitoring report to Cabinet in November 2023, the first call on the Available for Use Reserve is to make good the forecast overspend in 2023/24. This is currently forecast to be £18.494m. Using this amount of the Available for Use Reserve to make good the 2023/24 overspend as well as the £28.114m needed to fund the time-limited allocations set out in Appendix C means there is only £1.143m in excess of this available to support the MTFS.

7.5   It is therefore the advice of Corporate Board that Members should plan for there being no reserves available to support the MTFS beyond the level of the time-limited allocations set out in Appendix C. If this position changes as we prepare Quarter 3 forecasts this will be reported to Cabinet as part of the January 2024 MTFS update report.

7.6   Any use of reserves Members want to use to support additional allocations or manage the timing differences between spending need and the delivery of budget reductions or future Council Tax increases will require a reduction in the Investment Funds. The use of funding set aside to meet the upfront costs of service transformation, the delivery of budget reductions or to invest in the priorities set out in the Council Plan is not recommended.

7.7   There is one change to the Reserves Strategy proposed for 2024/25 and that is to consolidate the individual Directorate Risk Reserves into a single corporately held Financial Management Reserve. This will enable a clearer line of sight as to how any future overspends will be managed and ensure, through our One Council approach, corrective action to prevent an overall overspend in future years is taken at the earliest opportunity. With the Available for Use Reserve now being fully committed making good any overspend in 2024/25 will be the first call on the 2025/26 MTFS refresh. The draft revised Reserves Strategy is attached at **Appendix E**. This will be updated to reflect the reserves position forecast as at the end of Quarter 3 as part of the budget resolutions to Council in February 2024.

8.   Summary Revenue Position

8.1   This section of the report brings all the elements of the budget and MTFS outlined above together to provide a summary position which provides clarity of

the decisions needed to ensure the 2024/25 budget is balanced and 2024-29 MTFS is sustainable and robust.

8.2   Table 4 shows that, with a 4.99% Council Tax increase in 2024/25, and 2% thereafter, and the use of at least £28.114m of reserves, the Authority is estimated to have a balanced budget for 2024/25 and for the period of the MTFS providing all the savings proposals are approved and delivered at the level and pace set out in Appendix D. The remaining level of headroom available to Members is £1.166m, of which a maximum of £0.290m is available for 2024/25).

8.3   If Members wish to increase investment in any service on a permanent basis or reject any of the budget reductions they do not want to see implemented then there are a number of flexibilities available:
- to increase the budget reductions shown in Appendix D and/or identify new opportunities for budget reductions; or
- take advantage of any additional flexibility offered in the Autumn Statement to increase the Council Tax; or
- to use any non-ringfenced additional funding announced, above the estimates used in this report, from the Local Government Finance Settlement and any favourable impact of the updated taxbase information provided by the Districts/Boroughs.

Table 4: Summary Revenue Budget Position 2024-29					
	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m	2028/29 £m
Spending to be Financed (Table 2)	626.832	638.600	662.565	693.948	727.313
Less:					
• Reserves used of fund one-off spending	(23.503)	(4.295)	(0.184)	(0.132)	-
• Options for Balancing the Books (Table 3)	(16.698)	(32.592)	(45.893)	(58.825)	(69.414)
Total Spend to be Resourced	**586.631**	**601.713**	**616.488**	**634.991**	**657.899**
On-going resources available (Table 1) (£1.908m of the resources shown in table 1 in 2024/25 are not on-going and are therefore excluded here)	(579.558)	(595.248)	(612.953)	(631.324)	(650.430)
Additional income from a 4.99% council tax increase in 2024/25	(7.363)	(7.646)	(7.966)	(8.295)	(8.635)
(Surplus)/Shortfall	**(0.290)**	**(1.181)**	**(4.431)**	**(4.628)**	**(1.166)**

8.4   The headroom of £1.166m provides a degree of flexibility in the allocations/budget reductions Members ultimately decide to take forward.

8.5   To arrive at the headroom of £1.166m impact of the budget options set out in this report requires the use of £28.114m reserves. This is within the level of

reserves identified as being available to support the MTFS. The reserves figures, and the consequent impact on the resources available for will be updated in the January 2024 report when the Quarter 3 budget monitoring forecast is available.

8.6   The high degree of uncertainty about both the level of resources that would be available to the Authority and the level of additional spending needed to manage the cost of services at a time of high inflation has been highlighted throughout the report. The in-year forecasts for 2023/24 are also more uncertain and volatile than usual as a result of the combination of increasing demand and inflationary impacts. It is likely that the extent of any variations between the position set out in this report and the final information (in the January 2024 report) will be greater than would normally be expected this year. Members are asked to note this heightened uncertainty and the level of flexibility to respond to emerging issues that this requires when considering the development of their budget resolutions.

9.   Capital Strategy

9.1   Each year Council is required to approve a capital strategy as part of its budget proposals. Much of the content is specified, however the strategy is an important document in setting out the Council's ambition to ensure capital and revenue spending on the asset portfolio is directed efficiently and effectively.

9.2   As a suite of documents, the capital strategy sets out:
- Our strategic intent – the aspiration and direction for our capital investment, defining the outcomes we are seeking to achieve through investment (why);
- The draft programme – the activity programmes and projects funded from our capital investment (what); and
- The governance framework – the way we will manage capital spend and the capital programme (how). It is this technical appendix that ensures we meet with statutory guidance. It also sets out how we will optimise delivery by strengthening of performance, adopting commercial principles and practice and robust benefits realisation.

9.3   Work is still on-going to finalise these draft documents pending the latest Government capital announcements, including the additional funding following the cancellation of HS2 north of Birmingham and the latest Warwickshire Recovery and Investment Fund (WRIF) and Warwickshire Property and Development Group (WPDG) business plans. The updated business plans for WRIF and WPDG are due to be reported to Cabinet in January 2024 for

approval. Work on the strategies also reflects pressures to fund school places and additional SEND provision, as well as managing the impact on capital budgets of significant inflation in the construction sector. Taken together, these factors explain why Corporate Board have not recommended reductions in the revenue costs of capital borrowing in their budget proposals.

9.4   The draft capital strategy will be brought to Cabinet on 23 January 2024 along with the accompanying Technical Annex and draft capital programme once these have been updated for Quarter 3 monitoring the refreshed WRIF and WPDG business plans.

10.   The Need for a Balanced Budget

10.1   In putting forward their proposals, Members are reminded that local authorities are required by law to set a balanced budget. An intention to set a deficit budget is not permitted. However, what is meant by 'balanced' is not defined in law. A prudent definition of a sustainable balanced budget is a financial plan based on sound assumptions which shows how income will equal expenditure over the short- and medium-term, acting in a way that considers both current and future local taxpayers.

10.2   If the budget is unbalanced then the Chief Finance Officer, supported by Corporate Board, would have to consider issuing a Section 114 notice. Such a notice is only given in the gravest of circumstances, as during that time spending and other financial activity is suspended, the External Auditors would investigate and publicly report on the circumstances and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) may take over the running of the Authority.

10.3   In the past this legal status was seen as a theoretical risk, however, over recent months there have been a number of Section 114s issued by authorities where they are unable to balance their spending needs and resources. The strength of our financial resilience and governance arrangements means that despite the demand and cost pressures facing the Authority we are not in this position. Equally the context within which we are now operating does make ensuring the budget choices made are deliverable in full and on-time is more important than ever.

10.4   Because Members decide on the Council Tax before the year begins and cannot increase it during the year, there is a need to consider risks and uncertainties that might force them to spend more on their services than they planned. Allowance is made for these risks by making prudent allowance in the estimates for services; and ensuring that there are adequate reserves to draw on if the service estimates turn out to be insufficient.

10.5 To avoid setting an unbalanced budget the Local Authority has to be financially resilient. Setting a clear MTFS helps clarify expected income and expenditure. Awareness of the funding available in the forthcoming years means the Council stands a better chance of balancing the budget. Reserves are a useful option for balancing the budget in the short-term. However, reserves should not be used to pay for day-to-day expenditure, and it is important that they are replaced when the short-term need has passed. Therefore, the MTFS needs to be fully balanced on an ongoing basis, with no ongoing spending funded from one off resources, meaning the Council Plan starts from a deficit position.

10.6 It is important that the Authority complies with its obligations under the Equalities Act 2010 - the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) - to promote equality and to reduce discrimination in relation to any of the nine 'protected characteristics' (age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; marriage and civil partnership; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation). The Council must have 'due regard' to the PSED when taking any decisions on service changes whilst recognising that local authorities have a legal duty to set a balanced budget. Similarly, if proposals are likely to have adverse impacts on customers, public consultation should be undertaken before any final decisions are made and consideration given to the outcomes of those consultations. This may mean that some proposals are not implemented, and alternative solutions may need to be sought. Legal challenges to local authority budget setting processes have tended to turn on whether the authority has complied with these duties. Equality Impact Assessments for the savings options will be made available to Members ahead of full Council in February alongside the January 2023/24 Budget and MTFS Update report.

10.7 Using the information contained in this report, Cabinet is asked to develop their 2024/25 Budget resolutions for recommendation to Council on 8 February 2024.

11.   Timescales and Next Steps

11.1 An effective MTFS ensures the Authority has the financial strategies, plans and financial decision-making framework in place that will deliver a financially resilient and sustainable Authority over the short, medium and long-term. The key components of the MTFS are:
- a 5-year Revenue Plan to balance annual funding and expenditure;
- a Capital Strategy and Capital Investment Programme to optimise the way in which we generate, manage and allocate the capital funds at our disposal;
- a Reserves Strategy and an associated programme of reserves reviews to

make sure the money we hold is effectively managed to meet the financial risks and uncertainties; and

- Treasury Management and Investment Strategies that govern how, and to what extent, we can use our cash reserves and balance sheet strength to invest in the Council's priorities and plans.

11.2 The draft strategies will form part of January's Cabinet agenda, alongside the 2024/25 Budget Update report, and will come to Council for approval alongside the budget. The January Cabinet report will reflect the funding announcements in the Government in the 2024/25 Local Government Finance Settlement, the latest information on taxbases from the districts/boroughs and any changes to the spending need in 2024/25 that arise from the latest financial monitoring information.

11.3 The timetable for agreeing the 2024/25 budget and 2024-29 MTFS is set out in Table 6.

Table 6: Timetable for Agreeing the 2024/25 Budget and 2024-29 MTFS	
14 December 2023	Report to Cabinet from Corporate Board on the budget options
Late December 2023	Provisional 2024/25 Local Government Finance Settlement
23 January 2024	Report to Cabinet outlining the final information to be used in setting the budget
By 31 January 2024	Cabinet release Conservative Group 2024/25 budget resolution(s)
31 January 2024	Statutory deadline for receipt of Council Tax and business rates information from the districts/boroughs
By 5 February 2024	Opposition Groups release any amendments/alternatives to the Conservative proposals
6 February 2024	Comparison of budget resolutions released
8 February 2024	Council agrees the 2024/25 budget and Council Tax

12. Financial Implications

12.1 There are no direct financial implications for the Authority arising from this report. The report is part of a series of reports that will culminate in Council agreeing the 2024/25 budget and Council Tax at their meeting on 8 February 2024.

13. Environmental Implications

13.1 There are no immediate environmental implications for the Authority from this report. There will be environmental implications that flow from the individual

allocations and proposals agreed as part of the Council's approved budget and these should be considered by Members as part of reaching their decisions.

14. Background Papers

14.1 None

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Elected Members have not been consulted in the preparation of this report.

Council Tax Increase Scenarios

The purpose of this ready-reckoner is to set out how either the shortfall in resources to deliver a balanced MTFS or the additional capacity available to Members to increase spending and/or remove savings options changes as different decisions are made in relation to Council Tax increases. All of the options shown are for illustrative purposes. The annual increase in the Council Tax will remain a decision for Members.

	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Basis of Corporate Boards Proposals					
Council Tax increase	4.99%	2%	2%	2%	2%
Annual increase in Council Tax (£/Band D)	82.62	34.65	35.37	36.09	36.81

The first four options shown below do not deliver a balanced 2024/25 budget and 2024-29 MTFS without additional budget reductions or resources being identified.

	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Option 1: Council Tax increase as per MTFS February 2023					
Council Tax increase	3%	2%	2%	2%	2%
Annual increase in Council Tax (£/Band D)	49.59	34.02	34.65	35.37	36.09
Cumulative additional savings/resources that would need to be identified	£7.363m	£7.646m	£7.966m	£8.295m	£8.635m
Option 2: 3.5% council tax increase in 2024/25, 2% thereafter					
Council Tax increase	3.5%	2%	2%	2%	2%
Annual increase in Council Tax (£/Band D)	57.87	34.20	34.83	35.55	36.27
Cumulative additional savings/resources that would need to be identified	£5.517m	£5.724m	£5.964m	£6.211m	£6.465m
Option 3: 4.0% council tax increase in 2024/25, 2% thereafter					
Council Tax increase	4%	2%	2%	2%	2%
Annual increase in Council Tax (£/Band D)	66.06	34.38	35.01	35.73	36.45
Cumulative additional savings/resources that would need to be identified	£3.692m	£3.823m	£3.983m	£4.148m	£4.317m
Option 4: 4.5% council tax increase in 2024/25, 2% thereafter					
Council Tax increase	4.5%	2%	2%	2%	2%
Annual increase in Council Tax (£/Band D)	74.34	34.47	35.19	35.91	36.63
Cumulative additional savings/resources that would need to be identified	£1.846m	£1.922m	£2.002m	£2.084m	£2.170m

The remaining six options all start from having a balanced budget for 2024/25 without the need to identify additional savings. They then show how Council Tax increases above 2% in the years 2025/26 to 2028/29 would give Members the financial capacity to either remove savings options or invest in priorities. There is a risk that using additional Council Tax now will reduce any future flexibility if demand and cost increases continue to increase as they have over the last two years. It should be noted that in any year the Council Tax increase is above 3% this is assumed to be additional adult social care levy and to take this level of council tax increase will in some cases mean additional investment in adult social care. The cumulative additional resources figures shown have been adjusted to reflect that the use of the additional resources in these cases would not wholly be a choice for Members.

	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Option 5: 5% council tax increase in 2024/25, 2.5% thereafter					
Council Tax increase	5%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%
Annual increase in Council Tax (£/Band D)	82.62	43.38	44.46	45.54	46.71
Cumulative additional resources available for investment	-	£1.983m	£4.129m	£6.445m	£8.960m
Option 6: 5% council tax increase in 2024/25, 3% thereafter					
Council Tax increase	5%	3%	3%	3%	3%
Annual increase in Council Tax (£/Band D)	82.62	52.02	53.55	55.17	56.80
Cumulative additional resources available for investment	-	£3.946m	£8.237m	£12.911m	£17.988m
Option 7: 5% council tax increase in 2024/25, 3.5% thereafter					
Council Tax increase	5%	3.5%	3.5%	3.5%	3.5%
Annual increase in Council Tax (£/Band D)	82.62	60.75	62.82	65.07	67.32
Cumulative additional resources available for investment	-	£5.929m	£12.408m	£19.505m	£27.250m
Option 8: 5% council tax increase in 2024/25, 4% thereafter					
Council Tax increase	5%	4%	4%	4%	4%
Annual increase in Council Tax (£/Band D)	82.62	69.39	72.18	75.06	78.03
Cumulative additional resources available for investment	-	£6.435m	£16.524m	£26.120m	£36.579m
Option 9: 5% council tax increase in 2024/25, 4.5% thereafter					
Council Tax increase	5%	4.5%	4.5%	4.5%	4.5%
Annual increase in Council Tax (£/Band D)	82.62	78.03	81.63	85.23	89.10
Cumulative additional resources available for investment	-	£6.435m	£18.486m	£31.032m	£44.640m

Option 10: 5% council tax increase in 2024/25, 5% thereafter						
Council Tax increase		5%	5%	5%	5%	5%
Annual increase in Council Tax (£/Band D)		82.62	86.76	91.08	95.67	100.44
Cumulative additional resources available for investment		-	£6.435m	£20.489m	£35.244m	£51.404m

Permanent Revenue Allocations 2024/25 to 2027/28

Description	Value of Pressure	Indicative Extra Allocation in Future Years					Total
		2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000	2028/29 £'000	£'000
Children and Families							
Price inflation - An allocation to meet the cost of net price inflation across the Service.	Updated	1,075	1,097	1,119	1,141	1,164	5,596
Child allowances costs - An allocation to meet the additional inflationary cost of keeping allowances competitive in the market for foster carers.	New	88	-	-	-	-	88
Children in Care transport costs - An allocation to meet the additional inflationary cost, aligned to the expected increase in home to school transport costs.	New	60	47	50	33	36	226
Child allowances demand - An allocation to meet the increased demand for specialist care orders to support children to leave or avoid care through allowances for extended family members caring for children.	Reduced	287	38	44	-	-	369
Children's placements (exc. children with disabilities) demand - An allocation to meet the impact of fostering/placements framework contracts and changes to the placement mix on costs.	Increased	4,878	763	813	866	922	8,242
Children in Care transport demand - An allocation to meet current and future levels of provision based on a 1.6% medium term increase in the number of children in care.	New	606	41	44	44	46	781
Children and Families sub-total		**6,994**	**1,986**	**2,070**	**2,084**	**2,168**	**15,302**
Education Service							
Price inflation - An allocation to meet the cost of net price inflation across the Service.	Updated	36	36	37	38	39	186
Attendance service - An allocation to offset the loss of traded income and increase in education attendance case-workers to meet increased demand.	Increased	98	-	-	-	-	98
Education sub-total		**134**	**36**	**37**	**38**	**39**	**284**
Children and Young People Directorate		**7,128**	**2,022**	**2,107**	**2,122**	**2,207**	**15,586**
Economy and Place							
Price inflation - An allocation to meet the cost of net price inflation across the Service.	Updated	392	400	408	416	425	2,041
Waste management - An allocation to address the increased waste management costs being incurred as a result of housing and population growth within the county and as set out in the District and Borough Council Local Plans.	Unchanged	300	300	-	-	-	600
Economy and Place sub-total		**692**	**700**	**408**	**416**	**425**	**2,641**

Permanent Revenue Allocations 2024/25 to 2027/28

Description	Value of Pressure	2024/25 £'000	Indicative Extra Allocation in Future Years				Total £'000
			2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000	2028/29 £'000	
Environment, Planning and Transport Services							
Price inflation - An allocation to meet the cost of net price inflation across the Service.	Updated	1,044	1,065	1,087	1,108	1,131	5,435
Street lighting energy cost - An allocation to fund the additional inflationary cost of street lighting energy.	New	193	208	-	-	-	401
Traffic signals cost - An allocation to fund the additional inflationary costs to maintain levels of provision following a period of increased contract and energy inflation.	New	250	-	-	-	-	250
Bridge maintenance cost - An allocation to fund the additional inflationary costs to maintain levels of provision following a period of inflation.	New	250	-	-	-	-	250
Highways maintenance contract cost - An allocation to fund the additional inflationary costs in the highways maintenance contract across routine works, road markings and streetlighting (non-energy) in each of the next two years. The contract will be retendered in 2026.	New	303	303	-	-	-	606
CSW Resilience Service cost - An allocation to fund the Council's increased contribution to the staff and running costs of the Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Resilience Service. The current contribution has been unchanged since 2019 and new agreement will cover 5 years.	New	60	-	-	-	-	60
Home to School transport cost - An allocation, covering both mainstream and SEND transport, to fund the additional inflationary costs based on expected price increases when re-tendering services.	Unchanged	1,359	358	371	384	398	2,870
Home to School transport 2023/24 - An allocation to meet the demand and inflation pressure incurred to 'catch-up' from the increase in costs/demand in 2023/24 above the allocation made as part of the budget approved in February 2023.	New	5,700	-	-	-	-	5,700
SEND home to school transport demand - An allocation to meet the increased demand for home to school transport for pupils and students.	Increased	1,643	1,617	1,130	1,186	1,245	6,821
Mainstream education transport demand - An allocation to meet the increased demand for home to school transport for pupils and students.	Increased	240	182	143	144	146	855
Traffic Signals - An allocation to reflect the growth in traffic signal assets having to be adopted, including Real Time Information Displays signs at bus stops, as a result of increased capital activity both through Council and developer-led schemes.	New	100	-	-	-	-	100
Environment, Planning and Transport Sub-total		**11,142**	**3,733**	**2,731**	**2,822**	**2,920**	**23,348**

Permanent Revenue Allocations 2024/25 to 2027/28

Description	Value of Pressure	2024/25 £'000	Indicative Extra Allocation in Future Years				Total £'000
			2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000	2028/29 £'000	
Fire and Rescue							
Price inflation - An allocation to meet the cost of net price inflation across the Service.	Updated	68	69	70	72	73	352
Fire Protection - An allocation to provide permanent funding for fire protection, originally funded temporarily through the Improvement Plan. Following changes to fire safety legislation charging businesses for fire protection advice is no longer possible.	New	-	187	38	-	-	225
Fire and Rescue sub-total		**68**	**256**	**108**	**72**	**73**	**577**
Communities Directorate		**11,902**	**4,689**	**3,247**	**3,310**	**3,418**	**26,566**
People Strategy & Commissioning							
Price inflation - An allocation to meet the cost of net price inflation across the Service.	Updated	534	545	556	567	578	2,780
Strategic Commissioner for People sub-total		**534**	**545**	**556**	**567**	**578**	**2,780**
Social Care and Support							
Price inflation - An allocation to meet the cost of net price inflation across the Service.	Updated	3,523	3,594	3,666	3,739	3,814	18,336
Provider cost - An allocation to fund the additional cost of provider inflation, mainly reflecting the impact of the increase in the National Living Wage.	Increased	12,994	1,700	1,693	1,799	1,835	20,021
Discharge Grant - An allocation to match the increased ring-fenced Discharge Grant pending agreement with Health as to how the funding will be used.	New	1,415	-	-	-	-	1,415
Adult social care demand - An allocation to meet the cost of increased demand due to population growth, the length and intensity of care need as a result of increased life expectancy and the estimated reduction in people who can fund their own care.	Increased	8,066	4,307	4,548	4,788	5,029	26,738
Children with disabilities care demand - An allocation to meet the expected demand for future placements and increases in unit costs.	Decreased	16	158	312	69	706	1,261
Children with disabilities direct payments - An allocation to meet the growing demand to support children and young people with disabilities who already receive a direct payment.	Unchanged	33	35	38	-	-	106
Social Care and Support sub-total		**26,047**	**9,794**	**10,257**	**10,395**	**11,384**	**67,877**
Social Care and Health Directorate		**26,581**	**10,339**	**10,813**	**10,962**	**11,962**	**70,657**

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Permanent Revenue Allocations 2024/25 to 2027/28

Description	Value of Pressure	2024/25 £'000	Indicative Extra Allocation in Future Years				Total £'000
			2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000	2028/29 £'000	
Enabling Services							
Price inflation - An allocation to meet the cost of net price inflation across the Service.	Updated	235	240	245	250	255	1,225
Data and analytics platform - An allocation to meet the operating cost of implementing the data and analytics platform.	Unchanged	28	32	4	63	-	127
Fire and Rescue IT Support Team - An allocation to provide increased capacity in IT to provide adequate cover, including ensuring staff are only on call one week in three.	New	68	-	-	-	-	68
Business Intelligence - An allocation to provide capacity to deliver data insights from the Education Management Information System.	New	46	-	-	-	-	46
Synergy Delivery Unit - An allocation to provide permanent funding for the Synergy team (currently funded on a temporary basis).	New	172	-	-	-	-	172
Utilities - An allocation to fund the expected long-term increase in utility costs with a time-limited allocation reflecting assumptions about continued volatility in earlier years.	New	-	-	900	-	-	900
Enabling Services sub-total		**549**	**272**	**1,149**	**313**	**255**	**2,538**
Finance							
Price inflation - An allocation to meet the cost of net price inflation across the Service.	Updated	15	15	15	16	16	77
Benefit Assessment & Income Control capacity - An allocation to provide additional capacity to meet the increase in demand from adult social care.	New	45	-	40	-	20	105
Business Support capacity - An allocation to provide increased capacity in business support to reflect the increase in demand for support services from social care services.	New	225	-	-	-	-	225
Finance sub-total		**285**	**15**	**55**	**16**	**36**	**407**
Workforce and Local Services							
Price inflation - An allocation to meet the cost of net price inflation across the Service.	Updated	9	9	9	9	9	45
Specialist Recruitment Team - An allocation to provide increased capacity to manage the complexity and growth in demand for recruitment support, including specialist recruitment advisors for Children and Families and Fire and Rescue.	New	151	-	-	-	-	151
Workforce and Local Services sub-total		**160**	**9**	**9**	**9**	**9**	**196**
Resources Directorate		**994**	**296**	**1,213**	**338**	**300**	**3,141**

Permanent Revenue Allocations 2024/25 to 2027/28

Description	Value of Pressure	2024/25 £'000	Indicative Extra Allocation in Future Years				Total £'000
			2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000	2028/29 £'000	
Corporate Services							
Price inflation - An allocation to meet the cost of net price inflation across the Service.	Updated	112	93	95	97	98	495
Coroner - An allocation to meet the increase in post mortem and area coroner costs (shared with Coventry) and to resource the phased transfer of staff into the Council from Warwickshire Police to align service provision with national norm.	Increased	235	75	50	-	-	360
Capital financing costs - An allocation to meet the additional capital financing costs of the Authority based on planned borrowing requirement of the capital programme.	Increased	-	-	-	3,964	4,777	8,741
Provision for winter pressures - A provision to mitigate future potential winter pressures costs in Social Care and Support.	New	2,300	-	-	-	-	2,300
Provision for pay inflation - A provision for the cost of pay uplift for all Services.	Updated	9,269	4,462	4,551	4,642	4,735	27,659
Provision for future indicative spending pressures - A provision for future unknown and unquantified spending need to mitigate future potential costs as part of ensuring the Council's services are sustainable over the medium term.	Unchanged	1,000	9,000	6,000	6,000	6,000	28,000
Corporate Services sub-total		**12,916**	**13,630**	**10,696**	**14,703**	**15,610**	**67,555**
Corporate Services		**12,916**	**13,630**	**10,696**	**14,703**	**15,610**	**67,555**
Total Annual Additional Permanent Allocations		**59,521**	**30,976**	**28,076**	**31,435**	**33,497**	**183,505**
Total Cumulative Additional Permanent Allocations		**59,521**	**90,497**	**118,573**	**150,008**	**183,505**	

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Time Limited Revenue Allocations 2024/25 to 2028/29

Description	Value of pressure	2024/25 £'000	Indicative Allocation in Future Years				Total £'000
			2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000	2028/29 £'000	
Children and Families							
Children in Care placements - A two-year allocation to meet the cost of emergency provision until our own children's homes and joint provision with the NHS to manage mental health issues is fully operational.	New	1,950	2,028	-	-	-	3,978
Children and Families sub-total		**1,950**	**2,028**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**3,978**
Education							
Outdoor Education capacity building - Final year of the time-limited allocation to support the development, implementation and embedding of the Outdoor Education and Learning Strategy.	Increased	53	-	-	-	-	53
School Admissions telephony team capacity - A one-year extension of current time limited allocation to allow further time to explore IT solutions to reduce demand.	New	81	-	-	-	-	81
SENDAR - A two-year allocation to fund the cost of approved mediators and tribunals where the Council's decisions regarding children and young people with SEND are challenged.	New	389	195	-	-	-	584
Education sub-total		**523**	**195**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**718**
Children and Young People Directorate		**2,473**	**2,223**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**4,696**
Economy and Place							
HS2 - Years three and four of a four year allocation to continue work to mitigate the impacts of HS2 on Warwickshire residents and communities, maximising contributions from HS2.	Reduced	55	55	-	-	-	110
Coventry & Warwickshire Growth Hub (CWGH) - A two-year allocation to match fund at the current level of delivery, in partnership with Coventry the CWGH, following the closure of the Local Enterprise Partnership (CWLEP)	New	100	70	-	-	-	170
Economy and Place sub-total		**155**	**125**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**280**

Time Limited Revenue Allocations 2024/25 to 2028/29

Description	Value of pressure	Indicative Allocation in Future Years					Total
		2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000	2028/29 £'000	£'000
Environment, Planning and Transport							
Gypsy and Traveller sites - A two-year allocation to fund additional maintenance costs while capital project to improve the sites is completed.	Unchanged	70	30	-	-	-	100
Highways Maintenance Contract Procurement - A two-year allocation to fund the cost of consultancy advice and support during procurement of the new 10-year highways maintenance contract when the contract comes to an end in 2026.	New	200	200	-	-	-	400
Domestic Homicide Reviews - An allocation to meet the cost of the increased number of reviews each year.	New	82	-	-	-	-	82
Environment, Planning and Transport sub-total		**352**	**230**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**582**
Communities Directorate		**507**	**355**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**862**
Enabling Services							
Utilities - A two-year allocation to meet higher wholesale utility costs whilst the costs remain volatile before gas, electricity and water prices fall back to the underlying trend over the medium term.	Increased	1,400	1,100	-	-	-	2,500
Resource to support corporate and adult social care projects - Final year of a two-year allocation to provide capacity to support projects including the contact centre telephony system, the replacement customer records management system and adults and children's transformation programmes.	Unchanged	169	-	-	-	-	169
Customer Service Centre capacity - A two-year allocation to increase capacity in the Customer Service Centre 'one front door' for social care to manage demand, improve the answer rate and the process of non-telephony referrals.	New	130	133	-	-	-	263
Customer Relations capacity - A two-year allocation to increase capacity in the Customer Relations Team to manage the transition of a new customer feedback system to recognise the increased number of complex cases.	New	60	61	-	-	-	121
Enabling Services sub-total		**1,759**	**1,294**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**3,053**

Time Limited Revenue Allocations 2024/25 to 2028/29

Description	Value of pressure	2024/25 £'000	Indicative Allocation in Future Years				Total £'000
			2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000	2028/29 £'000	
Finance							
Invest to save for redesign - Final year of a three year allocation to provide additional capacity for process redesign and to implement the new digital and automation technologies required to support the delivery of the Finance Service savings proposals.	Unchanged	100	-	-	-	-	100
Vehicle management strategic approach - Final year of a three year allocation to deliver a project that will realise savings from the consolidation of spares, parts and tyres spend, changes to delivery models and reducing demand on fuel.	Unchanged	56	-	-	-	-	56
Finance sub-total		**156**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**156**
Strategy, Planning and Governance							
Customer and Partnership capacity- Final year of a two-year allocation to allow for a further 18 month delay in the delivery of the Customer and Partnership redesign where demand and activity has yet to settle down post Covid.	Unchanged	145	-	-	-	-	145
Community Pantries (Supermarkets) - A two-year allocation to enable the pantries to move to a more sustainable long-term delivery model.	New	302	239	-	-	-	541
Strategy, Planning and Governance sub-total		**447**	**239**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**686**
Workforce and Local Services							
Recruitment Team -A four-year allocation to bring back the temporary specialist recruitment advisors for Children and Families and Fire and Rescue to manage the complexity and growth in demand for recruitment support in these areas.	New	109	132	132	132	-	505
Your HR support costs - A three-year allocation to increase the capacity and capability to deliver medium to large scale restructure work within the system.	New	52	52	52	-	-	156
Workforce and Local Services sub-total		**161**	**184**	**184**	**132**	**0**	**661**
Resources Directorate		**2,523**	**1,717**	**184**	**132**	**0**	**4,556**

Time Limited Revenue Allocations 2024/25 to 2028/29

Description	Value of pressure	2024/25 £'000	Indicative Allocation in Future Years				Total £'000
			2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000	2028/29 £'000	
Corporate Services							
DSG deficit offset funding - an allocation to ensure that the Authority's overall financial position is sustainable by setting aside resources to meet the 2024/25 forecast shortfall in the High Needs Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) compared to the estimated need to spend.	Updated	18,000	-	-	-	-	18,000
Corporate Services sub-total		**18,000**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**18,000**
Corporate Services		**18,000**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**18,000**
Total Annual Time Limited Allocations		**23,503**	**4,295**	**184**	**132**	**0**	**28,114**

Budget Reductions 2023/24 to 2028/29

Description	Type	Annual Saving					Total
		2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000	2028/29 £'000	Saving £'000
Children and Families							
Savings on third party spend - Review of services purchased from third parties to ensure value for money.	Better procurement	(240)	-	-	-	-	(240)
Reduce spend on residential care - Reduce the cost of care/services including the increased use of our internal children's homes, boarding schools and residential schools.	Better procurement	(2,361)	(1,571)	(1,171)	(1,281)	(581)	(6,965)
External foster care - Reduce the cost of care/services by reducing spend on external foster care through increasing number of internal foster carers.	Better procurement	(200)	-	(100)	-	-	(300)
Grant income - More effective use of grant income to support the core activity of the service and contribute to the service overheads.	Income generation	(100)	(100)	-	-	-	(200)
Third-party contributions - Maximise contributions from other agencies for care packages for children in care.	Income generation	(250)	(300)	(200)	-	-	(750)
House project - Reduce the cost of 16 plus supported accommodation through the expansion of the House project.	Service redesign	(100)	-	(100)	-	(200)	(400)
Reduction in staff costs - Reduction in staffing costs flowing from the successful implementation of the Sustainability Plan	Service redesign	(91)	(194)	(1,126)	(656)	-	(2,067)
Youth and Community Centres - Increase income from third party use of centres.	Income generation	-	-	(20)	(50)	(50)	(120)
Children and Family Centres redesign - Redesigning the service offer, consolidating activity into a reduced number of centres across the County.	Service redesign	-	-	-	(900)	-	(900)
Children and Families sub-total		**(3,342)**	**(2,165)**	**(2,717)**	**(2,887)**	**(831)**	**(11,942)**
Education							
Savings on third party spend - Review of services purchased from third parties to ensure value for money.	Better procurement	(15)	(10)	-	-	-	(25)
Traded income - Increase traded income from Governor and Attendance service as well as review and modernise music services.	Income generation	(5)	-	-	-	-	(5)
Early Years service review - A review of the Service's staffing structure and allocation of school improvement support provision.	Service redesign	(21)	(116)	(54)	-	-	(191)
Education sub-total		**(41)**	**(126)**	**(54)**	**0**	**0**	**(221)**
Children and Young People Directorate		**(3,383)**	**(2,291)**	**(2,771)**	**(2,887)**	**(831)**	**(12,163)**

Budget Reductions 2023/24 to 2028/29

Description	Type	Annual Saving					Total
		2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000	2028/29 £'000	Saving £'000
Economy & Place							
Country parks income review - Apply commercial approach to Country Parks income streams.	Income generation	(25)	(25)	(50)	-	-	(100)
Savings on third party spend - Review of services purchased from third parties to ensure value for money.	Better procurement	(59)	-	-	-	-	(59)
Business centres portfolio - Increased income through the introduction of virtual office space and additional rental income following additional capital investment to expand the business centres portfolio.	Income generation	(50)	(275)	(150)	(150)	-	(625)
Rural agenda service review - Rationalise staffing resource covering rural agenda.	Service redesign	(40)	-	-	-	-	(40)
Waste strategy - Estimated reduction in cost as a result of the implementation of the Government's resource and waste strategy.	Service redesign	-	(1,000)	(2,000)	-	-	(3,000)
HS2 - removal of non-funded activity.	Right-sizing	-	-	(48)	-	-	(48)
Parking income - Increased income from changes to Pay and Display charges and resident parking permits as well as additional third party procurement savings and the implementation of business parking permits.	Income generation	-	-	(445)	(445)	(885)	(1,775)
Household Waste Recycling Centres - closure of three household waste recycling centres.	Service reduction	-	-	-	(200)	-	(200)
Economy & Place sub-total		**(174)**	**(1,300)**	**(2,693)**	**(795)**	**(885)**	**(5,847)**
Environment, Planning & Transport							
Traded income - An expansion of traded income including increasing income from external contracts, new external contracts and MOT sales to public, enforcement income from network management, ecology surveys and the forestry service.	Income generation	(80)	(80)	(40)	-	-	(200)
Savings on third party spend - Review of services purchased from third parties to ensure value for money, including from the new highways contract starting in 2026.	Better procurement	(29)	-	-	(150)	-	(179)
SEND Home to school transport - A reduction in the cost of the service as a result of service/route redesign and the positive impact of the SEND Change and Inclusion Programme on both demand and the length of journeys.	Service redesign	(1,024)	(546)	-	-	-	(1,570)
Home to school transport - Applying the learning from the SEND transport project to make efficiencies in home to school mainstream operations.	Service redesign	-	(500)	-	(116)	-	(616)
School crossing patrols – Review of the service with a view to reducing the long term cost.	Service reduction	-	(199)	-	-	-	(199)

Budget Reductions 2023/24 to 2028/29

Description	Type	Annual Saving					Total
		2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000	2028/29 £'000	Saving £'000
Winter gritting service - Review of the operation of the winter gritting service to reduce expenditure through more efficient delivery of services following capital investment for the construction of salt barns.	Service redesign	-	-	(250)	-	-	(250)
Review of verge maintenance - Review of the extent of grass cutting needed to maintain road safety.	Service redesign	-	-	-	(125)	(50)	(175)
Street Lighting - Reduction in energy costs through investment in dimming technology.	Service redesign	-	-	-	(200)	-	(200)
Street Lighting - Reduce energy costs by extending part-night lighting hours.	Service reduction	-	-	-	(100)	-	(100)
Redesign of bus support - Redesign to ensure effective provision of services through consideration of alternative delivery models and a review of subsidies for the rural bus service network.	Service reduction	-	-	-	(500)	(250)	(750)
Community Safety - Review and prioritisation of the work of the Community Safety team.	Service redesign	-	-	-	-	(75)	(75)
Trading Standards - Review and prioritisation of the work of the Trading Standards team.	Service redesign	-	-	-	-	(100)	(100)
Gypsy and Traveller sites - Externalise operation of Gypsy and Traveller sites, reducing in-house costs.	Service redesign	-	-	-	-	(150)	(150)
Winter gritting - Reduce winter gritting to statutory minimum (A & B roads only).	Service reduction	-	-	-	-	(150)	(150)
Environment, Planning & Transport sub-total		**(1,133)**	**(1,325)**	**(290)**	**(1,191)**	**(775)**	**(4,714)**
Fire and Rescue							
Savings on third party spend - Review of services purchased from third parties to ensure value for money	Better procurement	(71)	-	-	-	-	(71)
Fire training - Income generation from taking advantage of commercial training opportunities linked to completion of new training facilities.	Income generation	-	(50)	(100)	(50)	-	(200)
Fleet transport savings - Revenue savings from purchase of Fire transport vehicles, ending lease agreements	Service redesign	-	(60)	-	-	-	(60)
Administration review - review of administrative roles across WFRS. This saving will have no impact on operational service delivery.	Service redesign	-	-	-	-	(64)	(64)
Fire and Rescue sub-total		**(71)**	**(110)**	**(100)**	**(50)**	**(64)**	**(395)**
Communities Directorate		**(1,378)**	**(2,735)**	**(3,083)**	**(2,036)**	**(1,724)**	**(10,956)**

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Budget Reductions 2023/24 to 2028/29

Description	Type	Annual Saving					Total
		2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000	2028/29 £'000	Saving £'000
People Strategy & Commissioning							
Health, wellbeing and self-care - Rationalise the public health offer, preserving budgets for mandated public health functions, consolidating use of the Warwickshire Cares Better Together Fund and spend on the Wellbeing for Warwickshire offer.	Right-sizing	(306)	(100)	(185)	(390)	(60)	(1,041)
Management of Strategic Commissioning for People costs - Rationalise budgets across a range of areas including staffing, travel and conference budgets, central recharges and contributions.	Right-sizing	(75)	-	(40)	(50)	-	(165)
Housing related support - Further decommissioning of the housing related support service offer. £1m is the existing budget reduction the two £0.5m reductions are new.	Service reduction	-	(1,000)	-	(500)	(500)	(2,000)
Rationalisation of commissioned services - Reduction in spend on service contracts through service redesign and finding efficiencies within service delivery models, including the Domestic Abuse and Violence Service spend on consultancy, training, communications, counselling and therapy and outreach services and the Drug and Alcohol Service's non-statutory substance misuse user involvement service and prescribing and detox in-patient services.	Service redesign	-	-	(33)	(275)	(338)	(646)
Vacancy factor - Application of an additional 5% vacancy factor/turnover allowance in Public Health and People Strategy and Commissioning.	Right-sizing	-	-	-	(235)	(235)	(470)
Provider Learning and Development Partnership - Increase income through the approach to charging for the learning and development offer.	Income generation	-	-	-	(55)	-	(55)
People Strategy and Commissioning sub-total		**(381)**	**(1,100)**	**(258)**	**(1,505)**	**(1,133)**	**(4,377)**

Budget Reductions 2023/24 to 2028/29

Description	Type	Annual Saving					Total
		2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000	2028/29 £'000	Saving £'000
Social Care and Support							
Savings on third party spend - Review of services purchased from third parties to ensure value for money.	Better procurement	(204)	-	-	-	-	(204)
Housing with support for older people - Further develop the housing with support offer to reduce reliance on residential provision for all ages; including consideration of capital investment to secure revenue savings.	Demand management	(500)	-	-	-	-	(500)
Management of cost of adults service provision - Management of the budgeted cost increases of externally commissioned care.	Demand management	(2,000)	(2,064)	-	-	-	(4,064)
Prevention and self-care - Develop a prevention and self care strategy implementing the service change and transformation activities underway across adult social care, including an improved early intervention and prevention offer, further refinement of the in-house reablement offer, further development of assistive technology and investment in programmes, projects and services that reduce people's reliance on care and support.	Demand management	(1,706)	(935)	-	-	-	(2,641)
Integrated commissioning with Health - Efficiencies through joint working and increased purchasing power for externally commissioned care. Arrangements will form part of the Coventry and Warwickshire Integrated Health and Care Partnership and associated system plan.	Service redesign	(200)	(267)	-	-	-	(467)
Management of care demand - Rephasing the demand and cost pressures for adults social care based on expected growth as informed by national and local data.	Demand management	(1,356)	(2,389)	(4,416)	(3,507)	(3,320)	(14,988)
Increase in client and external income - Increase in income as a result of taking into account expected growth of adult social care services and in-year unplanned income from the Department of Health and Social Care.	Income generation	(750)	(900)	(1,000)	(1,300)	(1,300)	(5,250)
Review of support for children with disabilities - Implementing the service change and transformation activities services supporting children with disabilities.	Demand management	-	(750)	(500)	-	-	(1,250)
Social Care and Support sub-total		**(6,716)**	**(7,305)**	**(5,916)**	**(4,807)**	**(4,620)**	**(29,364)**
Social Care and Health Directorate		**(7,097)**	**(8,405)**	**(6,174)**	**(6,312)**	**(5,753)**	**(33,741)**

Budget Reductions 2023/24 to 2028/29

Description	Type	Annual Saving					Total
		2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000	2028/29 £'000	Saving £'000
Enabling Services							
Vacancy factor - Application of a 2% vacancy factor/turnover allowance where not already applied.	Right-sizing	(7)	(25)	-	-	-	(32)
Enabling Services delivery review - Review of expenditure on staffing, expenses and projects in Enabling Services.	Right-sizing	(50)	(150)	-	-	-	(200)
Estates rationalisation - Reduction in rates, utility costs, facilities management and maintenance costs from the disposal of surplus assets, the effective mix of staff and agency use and increased income from capital fees and rental income from the effective use of our residual estate.	Service redesign	(200)	(181)	(233)	(867)	(1,060)	(2,541)
ICT Service delivery review - Review past ICT budget growth and focus on efficiencies through development projects.	Service redesign	(125)	(54)	(108)	(107)	-	(394)
ICT applications migration and rationalisation - Migrating workloads to Azure to derive efficiencies from ICT application management alongside an on-going focus on the rationalisation of applications to reduce licence and maintenance costs.	Service redesign	(120)	(50)	-	-	-	(170)
Digital roadmap - Savings as a result of a three year programme of investment in digital technology and automation and the on-going service redesign and automation both within the Service and across the organisation more widely.	Service redesign	(273)	(284)	(364)	(55)	-	(976)
Voice of Warwickshire - Review of the use of the Voice of Warwickshire.	Service reduction	-	(21)	-	-	-	(21)
Data Strategy - Implementation of the Data Strategy to improve data, data literacy and tools that better equip the council to be data led and self-serving to enable efficiencies in our data workforce.	Service redesign	-	-	-	-	(63)	(63)
Enabling Services sub-total		**(775)**	**(765)**	**(705)**	**(1,029)**	**(1,123)**	**(4,397)**
Finance							
Process efficiencies - Efficiencies through ongoing service redesign, automation, AI and self-service across finance and business support.	Service redesign	(149)	(250)	(162)	(312)	(81)	(954)
Third-party spend - Savings and rebates from externally purchased services and a commercial approach to contracting, to be co-produced and co-owned with Services, with activity to be led by Procurement to ensure value for money.	Better procurement	(199)	(167)	-	-	(300)	(666)
Vacancy factor - Application of a vacancy factor/turnover allowance where not already applied.	Right-sizing	-	(19)	-	-	-	(19)
Finance sub-total		**(348)**	**(436)**	**(162)**	**(312)**	**(381)**	**(1,639)**

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Budget Reductions 2023/24 to 2028/29

Description	Type	Annual Saving					Total Saving
		2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000	2028/29 £'000	£'000
Strategy, Planning & Governance							
Vacancy factor - Application of a vacancy factor/turnover allowance where not already applied.	Right-sizing	(34)	(40)	-	-	-	(74)
Third party spend - Review of services purchased from third parties to ensure value for money and management of the budgeted cost increases of externally purchased services.	Better procurement	(32)	(23)	-	(15)	(15)	(85)
Legal services trading income - Additional surplus from external trading with other local authorities and public sector bodies, including Warwickshire Legal Services dividends	Income generation	(40)	(40)	(110)	(30)	(30)	(250)
Service efficiencies - Right-sizing of budgets across the Service following the prioritisation of activity and more effective channels of service delivery including electronic record keeping, consultancy and change programme activity.	Service redesign	-	-	(4)	(94)	-	(98)
Strategy, Planning & Governance sub-total		**(106)**	**(103)**	**(114)**	**(139)**	**(45)**	**(507)**
Workforce and Local Services							
Vacancy factor - Application of a 2% vacancy factor/turnover allowance where not already applied.	Right-sizing	(4)	(19)	-	-	-	(23)
Registration Service - Increase registration revenue through the optimisation of service delivery locations.	Income generation	(28)	(20)	-	-	-	(48)
Pro-active use of apprenticeships - Closer integration of apprentices into service workforce structures.	Service redesign	-	(165)	-	-	-	(165)
Rationalisation of the Libraries and Museums Service - A range of service changes including reducing the Book Fund and E-Resource Fund, aligning opening hours across the county by closing smaller libraries at 5pm and reviewing Museums opening hours culminating in a customer focused review of the delivery methods of museums and libraries services.	Service redesign	-	-	(122)	(193)	(168)	(483)
Service redesign - Generic saving target for new service at the end of Year 5. New Director to generate options and ideas and firm up by 2025/26 MTFS refresh.	Service redesign	-	-	-	-	(100)	(100)
Workforce and Local Services sub-total		**(32)**	**(204)**	**(122)**	**(193)**	**(268)**	**(819)**
Resources Directorate		**(1,261)**	**(1,508)**	**(1,103)**	**(1,673)**	**(1,817)**	**(7,362)**

Budget Reductions 2023/24 to 2028/29

Description	Type	Annual Saving					Total
		2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000	2028/29 £'000	Saving £'000
Corporate Services							
Savings on third party spend - Review of services purchased from third parties and the increased take-up of early invoice payment. (Delivery will be the responsibility of the Director of Finance).	Better procurement	(3)	(202)	(100)	-	-	(305)
Treasury management returns - A target to increase returns on investment by 10 basis points based on a more pro-active approach to treasury management. (Delivery will be the responsibility of the Director of Finance.)	Income generation	(121)	-	-	-	-	(121)
Warwickshire Property and Development Group - Forecast income stream from the successful delivery of the company business plan.	Income generation	(2,856)	(433)	-	-	-	(3,289)
Capital financing costs - Reduction in the Authority's borrowing costs as a result of using capital receipts from the sale of surplus assets. (Delivery will be the responsibility of the Director of Enabling Services).	Income generation	(16)	(120)	(70)	(24)	(64)	(294)
Rebate on loan repayment - Rebate from the early repayment of borrowing due to favourable gilt rates with the annual benefit realised over 10 financial years. (Delivery will be the responsibility of the Director of Finance).	Income generation	(193)	-	-	-	-	(193)
Members allowances - Reduction in the cost of Members allowances due to reduced travel/mileage and other expenses.	Right-sizing	(140)	-	-	-	-	(140)
SCAPE dividend - Additional income from including the average annual SCAPE dividend in the Council's core budget.	Income generation	(250)	-	-	-	-	(250)
Increase in Council tax Income - No win, no fee work to identify properties that should be liable for council tax but not currently charged.	Income generation	-	(200)	-	-	-	(200)
Resources Directorate efficiencies - Staff reductions and structural efficiencies in the Directorate. (Delivery will be the responsibility of the Executive Director for Resources).	Service redesign	-	-	-	-	(400)	(400)
Corporate Services		**(3,579)**	**(955)**	**(170)**	**(24)**	**(464)**	**(5,192)**
Annual Budget Reductions Total		**(16,698)**	**(15,894)**	**(13,301)**	**(12,932)**	**(10,589)**	**(69,414)**
Cumulative Budget Reductions Total		**(16,698)**	**(32,592)**	**(45,893)**	**(58,825)**	**(69,414)**	

Reserves Strategy 2024-29

Introduction

Councillor Peter Butlin
Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Property

I am delighted to be able to endorse this reserves strategy. It provides a clear framework for making sure the 'rainy-day' money we hold is effectively managed to meet the financial risks and uncertainties we face whilst enabling us to hold less overall and providing capacity for investing in the delivery of the Council Plan.

It faces head-on Members' concerns about the number of reserves, the amount of money tied up and the lack of clarity about how specific financial risks are being managed. Most importantly it supports the building of a common understanding that balances ensuring we remain a financially resilient authority with identifying whether resources could be released for investment in the objectives we are working towards.

Rob Powell
Executive Director for Resources

Part of my role, as Executive Director for Resources and the Council's s151 officer, is to report on the adequacy of the Authority's financial reserves and provide assurance that they are sufficient to ensure the Authority remains financially sustainable and resilient over the medium-term.

Alongside this, ensuring effective use of reserves for investing in long-term transformation and better outcomes is increasingly becoming of greater value and importance.

This reserves strategy sets out why effective management of reserves is important and how we make decisions about the level of reserves to hold. Our approach will be a success if, across the Council, it is understood that the money we have in reserves is proportionate to the risks and uncertainties we face, promotes financial resilience and is actively managed to identify where one-off resources that can be invested in support of the Council's outcomes and key objectives.

Section 1: The Purpose of our Reserves Strategy

What are Reserves?

Reserves are revenue resources we have accumulated over time and set aside for a particular purpose as part of an integrated approach to the financial management of the Authority over the short, medium and long-term.

What is a Reserves Strategy?

This reserves strategy sets out the choices we make in relation to the level and purposes for which we hold the reserves we have accumulated. It is made up of three key elements:

1. Our strategic intent – what we are seeking to achieve through holding reserves;
2. Our programme – the level of reserves we hold and our plans for their use over the period of the 2024-29 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS); and
3. Our framework – the way we will determine the level of reserves we need, manage those reserves and plan for their use in line with best practice and statutory requirements.

Together these elements set out our ambition for reserves, the nature of that ambition and how we provide assurance.

Why do we need a Reserves Strategy?

We plan over the short term and medium term how we will use the resources we are allocated and raise to deliver services for and to the residents and communities of Warwickshire. As a large, complex organisation there will always be variations between our actual spending/income and our plans due to variations in demand, demographic change, changes in costs and funding decisions of third parties as well as needing to deliver projects and investments spanning more than one financial year.

There will always be events that occur in an unplanned and unpredictable way that will have financial consequences for the Authority and respond in a prompt and timely way. To ensure we can manage these financial risks whilst being able to maintain services requires that the Authority holds funds in reserve to meet these costs as and when they arrive. A reserves strategy enables us to do this in a planned way.

How does it fit with our other strategies?

The reserves strategy is part of a suite of supporting strategies that supplement the Council Plan and MTFS. All the supporting strategies are aligned to the Council Plan and MTFS and provide an additional level of granularity that help create a bridge between the high-level over-arching plan and operational delivery. As such it forms part of a collective accountability framework for the management of the Authority's financial resources.

Maintaining the current high standards of financial management across the organisation is critical to the successful delivery of the Council Plan and MTFS. Any weakening of financial management has a direct impact on the level of reserves needed to offset the risk of services overspending and/or the non-delivery of savings targets. The central role in the management of the Authority's reserves lies with the Chief Executive and Executive Directors, both individually and collectively, with support and advice from Finance.

Section 2: Our Reserves

Our drivers for holding reserves are to:

a) Manage financial risk so that the risk materialising does not undermine the Authority's overall financial position or impact on service delivery;

b) Plan for the effective use of project resources over time;

c) Ensure we meet funding conditions in our use of any available resources; and

d) Retain any other accumulated underspends prior to decisions on their use.

We will always need to retain reserves for each of these reasons. All reserves that do not fall into categories a) to c) automatically fall into category d).

Our reserves are forecast to be £195.7m at the end of 2023/24. We are holding the £195.7m for the following reasons:

a) £94.7m to manage financial risk, including volatility;

b) £39.1m for investment in projects to drive forward the delivery of the Council's objectives;

c) £33.9m to meet externally set funding conditions; and

d) £28.0m available for investing to pump-prime the delivery of the Council's core outcomes and to support the resourcing of the MTFS by managing timing differences between spending need and the delivery of budget reductions.
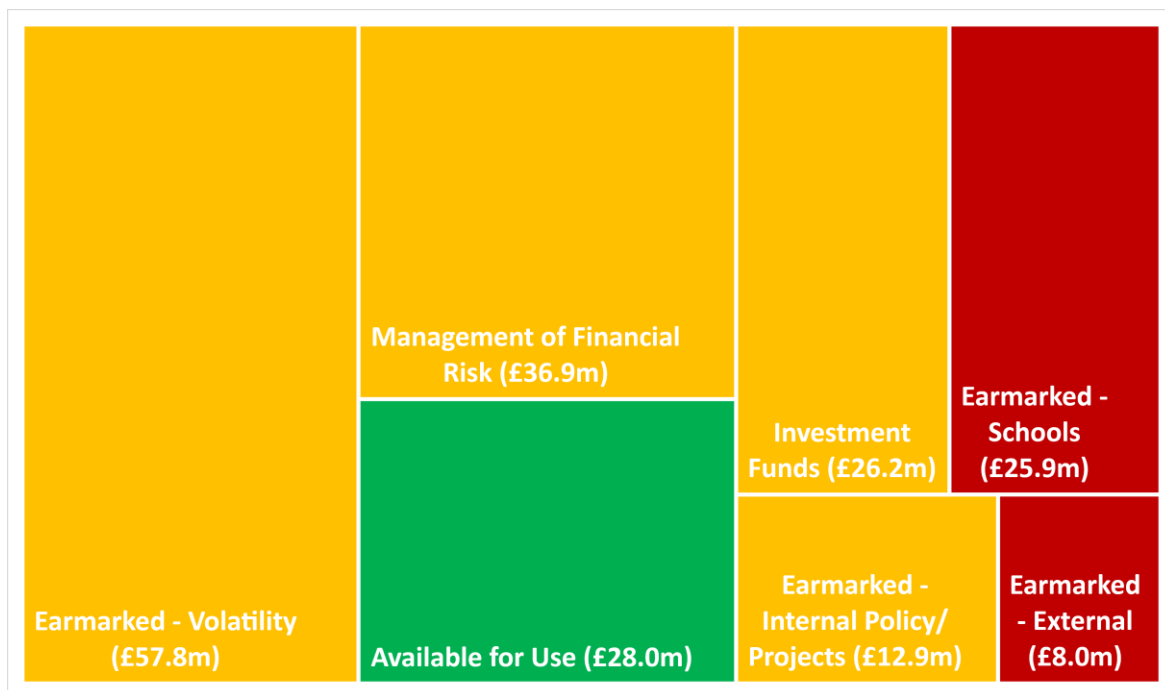
Key	
Not available for use	🟥
To be reviewed on an annual basis	🟧
Available for investment	🟩

Section 3: Our Reserves Framework

Our Reserves Framework sets out our accountability and governance arrangements around the retention and use of reserves. In doing so it balances speed of decision-making with Member oversight and accountability for decisions about the effective use of the Council's resources.

Guiding principles for managing and using Reserves

Our guiding principles for managing and using reserves are:

- The primary purpose is to manage financial risk and promote financial sustainability.
- Subject to meeting this requirement we will:
  - maximise the ability to use reserves flexibly to deliver the organisation's priorities;
  - control the amount of scarce resources held in reserves; and
  - hold reserves at a corporate level unless there is a business/technical reason for not doing so.
- The planned use of reserves, for the following financial year, will be agreed as part of the annual budget setting and medium-term financial planning process. Other than in exceptional circumstances the planned use of reserves is only expected to change in year as a result of:
  - investment projects and projects to deliver budget reductions in future years approved by Members/Corporate Board; and
  - adjustments to reflect the impacts of the previous year's outturn that were not known at the time the budget for the year was agreed, where this aligns with the approved Council Delivery Plan or is an invest-to-save project.
- All reserves will be subject to a year-end review to ensure the reason for holding the reserve and the plans for its use aligns with the Council Plan, the Council Delivery Plan, MTFS and this strategy.
- Reporting on each reserve and seeking approval for any variations or to create a new reserve will form part of the quarterly monitoring report to Cabinet.

Year-end review of reserves

All reserves will be subject to a year-end review by the relevant Execuive Director in conjunction with the Director of Finance. At the end of each financial year for each reserve a delivery plan will be prepared that sets out:

- plans for use of the reserve including sunset clauses/closure dates; and
- benefits to be delivered from the investment.

Without an approved delivery plan in place a reserve cannot be accessed.

The outcome of this review will be a report to Cabinet in June each year seeking approval for further use of reserves in the current financial year and to identify where there are additional reserves to support the MTFS roll-forward.

Governance Framework

Managment of Financial Risk - Corporate
- Level of reserve set by the Executive Director for Resources (as Section 151 officer) as the minimum amount required, based their assessment of the financial risks facing the orgnaisation and the extent to which these are covered elsewhere
- Allocations approved by full Council based on a recommendation from Cabinet or the Executive Director for Resources
- Any approved use to be replenished up to the minimum level as part of setting the Council's budget for the following financial year

Management of Financial Risk - Services
- To manage in-year financial variations e.g. fluctuations in demand, financial risks associated with the delivery of the savings plan and to manage any overspend
- Maximum of 2% of Services net revenue budget
- Held as a single corporate reserve with the Executive Director for Resources accountable
- Decisions and proposals on its use reported to Cabinet as part of the outturn report each year with any use replenished as part of financial planning for the following financial year

Volatility
- To manage areas of spending where the cost in any one year is variable and unpredictable but where annual fluctuations are averaged out over the medium-term
- The continued need for and level of all volatility funds will be subject to an annual review. Held at both Directorate and Corporate level with accountability at Director level
- In-year governance arrangements approved by the Exeucitve Director for Resources as part of the Council's scheme of delegation

Earmarked
- To manage external funding received for specific purposes where the decisions on how the funding is used is not wholly within the control of the Council
- Held at Service level with accountability at Director level
- Governance arrangements agreed as part of the approval process for setting up the reserve, but will be determined by the requirements of the individual ring-fence

Investment Funds
- Funds set up to provide pump-priming investment to deliver on the Council's core outcomes and areas of focus
- Held at Service level with accountability at Director level
- Governance arrangments agreed as part of the approval process for the investment if the project plan is to straddle more than one financial year
- All Investment Fund reserves expected to be time-limited and subject to annual review

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Cabinet

14 December 2023

Education Capital Programme 2023/24

Recommendations

That Cabinet:

1. Recommends to Council the addition of £2.868m to the capital programme to deliver the scheme at Warton Nethersole CofE Primary School to be funded by developer contributions and the Department for Education (DfE) Basic Need Grant.

2. Approves the proposals for alterations at St John's Primary School:
   a) To increase the capacity from one form entry (210 places) to two form entry (420 places).
   b) To establish specialist resourced provision (SRP) for up to 14 learners with SEND.
   and recommends to Council the addition of £6.335m to the capital programme to deliver the scheme at St John's Primary School which will be funded from developer contributions and the DfE Basic Need grant.

3. Approves the addition to the Education Capital Programme of £0.328m to deliver the proposed schemes at Shottery St Andrews CofE Primary School and Cubbington CofE Primary School

4. Approves the increase of pupils on roll at the specialist resourced provisions at Paddox Primary School and Water Orton Primary School as outlined in section 3.

5. Subject to Council's agreement to the required additions to the Capital Programme, delegates authority to the Executive Director for People, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Property, to invite tenders and enter into the appropriate contracts or (where the scheme is school led) to make the necessary funding arrangements for these schemes on terms and conditions considered acceptable to the Executive Director for Resources.

1.   Executive Summary

1.1   This report recommends proposals for allocating resources in the Education (Schools) Capital Programme to the specific projects set out in Section 3.

1.2 The Education Capital Programme is driven by the long-term strategic planning outlined in the Education Sufficiency Strategy and the annual sufficiency update to ensure Warwickshire can meet its statutory duty to provide school places.

1.3 Forecasts of expected future pupil numbers are produced and published annually and consider current and expected future population growth. This includes growth from approved housing development. Where these forecasts predict a shortfall of school places, and local schools do not have enough physical space to admit the expected numbers of additional children, education capital projects are developed to provide those additional places.

1.4 Projects are prioritised and brought forward according to the date the additional places will be required, as evidenced in the pupil forecast data, combined with the expected time required to design and deliver each scheme.

1.5 With the number of EHCPs in Warwickshire increasing annually, there is forecast to be insufficient capacity in Warwickshire state-maintained specialist provision to accommodate demand. Alongside proposals to increase state-maintained special school places in Nuneaton and Warwick, the Council also plans to expand specialist resourced provision within state funded primary and secondary schools across the County. Therefore, as part of proposals to deliver new schools or school expansions, the inclusion of resourced provision will also be considered where feasible.

1.6 The expected education capital requirements associated with proposed strategic housing development across the county are identified as part of the District and Borough Local Plan process. As strategic housing developments progress across the county, and planning permission is granted, the pupil forecast data is updated and the prioritisation of education capital projects amended as needed to ensure sufficient school places exist to meet the expected demand. Availability of education capital resources limits the ability to deliver additional school places in advance of the requirement for those places being evidenced in the pupil forecast data.

1.7 Whilst the issue of sufficiency of provision must take priority, it is important to ensure that schools that are not expanding are able to continue to meet existing sufficiency needs and to operate within their existing accommodation. Details of proposed schemes to make improvements to existing settings are set out in section 3.

1.8 Where possible, and where economies of scale allow, expansions and building works will also address other factors such as: encouraging infant and junior to become primary, pre-school requirements in an area, providing specialist SEND provision, and any outstanding disability access requirements

1.9 All proposed education capital projects are considered against independently published third-party data to benchmark the cost to the Council of providing school places and ensuring effective allocation of resources.

1.10   The current available funding is set out in Section 2.

2.   Financial Implications

2.1   The Basic Need capital grant allocation for 2023/24 is £40.850 million, of which £8.550 million remains unallocated. The Department for Education has confirmed the Council will receive £21.366 million in 2024/25 and zero in 2025/26.

2.2   The project costs outlined within this report total £9.531 million of which £8.671 million is from the Basic Need Fund, £0.824 million is from developer contributions and £0.036 million is from other funding. These allocations will result in a zero 2023/24 Basic Need balance and use £0.121 million of the allocation for 2024/25.

2.3   The Service holds resources for school investment which are not currently included in the approved Capital Programme, this is largely from the following:
   - confirmed yet unallocated Basic Need grant to be received up to 2025/26,
   - other grants/contributions held for specific purposes,
   - developer contributions currently held but unallocated; and
   - one historically earmarked capital receipt

Available Resources (unallocated)	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	Total
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Basic Need Grant	8,550	21,366	0	29,916
Basic Need Funding Swaps 2023/24	4,095	0	0	4,095
High Needs Grant	269	0	0	269
Schools Condition Allocation 2022/23	2,197	0	0	2,197
Schools Condition Allocation 2023/24	2,082	0	0	2,082
Special Provision Fund	64	0	0	64
s.106*	18,419	0	0	18,419
Earmarked Capital Receipts	2,113	0	0	2,113
	37,789	**21,366**	**0**	**59,155**

1.1.   The larger scale capital projects at Warton Nethersole CofE Primary School and St John's Primary School are at a stage which allows further design and development and surveys to be undertaken to increase the level of cost certainty. Contingency and risk allowance are included in the project budgets to provide some mitigation against further cost increases.

1.2.   Pupil places in the specialist resourced provisions are funded at a higher rate so that pupils additional learning needs can be met. The level of funding will be broadly in line with how pupils are funded in the County's special schools.

A service level agreement between WCC and the school will confirm the exact arrangements and expectations.

1.3. The establishment of specialist resourced provision is part of the strategy to mitigate the overspend on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) allowing learners to be placed in more cost-effective provision, and ensuring that, where possible, more learners with an EHCP can be taught alongside, and within, a mainstream school environment.

3. Proposals for addition to the 2023/24 Education Capital Programme

Warton Nethersole CofE Primary School

3.1 Warton Nethersole CofE Primary School has an Ofsted rating of 'Good' with 157 places for children aged 4-11 years.

3.2 In the last few years housing development in Warton has increased the number of pupils on roll at the school. Over 200 homes across three sites have been approved in Warton and whilst some of the development has been completed the majority is due be completed over the next couple of years. This development could yield circa 7 additional pupils per year group.

3.3 In-year applications for children moving into Warton where the local primary school is full in certain year groups will be offered a place at the next nearest school which would likely have home to school transport implications.

3.4 To ensure sufficient school places in the village of Warton as the housing development builds out it is proposed to increase the capacity of Warton Nethersole CofE Primary to enable the school to increase their PAN from 22 to 30 (8 per year group).

3.5 In order to facilitate the expansion, it is proposed to provide a new modular building containing two additional classrooms with ancillary space. Further internal alterations to the main school building are proposed to create additional hall space, library and intervention space. Feasibility work has been undertaken in collaboration with the school and Birmingham Diocesan Multi-academy Trust and estimated the cost of the capital works at £2.868 million.

3.6 Cabinet is asked to agree the proposal to allocate £2.868 million funded as follows and recommend to Full Council its addition to the Capital Programme:

Basic Need Funding   £2.794 million

Developer Funding   £0.074 million

St Johns Primary School, Kenilworth

3.7   St Johns Primary School is a 1FE school with an Ofsted rating of 'Good', with 210 places for children aged 4-11 years.

3.8   In 2021, two large strategic sites were approved in Kenilworth Town totalling 1400 homes. These are due to start completions from 2023. Some smaller scale development is currently building out/being occupied which is starting to have pressure on places. Forecasts for the Kenilworth area indicate reduced capacity from 2024. Therefore, additional permanent capacity is needed to ensure future reception cohorts and children moving into Kenilworth can be accommodated at a primary school in the Town.

3.9   In recent years, St John's Primary School have accommodated several additional temporary reception and in-year classes within their existing accommodation at the request of the County Council to alleviate the pressure on school places in the local area. It is proposed to build on this existing capacity and increase the number of permanent places at the school by 210 pupils. This would mean St John's Primary School would move from a one form entry (1FE) primary school (210 pupils) to a two-form entry (2FE) primary school (420 pupils).

3.10   It is also proposed to establish educational provision for children with special educational needs in the form of specialist resourced provision for up to 14 primary aged pupils with Social, Emotional & Mental Health (SEMH) needs. The location of a specialist resourced provision within Kenilworth will meet the need for more localised resourced provision for SEMH pupils within a growing area of Warwick District and is in line with the Council's plans to expand resourced provision across Warwickshire's state funded primary and secondary schools.

3.11   The capital works to create the required accommodation would involve three separate extensions to different parts of the existing school building to create 4 additional classrooms and the teaching space for the specialist resourced provision. Further internal refurbishment and remodelling will create two further classrooms, intervention/group space and ancillary space.

3.12   As part of the process to increase the number of school places at St Johns Primary School, a 4-week statutory consultation was carried out with key stakeholders between 2nd October and 29th October 2023. 92 responses were received. 27% of respondents agreed with the proposal and 17% provided a neutral response. 55% of respondents disagreed with the proposal to increase capacity.

3.13   With regards to establishing a specialist resourced provision 59% agreed with the proposal, 16% provided a neutral response, and 25% disagreed with the proposal.

3.14   Over half the respondents disagreed with the proposal to expand the school to 2FE. Of those disagreeing with the proposal, 75% were not a parent or

carer of a pupil at the school. The reasons provided were largely focused around highways and the potential impact of the increase in traffic on parking, traffic management and road safety on roads surrounding the school. Approximately 69% of respondents mentioned a highways factor in their response. Other reasons mentioned included the impact of the additional build on the school's external space, and the impact of the building work on local residents and the pupil's learning environment. A summary of the consultation responses is available in Appendix 1.

3.15 Of those respondents that agreed with or provided a neutral response to the proposal, over half highlighted concerns relating to an increase in traffic and the potential measures that could be put in place to mitigate the potential impact. Other reasons in agreement with the proposal included the need for more mainstream and SEND places in Kenilworth but also the need to limit the impact on existing schools with the introduction of this additional capacity. A summary of the consultation responses is available in Appendix 1.

3.16 As highlighted by the consultation responses, WCC recognise that this proposal is likely to have an impact on the highways infrastructure around the school and the concerns that this presents to local residents. However, given its location to current housing development, existing site and build capacity and the likelihood that highways challenges and associated opposition would be presented if an alternative existing school site was proposed, it is recommended that the proposal continues forward to ensure the sufficiency of school places in Kenilworth town can be maintained.

3.17 As part of the feasibility process, the project team has engaged with Highways and Road Safety through the pre application process to ensure that the required transport surveys and assessments are undertaken to inform a potential planning application. If approved by Cabinet, the highways impact of the expansion would be considered through the statutory planning process where there will be further opportunity for local residents and the community to provide comment or feedback.

3.18 Cabinet is asked to agree the proposal to allocate £6.335 million funded as follows and recommend to Full Council its addition to the Capital Programme:

Basic Need Funding	£5.838 million
Developer Funding	£0.497 million

Shottery St Andrew's CofE Primary School

3.19 Shottery St Andrew's CofE is a 0.5 FE primary school with 105 places for children aged 4-11.

3.20   The school is finding it increasingly difficult to operate an effective teaching and learning environment within the existing accommodation, particularly with regards to sufficient intervention and one to one space.

3.21   The condition of the brick-built grade 2 listed building part of the school is deteriorating with significant issues as identified from recent survey reports and there is no dedicated hall/dining space.

3.22   It is proposed that a temporary classroom be provided on a hard standing area adjacent to existing modular classrooms to allow easy access to toilets. The classroom would be in place for two years from Spring 2024 (subject to planning) to January 2026. There are proposals at an early stage looking at relocating the school to a new school site as part of the Shottery West development in Stratford upon Avon. However, in the interim, this proposal looks to ensure appropriate accommodation is in place to meet the education needs of children on the existing school site.

3.23   It is proposed to use developer funding available for improvements to the existing school to fund the additional teaching space.

3.24   Cabinet is asked to agree the proposal to allocate £0.215 million funded as follows:

Developer Funding   £0.215 million

Cubbington CofE Primary School (Warwick District)

3.25.   Cubbington CofE Primary School are wanting to re purpose a Victorian 'Old School' building on the school site consisting of 2 former classrooms and former caretakers residence, to enable delivery of nursery provision offering 24 places at any one time supporting the increase for early years / nursery places in the area and aligning with the expansion to funded places from April 2024.

3.26.   At the same time the capacity of the before and after school care offer for the school aged children will increase from 25 to 50 children to meet the long-term expansion of places linked to the need for all Primary Schools to secure before and after school care from September 2026 to support additional parents / carers back to work.

3.27.   The building is in a significant state of disrepair and requires substantial updating to ensure it is a safe, usable space for children and staff. Capital improvements will include additional children's toilets, the provision of a secure entrance, installation of kitchen facilities, new flooring, and additional works to the outdoor space.

3.28.   The cost of the works has been estimated at £0.113 million to be funded from developer funding, the WCC Early Years Sustainability Fund, the DfE Basic Need Grant and a funding contribution from the school.

3.29. Cabinet is asked to agree the proposal to allocate £0.113 million funded as follows:

Developer Funding	£0.038 million
Basic Need Funding	£0.039 million
WCC Early Years Sustainability Fund	£0.030 million
School Contribution	£0.006 million

Paddox Primary School – Specialist Resourced Provision

3.30. The specialist resourced provision at Paddox Primary School, known as "Brambles", was established in 2020 as a 10-place provision for pupils with Social, Emotional & Mental Health needs (SEMH).

3.31. In order to continue to meet demand for provision for pupils with an EHCP, it is proposed to increase the number of places available at the specialist resourced provision from 10 to 14. This can be achieved within the current accommodation and therefore requires no capital expenditure or statutory consultation.

3.32. If approved by Cabinet, this would take effect from January 2024.

Water Orton Primary School – Specialist Resourced Provision

3.33. The specialist resourced provision at Water Orton Primary School, known as Evergreen, was established in 2016 as an 8-place provision for pupils with Communication & Interaction (C&I) needs.

3.34. In order to continue to meet the demand for provision for pupils with an EHCP, it is proposed to increase the number of places available at the specialist resourced provision, from 8 to 12. This can be achieved within the current accommodation and therefore requires no capital expenditure or statutory consultation.

3.35. If approved by Cabinet, this would take effect from January 2024.

4. Environmental Implications

4.1. The County Council will look to use modern methods of construction to achieve efficiencies and benefits particularly in terms of time, cost, and the environment.

4.2. Environmental risk assessments, together with mitigation statements to reduce any potential environmental impacts, are required for any capital project.

4.3. All future school capital projects will be developed in accordance with statutory regulations which include the revised Building Regulations 2021. These new building regulations include significant changes to the regulations around ventilation, energy efficiency and overheating, electric vehicle charging

and a number of smaller supporting elements of the regulations. Schools will therefore be built to new standards that are expected to produce lower carbon dioxide omissions compared to previous standards.

4.4. As part of the feasibility work on capital projects, where feasible net zero options and associated costs have been explored and considered.

4.5. Extensions to existing buildings, such as at the schemes at Warton Nethersole CofE Primary and St John's Primary School, make environmental improvements a challenge. However, where possible new build elements will be fossil fuel free and will be net zero carbon enabled.

4.6. Proposed schemes aim to ensure the sufficiency of, and accessibility to, provision in local settings avoiding the need to travel further afield to access education or childcare provision. The provision and access to local education provision supports the promotion of active travel and the health and well-being, economic and environmental benefits this can bring.

5. Supporting Information

5.1. None

6. Timescales associated with the decision and next steps

6.1. Subject to Cabinet approval, those schemes requiring Council approval will be submitted on 19 December 2023.

Appendices
Appendix 1: Summary of responses to consultation

Background Papers
1. Equality Impact Assessment

	Name	Contact Information
Report Author	Emma Basden-Smith - Education Capital and Sufficiency Lead Commissioner	emmabasdensmith@warwickshire.gov.uk
Director	Johnny Kyriacou - Director of Education	johnnykyriacou@warwickshire.gov.uk
Executive Director	Nigel Minns - Executive Director for People	nigelminns@warwickshire.gov.uk
Portfolio Holder	Kam Kaur - Portfolio Holder for	kamkaur@warwickshire.gov.uk

	Education, Peter Butlin - Portfolio Holder for Finance and Property	peterbutlin@warwickshire.gov.uk

The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Local Member(s): Councillors Rik Spencer, Andrew Wright, Jenny Fradgley, Jerry Roodhouse, Martin Watson, Wallace Redford

Other members: Councillors Marian Humphreys, Jerry Roodhouse, Barbara Brown, Adrian Warwick, Parminder Singh Birdi, Sarah Boad, Sarah Feeney, and Will Roberts

Appendix 1: Proposal to increase capacity at St John's Primary– Overview of Consultation Responses

Reasons Against Proposal	% of respondents against proposal	WCC response
Increase in Traffic: Increase in traffic as a result of the expansion and the impact this would have on the roads around the school such as Mortimer Road, Roseland and Chestnut Avenue, particularly relating to parking, and the safety of pedestrians/residents	63%	WCC are aware that there is likely to be an impact on the highways infrastructure around the school. As part of the feasibility process, the project team has engaged with Highways and Road Safety through the pre application process to ensure that the required transport surveys and assessments are undertaken to inform a potential planning application. If approved by Cabinet, the impact of the expansion would be considered through the statutory planning process.
Additional Parking: Concerns and comments that additional parking would be needed to accommodate the additional teaching and support staff, to prevent further overflow onto the surrounding roads	20%	The feasibility and planning process will investigate the necessary additional parking requirements for the school
Safe Crossing Points: Would increase the need for a safe crossing point – lights, crossing patrol etc. The increase in traffic and parking can reduce visibility making it difficult	18%	WCC are aware that there is likely to be an impact on the highways infrastructure around the school. As part of the feasibility process, the project team as engaged with Highways and Road Safety through the pre application process to ensure that the required transport surveys and assessments are undertaken to inform a potential planning application. If approved by Cabinet, the impact of the expansion would be considered through the statutory planning process.

for pedestrians and cyclists to cross safely		
Impact on external space: Concerns regarding any new building encroaching onto playing field space	10%	Options for providing the required additional accommodation do not build on playing field space – preference to use infilling or extending onto underused external area.
Impact of building works on learning environment: noise, building works and air pollution	8%	The project team would aim to cause as little disruption to the pupils as possible. The contractor would work with the school and phase the project to ensure the works with the greatest impact can be undertaken when pupils are not in the school.
Impact of building work on local residents	8%	The building works will be contained to the school site. The project team will aim to keep any disruption to a minimum and temporary.
Open a new school	8%	New schools will form part of the larger strategic sites. However, there is housing development prior to the introduction of these schools 3-5 years away that will create additional school places
Road safety measures: concern for the safety of pupils around the school which could be improved with traffic calming measures, traffic lights	6%	As part of the statutory planning application, transport assessment and surveys and consultation with Highways/road safety will be undertaken.
More detail on build	4%	Further detail on how the accommodation will form part of the planning application once finalised
Increase in pupil numbers impacting on quality of education	2%	A larger school doesn't necessarily correlate to the reduction in education quality. Staffing and resources are increased to continue to meet pupils teaching needs. The gradual year on year growth also facilitates a smoother transition from 1FE to 2FE
Limit activities for pupils	2%	Resources are increased and timetabled
Ofsted: concerns school not had a recent Ofsted	2%	School has recently had an Ofsted inspection
No Demand	2%	Demand is forecast and currently in year pressure on a number of year groups as a result of limited capacity
School Security	2%	Existing security measures and protocols
Not a preferred school	2%	A number of factors contribute to school expansion – location, site size, existing internal space, funding, Ofsted rating.
More lunchtime supervision	2%	An increase in pupil numbers will require the school to undertake a programme of recruitment

Staffing for SRP	2%	The school will be undertaking a programme of specialist recruitment to ensure the SRP is resourced appropriately to meet the pupils needs
Reasons In Agreement with Proposal	**% of respondents For proposal**	**WCC response**
Increase in Traffic: Supporting the proposal but concerns relating to the increase in traffic and how this will be managed	36%	WCC are aware that there is likely to be an impact on the highways infrastructure around the school. As part of the feasibility process, the project team has engaged with Highways and Road Safety through the pre application process to ensure that the required transport surveys and assessments are undertaken to inform a potential planning application. If approved by Cabinet, the impact of the expansion would be considered through the statutory planning process.
Safe Crossing Points: concerns for the safety of children with the increase in traffic. Would like to see a safe crossing point implemented – such as pedestrian crossing	28%	WCC are aware that there is likely to be an impact on the highways infrastructure around the school. As part of the feasibility process, the project team as engaged with Highways and Road Safety through the pre application process to ensure that the required transport surveys and assessments are undertaken to inform a potential planning application. If approved by Cabinet, the impact of the expansion would be considered through the statutory planning process.
Additional SEND places needed	20%	Proposal aims to increase the number of special resourced provision places in the local area
Additional places needed in Kenilworth	20%	Proposal aims to increase the number of mainstream places available in the local area
Additional Parking	12%	The feasibility and planning process will investigate the necessary additional parking requirements for the school
Road Safety Measures: Access, traffic calming, safe crossing need to be looked at alongside the proposal	12%	As part of the statutory planning application, transport assessment and surveys and consultation with Highways/road safety will be undertaken.
Impact on external space	4%	Options for providing the required additional accommodation do not building on playing field space – preference to use infilling or extending onto underused external area.
Staffing	4%	The school will undertake recruitment for additional staff as the school expands

Building and infrastructure needs to be provided	4%	Additional accommodation considered alongside Department for Education guidelines
Impact of SRP on rest of school: exposure to potential negative behaviour	4%	WCC promotes inclusion within mainstream settings. The SRP will allow the flexibility for pupils in the SRP to join their peers for teaching and learning when appropriate and supported by staff.
Reasons neither agree/disagree with Proposal	**% of respondents For proposal**	**WCC response**
Increase in Traffic: Concerns relating to the increase in traffic and how this will be managed	56%	WCC are aware that there is likely to be an impact on the highways infrastructure around the school. As part of the feasibility process, the project team has engaged with Highways and Road Safety through the pre application process to ensure that the required transport surveys and assessments are undertaken to inform a potential planning application. If approved by Cabinet, the impact of the expansion would be considered through the statutory planning process.
Impact on existing schools	25%	Planning is required to ensure there are sufficient school places in the area and capacity to create in year movement. If all schools are full no further children can be accommodated particularly in an area of growth
Safe Crossing Points: concerns for the safety of children with the increase in traffic. Would like to see a safe crossing point implemented – such as pedestrian crossing	19%	WCC are aware that there is likely to be an impact on the highways infrastructure around the school. As part of the feasibility process, the project team as engaged with Highways and Road Safety through the pre application process to ensure that the required transport surveys and assessments are undertaken to inform a potential planning application. If approved by Cabinet, the impact of the expansion would be considered through the statutory planning process.
Additional SEND places needed	6%	Proposal aims to increase the number of special resourced provision places in the local area
Additional Parking	13%	The feasibility and planning process will investigate the necessary additional parking requirements for the school
Impact on external space: like to see building on playground/playing field avoided	6%	Options for providing the required additional accommodation do not building on playing field space – preference to use infilling or extending onto underused external area.

Staffing: Make sure there is enough staff	6%	The school will undertake recruitment for additional staff as the school expands
Funding: Funding needs to be available	6%	School will be funded on a per pupil basis. Additional financial support is available from the LA if required whilst the school grows
Limited hall and after school space	6%	Additional accommodation requirements looked at alongside Department for Education guidelines

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Warwickshire County Council (WCC) Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Form

The purpose of an EIA is to ensure WCC is as inclusive as possible, both as a service deliverer and as an employer. It also demonstrates our compliance with Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED).

This document is a planning tool, designed to help you improve programmes of work by considering the implications for different groups of people. A guidance document is available here.

Please note that, once approved, this document will be made public, unless you have indicated that it contains sensitive information. Please ensure that the form is clear and easy to understand. If you would like any support or advice on completing this document, please contact the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) team via equalities@warwickshire.gov.uk, or if it's relating to health inequalities, please contact Public Health via phadmin@warwickshire.gov.uk.

EIA
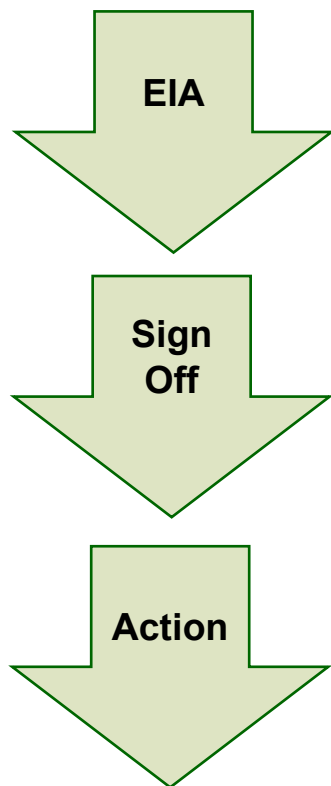
➢ Having identified an EIA is required, ensure that the EIA form is completed before any work is started. This includes gathering evidence and / or engaging the relevant stakeholders to inform your assessment.

Sign Off

➢ Brief the relevant Assistant Director for sign off and upload the completed form here: **Upload Completed Equality Impact AssessIIIII'.ments.** Please name it "EIA [project] [service area] [year]"
➢ Undertake further research / engagement to further understand impacts (if identified).
➢ Undertake engagement and / or consultation to understand if EIA has identified and considered impacts.
➢ Amend accordingly to engagement / consultation feedback and brief decision makers of any changes.

Action

➢ Implement proposed activity.
➢ Monitor impacts and mitigations as evidence of duty of care.

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Section One: Essential Information

Service / policy / strategy / practice / plan being assessed	Expansion of School from 1FE (210 places) to 2FE (420 places) and Establishment of Specialist Resourced Provision at specific schools
Business Unit / Service Area	Education Services
Is this a new or existing service / policy / strategy / practice / plan? If existing, please state date of last assessment.	Expansion of existing provision and new provision but within an existing strategy
EIA Authors **N.B.** It is best practice to have more than one person complete the EIA to bring different perspectives to the table.	Emma Basden-Smith
Do any other Business Units / Service Areas need to be included?	SENDAR
Does this EIA contain personal and / or sensitive information?	No

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Are any of the outcomes from this assessment likely to result in complaints from existing services users, members of the public and / or employees?	No

1. Please explain the background to your proposed activity and the reasons for it.

Housing development is currently building out/being occupied which is starting to have pressure on places. Forecasts for the Kenilworth area indicate reduced capacity from 2024. Therefore, additional permanent capacity is needed to ensure future reception cohorts and children moving into Kenilworth can be accommodated at a primary school in the Town. WCC are proposing to increase the number of mainstream places in the local area by expanding St John's Primary School.

Establishing specialist resourced provision is a key project within the SEND & Inclusion Change Programme and part of the SEND & Inclusion Strategy and DSG Recovery Plan. It allows learners with SEND to attend local settings and provides a bridge between mainstream and specialist provision.

There has been significant growth in both generic and specialist special schools. The main growth and investment has been in specialist provision for pupils with communication and interaction needs and social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) difficulties.

In line with the statutory guidance issued by the Department for Education 'Making Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools' any proposals to increase capacity to a school or establish, remove or alter SEN provision (including Resourced Provision) at a mainstream school requires the local authority to undertake a statutory process including a consultation period of at least 4 weeks.

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2. Please outline your proposed activity including a summary of the main actions.

Warwickshire County Council is proposing to:
 -Increase the capacity of St John's Primary School from 210 places to 420 places.
- Establish provision for children with special educational needs in the form of specialist resourced provision for up to 14 primary aged pupils with Social, Emotional & Mental Health (SEMH) needs
- If approved the additional places would be implemented for from September 2024.
- Pupils in the specialist resourced provision will benefit from accessing education at a mainstream primary school through a flexible approach, tailored and adapted to their needs.
- A statutory planning application would need to be submitted to create the additional accommodation needed to accommodation the one form entry expansion and specialist resourced provision

3. Who is this going to impact and how?

Customers	Members of the Public	Employees	Job Applicants
	Local residents		
Other, please specify:	SEND pupils/Families, Schools/existing pupils		

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Section Two: Evidence
Please include any evidence or relevant information that has influenced the decisions contained in this EIA. This could include demographic profiles; audits; research; health needs assessments; national guidance or legislative requirements and how this relates to the protected characteristic groups and additional groups outlined in Section Four.

A – Quantitative Evidence
This is evidence which is numerical and should include the number people who use the service and the number of people from the protected characteristic groups who might be affected by changes to the service.

As at May 2023 school census 225 pupils (Reception to Year 6) were on roll at St John's Primary School. Forecasts indicate a limited capacity at Reception from September 2024 onwards. In previous years, St John's Primary School has accommodated several temporary reception and in year classes at the request of WCC. It is proposed to build on this existing capacity and permanently expand the school.

The first SRPs opened in 2016 and there are currently 16 specialist resourced provisions attached to mainstream primary provision in Warwickshire – 2 in North Warwickshire, 5 in Nuneaton & Bedworth, 1 in Rugby, 1 in Warwick and 3 in the Stratford on Avon area.

In addition, over the last nine years WCC have opened four special schools for children and young people with social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH), offering an additional 330 places across the county.

B – Qualitative Evidence
This is data which describes the effect or impact of a change on a group of people, e.g. some information provided as part of performance reporting.

The LA believes that all children should be educated as close to their home as possible, which not only reduces the time they spend travelling, but also enables them to be an integral part of their local community, where they are able to feel welcomed, included and valued as equal members of society. We want to support children, young people and their families by encouraging and challenging schools to cater for as wide a range of needs and abilities as is possible. We want mainstream settings to nurture positive attitudes to children and young people with SEND, both in their own school and in their wider community.

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The Warwickshire SEND & Inclusion Strategy 2019-2023, which had developed from the Vulnerable Learners Strategy 2015 - 2018, sought to establish a number of SRPs and partnerships, creating a bridge between mainstream and specialist provision, with the aim of offering this third category of provision to all pupils for whom it is appropriate. The establishment of these SRPs has the aim of addressing the increasing proportion of learners with an EHCP placed in specialist provision.

Section Three: Engagement
Engagement with individuals or organisations affected by the proposed activity must take place. For further advice and support with engagement and consultations, click here.

Has the proposed activity been subject to engagement or consultation with those it's going to impact, taking into account their protected characteristics and socio-economic status?	A statutory consultation on the 1FE expansion and establishment of the specialist resourced provision at St John's Primary School took place between 2 and 29 October 2023
If YES, please state who with.	Details were published in the local press and on the WCC website. Proposals were sent to the parents and carers of pupils at the school, other schools in the area and democratic representatives for the area. Feedback was collated and evaluated.
If NO engagement has been conducted, please state why.	

How was the engagement carried out?	Yes / No	What were the results from the engagement? Please list…

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Focus Groups		
Surveys	Y	Ask Warwickshire
Public Event		
Displays / Exhibitions		
Other (please specify)	Y	Local paper
Has the proposed activity changed as a result of the engagement?	No	A large majority of the respondents shared concerns regarding the increase in pupil numbers (primarily from the 1FE expansion) on the traffic in the area and the increase in traffic would be managed. These concerns have been fed back to the project team who are managing the statutory planning application process.
Have the results of the engagement been fed back to the consultees?	Following a Cabinet decision	
Is further engagement or consultation recommended or planned?	Yes	If the proposal is approved, there will need to be a planning application to deliver the accommodation required. Further matters relating to concerns around the impact on the highways infrastructure as a result of the proposal will be assessed further.
What process have you got in place to review and evaluate?	Mainstream and Specialist provision within the county regularly reviewed to ensure meeting the need and demand for places.	

Section Four: Assessing the Impact

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Protected Characteristics and other groups that experience greater inequalities

What will the impact of implementing this proposal be on people who share characteristics protected by the Equality Act 2010 or are likely to be affected by the proposed activity? This section also allows you to consider other impacts, e.g. health inequalities such as deprivation, socio-economic status, vulnerable groups such as individuals who suffer socio-economic disadvantage, armed forces, carers, homelessness, people leaving prison, young people leaving care etc.

On the basis of evidence, has the potential impact of the proposed activity been judged to be positive (+), neutral (=), negative (-), or positive and negative (+&-), for each of the protected characteristic groups below and in what way?

N.B In our Guidance to EIAs we have provided you with potential questions to ask yourself when considering the impact of your proposed activity. Think about what actions you might take to mitigate / remove the negative impacts and maximize on the positive ones. This will form part of your action plan at Section Six.

	Impact type (+) (=) (-) or (+&-)	Nature of impact including health inequalities Will your proposal have negative or positive implications for each group, including on health inequalities? Think about whether outcomes vary across groups and who benefits the most and least, for example, the outcome for a woman on a low income may be different to the outcome for a woman a high income.	Mitigating Actions for Negative Impacts What can you do to mitigate any identified negative impacts or health inequalities? Think about offering for example benefits advice, access to bus routes, community support, flexible opening times, creche facilities etc. Use this column to form the basis of Section 6.
Age	+	Increasing 'local' specialist provision for SEND learners Increasing mainstream primary provision within the local area	
Disability Consider:	+	Increasing 'local' specialist provision for SEND learners.	

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		It allows learners with SEND to attend local settings and provides a bridge between mainstream and specialist provision.	
• Physical disabilities • Sensory impairments • Neurodiverse conditions (e.g. dyslexia) • Mental health conditions (e.g. depression) • Medical conditions (e.g. diabetes)			
Gender Reassignment	=		
Marriage and Civil Partnership	=	Not applicable	
Pregnancy and Maternity	=	Not applicable	
Race Including: • Colour • Nationality • Citizenship • Ethnic or national origins	=		
Religion or Belief	=	Admission to the school and SRP is open to all faiths and beliefs.	
Sex	=		

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Sexual Orientation	=		
Groups who may require support: • Individuals who suffer socio-economic disadvantage • Armed Forces (WCC signed the Armed Forces Covenant in June 2012) • Carers • Homelessness • People leaving Prison • People leaving Care	=		
Other Identified Health Inequalities (HI) Many issues can have an impact on health: is it an area of deprivation, does every population group have equal access, unemployment, work conditions, education, skills, our living situation, rural, urban, rates of crime etc.		What health inequalities already exist? Establishment of the SRPs aim to increase the local offer for SEND learners and reduce the need for travel Will your proposal have a negative or positive implications on health inequalities? Positive What can you do to mitigate any identified health inequalities? Feeding into the strategy to deliver the best system of education, health and social care for learners with SEND within our allocated resources, including the most vulnerable learners.	

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Other Groups If there are any other groups		

Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)

Public Authorities must have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. Please evidence how your proposed activity meets our obligations under the PSED.

	Evidence of Due Regard
Eliminate unlawful discrimination (harassment, victimisation and other prohibited conduct):	
Advance equality of opportunity: This involves • removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics; • taking steps to meet the needs of people with certain protected characteristics where these are different from the needs of other people, for example, taking steps to take account of people with disabilities; • encouraging people with certain protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.	The proposed change is part of the wider SEND programme to promote inclusion in all mainstream and educational settings Supporting the aspiration for every child and young person to have their health, social care and education needs met within their local community and for every child to attend a good local school that is appropriate for their level of need or disability.

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Foster good relations:
This means tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people from different groups and communities.

Section Five: Partners / Stakeholders

Which sectors are likely to have an interest in or be affected by the proposed activity?	Yes / No	Describe the interest / affect
Businesses		
Councils		
Education Sector	Y	Other schools in the area
Fire and Rescue		
Governance Structures		
NHS	Y	SEND learners may also have additional health needs
Police		
Voluntary and Community Sector	Y	Where involved in the provision of service for SEND children
Other(s): please list and describe the nature of the relationship / impact		

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Section Six: Action Planning

If you have identified impacts on protected characteristic groups in Section Four, please summarise these in the table below detailing the actions you are taking to mitigate or support this impact. It is also important to consider how often this E.I.A. will be reviewed, and who is responsible for doing this. If you are not taking any action to support or mitigate the impact, you should complete the No Mitigating Actions section below instead.

Mitigating Actions

Consider:

- Who else do you need to talk to? Do you need to engage or consult?
- How you will ensure your activity is clearly communicated
- Whether you could mitigate any negative impacts or build on positive impacts for protected groups or health inequalities
- Whether you could do more to fulfil the aims of the PSED
- How you will monitor and evaluate the effect of this work
- Anything else you can think of!

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Identified Impact	Action(s)	Timescale incl. evaluation and review date	Name of person responsible
Where responses to the consultation have highlighted where further information regarding the proposal needs to be communicated to stakeholders	Pass this feedback on to the school to ensure continue communication of the establishment of the SRPs into the school and parent community	December 2023 to September 2024	Emma Basden-Smith/Dale Bromfield
Where responses to the consultation highlighted concerns around the impact of the increase in pupils numbers on the highways infrastructure and road safety	Concerns passed onto project team to feed into transport assessment as part of planning application	November 2023 to January 2024	Emma Basden-Smith

No Mitigating Actions

Please explain why you do not need to take any action to mitigate or support the impact of your proposed activity.

Section Seven: Assessment Outcome

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Only one of following statements best matches your assessment of this proposed activity. Please select one and provide your reasons.		
No major change required	x	No significant negative impact identified
The proposal has to be adjusted to reduce impact on protected characteristic groups and/or health inequalities		
Continue with the proposal but it is not possible to remove all the risk to protected characteristic groups and/or health inequalities		
Stop the proposal as it is potentially in breach of equality legislation		

Section Eight: Sign Off
N.B To be completed after the EIA is completed but before the area of work commences.

Name of person/s completing EIA	Emma Basden-Smith
Name and signature of Assistant Director	Jonny Kyriacou
Date	17/11/2023
Date of next review and name of person/s responsible	

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Cabinet

14 December 2023

Water Contract

Recommendations

That Cabinet:

1.   approves the Council entering into a framework agreement for Council buildings with the Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation (ESPO) under their 'Water, Wastewater and Ancillary Services' framework, for an initial 2-year period, with the option to extend for a maximum of 24 months.

2.   authorises the Executive Director for Resources, to enter into all agreements necessary to implement this decision on terms and conditions considered acceptable to them.

1.   Executive Summary

1.1   The Council is not currently under contract for water and wastewater removal services. Of the corporate estate (owned and occupied by the Council) approximately eighty are with Water Plus, on a 'deemed / default terms' pricing schedule.

1.2   Two water retail organisations (Water Plus and Wave) have separately reviewed the commercially accessible water consumption data of our wider current portfolio (of one hundred and eleven sites) and both identified annual savings of c. £16k if the Council enters into a contractual agreement for these sites (see 2.7 for additional information).

1.3   The value of the framework contract (over a standard 2 year + 24-month term), for council managed properties is expected to be in the region of £2million (based on current corporate building spend) therefore, under contract standing orders, a member decision is required to commit to an agreement.

2.   Financial Implications

2.1   The average total, annual Council spend on water and wastewater over the last five financial years (2018-2023) was approximately £900,000, which includes a corresponding annual spend on County Buildings of approximately £500,000.

2.2   As with other utilities (i.e., gas and electricity), individual Council Services and maintained schools (along with tenants & non-maintained schools) currently purchase their own utilities. Implementing a corporate landlord approach to utilities, including management of the water contract, would ensure greater value for money through purchasing volumes, but would require consolidation of utilities under centralised contracts and budgets.

2.3   Estimated contract costs from the ESPO framework (via Wave, their preferred supplier) and Water Plus, were compared to actual costs for the 2021/22 financial year. Savings of £16k (for the Council's owned and operated buildings only) were identified if moving to either the ESPO framework or Water Plus's contractual arrangement (see 2.7 for additional information). This will contribute to future savings proposed for the MTFS refresh.

2.4   Ofwat sets wholesale prices in 5-year periods. We are currently within 2020 – 2025 pricing terms, with the next review period starting at the end of 2024 and to be applied in April 2025. Prices in the water contract will fluctuate annually under the agreement but will remain in line with the Ofwat agreed increases (as would all other water suppliers).

2.5   The ability to smooth any impact over the duration of the contract will allow the Council better control and management of its budget over a 2–4-year period. Based on current expectations about price increases, water costs can be managed from within the budget provision at least over the next three years. Any MTFS impact will be considered when Ofwat has agreed the next 5-year term of prices.

2.6   As part of a contract there would also be expected additional benefits of regular meter reads (twice yearly, as opposed to annually on the default terms), bill validation, high consumption alerts, portfolio reviews, and improved reporting (including carbon reporting). Collectively these would be expected to improve accuracy of billing, and identify opportunities to reduce consumption, leading to a further reduction in costs.

2.7   For increased accuracy of billing and more detailed consumption data (allowing for trends to be monitored and errors, for example leaks, to be identified earlier, thus saving costs), it is recommended that smart metering technology is installed, or physical meter readings are regularly taken. Contract costs range from £75 - £100 depending on the technology employed. This would be of particular benefit to the higher consuming locations (>1,000m3 p/a at a cost of £2k) but could equally be employed across all corporate sites at an estimated cost of c £8k (i.e. leaving a remaining saving of £8k in the first year).

2.8   As part of this new agreement, officers also intend to also review the scope of included sites to ensure the Council maximises value and potential savings by extending the coverage of the contract where able, and where cost effective to do so.

3.   Environmental Implications

3.1   As part of the Council Plan and the Sustainable Futures Strategy, the Council is committed to reducing its environmental impact and becoming net zero by 2030.

3.2   The recently agreed Energy Strategy identified saving energy as a key theme to support this ambition. A specific action recorded in the Energy Strategy Delivery Plan is to enter into a water contract, as the increased visibility provided by any agreement is expected to reduce consumption, which in turn will contribute to a reduced carbon burden (from the supply and processing of a reduced volume of water).

3.3   The Sustainable Futures Strategy estimates that the Council contributes to emissions of 192 tonnes of CO_2 a year from water and wastewater activities across its area. Entering into a contractual agreement will provide increased accuracy in quantification of these emissions, along with the benefits of recommendations of how to reduce consumption (i.e., by installing smart metering technology), costs, and ultimately local carbon emissions.

4.   Supporting Information

4.1   The water market was deregulated in 2017 with water supply defaulting to the local provider. In the Council's case this was Water Plus (a joint venture between Severn Trent Water and United Utilities). The majority of the Council's corporate (i.e. owned and occupied) sites (c.80) have since remained with this supplier on their default terms.

4.2   Water bills currently comprise two main elements, 'wholesale' costs (i.e. water consumed, wastewater removal & disposal) and 'retail' costs (i.e. customer service and billing). Wholesale costs represent 95% of bills and are determined by Ofwat (Water Services Regulation Authority).

4.3   The remaining 5% retail cost element leaves little room for suppliers to differentiate themselves and therefore running our own tender or choosing a different route to market would offer little benefit in terms of price. Using a framework that has already conducted a qualitative assessment therefore makes sense as it reduces our resource requirements.

4.4   The current ESPO water framework has been created via collaboration with other public sector buying organisation partners and a full tender process has been carried out to identify the successful bidder, Wave Utilities. The current framework opened 1 September 2023.

4.5   ESPO is a major purchaser with over 35 years' experience and as a founding member the organisation, the Council benefits from ESPO dividends. Selecting ESPO Utilities frameworks will marginally enhance our future dividend share.

4.6   There are no volume commitments in the framework agreement, therefore the Council will not be penalised for any changes in its consumption (e.g., due to sales / acquisitions of premises and reductions in usage due to building improvements, implementation of new energy efficient technology and/or agile working).

5.   Timescales associated with the decision and next steps

5.1   By end December 2023 - confirmation to ESPO to join the 'Water, Wastewater and Ancillary Services' framework.

5.2   By end December 2023 - confirmation to budget holders of commitment in the November 2023 – October 2025 period.

5.3   Ongoing - regular updates to budget holders and site contacts of pricing reviews, during the contract term.

Appendices

None

Background Papers

None

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The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Local Member(s): N/A - This is a countywide matter
Other members: The Chair and Party Spokes of the Resources and Fire and Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Cabinet

14 December 2023

Community Pantries - Sustainability Option

Recommendations

That Cabinet:

1. Endorses the strategy set out in the report of making the community pantries sustainable over the longer-term, with consideration of short-term support provided by the County Council; and

2. Agrees to consider including a final time-limited allocation of £541,000 to fund the balance of the costs as part of the 2024/25 MTFS budget proposals to be considered by Council in February 2024 as transitional funding needed over the next two financial years to support the community pantries moving to operational sustainability thereafter.

1. Executive Summary

1.1 In March 2022, Warwickshire County Council commissioned Feed the Hungry to undertake a proof-of-concept project around community pantries which met the needs of rural and urban communities. The pantries were intended to help people move beyond immediate food crises (provided by food banks) in an empowering and community-led way. This is an important example of the Community Powered Warwickshire approach set out as a fundamental part of the 2022-2027 Council Plan, and subsequent Countywide Approach to Levelling Up.

1.2 There are three community pantry sites currently operational: Lillington, Camp Hill, and New Arley, which went live during March/April 2022. These locations were chosen, among other reasons, for their positions high on the Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2019, which was subsequently used to define priority areas as part of the Countywide Approach to Levelling Up.

1.3 Funding for the first year of the proof-of-concept (2022/23) was allocated from the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) (£306,749). Funding for the second year (2023/24) was allocated from the up to £1m Revenue Investment Fund package of cost-of-living support approved by Cabinet in October 2022 (£262,000).

1.4 Feed the Hungry has been working with Council officers on options for future

sustainability since April 2023. The headline proposal is that Feed the Hungry will continue at the current locations for a short period with responsibility for operational delivery transferring to a local delivery team, or teams, over time. This will enable a more sustainable model to be implemented and maintained over the longer-term. This delivery model, which is being worked on with Feed the Hungry, envisages operational delivery supported by greater volunteer input and headed up by a small paid team.

1.5 Considering ongoing cost of living challenges, challenges of transitioning to local delivery, and to ensure the pantries remain operational while the phased transfer of responsibility is delivered, there is a need for interim funding. The proposal is that the County Council continues funding the pantries in the intervening period (assessed as two years) whilst the development and implementation of alternative sustainable funding models is completed at an estimated cost of £541,000.

1.6 Subject to Cabinet's support for the longer-term strategy, this funding would need to be a time-limited allocation in the 2024/25 budget and medium-term financial strategy (MTFS) to be approved in February 2024. This funding would be a final allocation, after which the community pantries would need to operate independently and be financially self-sustaining, and the paper sets out plans to achieve this.

2. Financial Implications

2.1 The estimated cost of running the community pantries is c£300,000 a year, with the costs for the next two years shown in Table 1.

2.2 The move from pantries being fully funded by the County Council to being independent and not subsidised cannot be delivered immediately. The plan from Feed the Hungry is for a phased transfer over the next five years, from the current model to operation by local organisations or community groups.

2.3 As no alternative sources of funding are currently available, sustaining the community pantries will require County Council funding for the next two years of 100% and then 80% of the estimated costs. This equates to a cost to the Council of £303,660 in 2024/25 and £237,777 in 2025/26. No further funding commitment beyond this is expected and officers will continue to work with Feed the Hungry to support a sustainable delivery model into the future beyond 2025/26.

Table 1: Costings for community pantries

Pantries	2024/25 £	2025/26 £	Total £
Lillington - food	141,070	141,070	282,140
New Arley - food	56,670	47,870	104,540
Camp Hill – food	48,670	48,670	97,340
Community centre costs	10,000	10,000	20,000
Citizens Advice wraparound support services	47,250	49,612	96,862
Total costs	303,660	297,222	600,882
WCC funding %	100%	80%	
WCC grant	303,660	237,777	541,437

2.4 The fundamental costs of operation are:

    a) the cost of food;
    b) Fareshare membership (for the purchase of food - Fareshare is the UK's national network of charitable food distributors);
    c) a contribution to local infrastructure costs;
    d) buying equipment for New Arley so it can transfer from a mobile to a static pantry; and
    e) management and support costs e.g., from Feed the Hungry.

2.5 The factors impacting the costs are:

    a) a comparison of the bulk Aldi basket of food regularly bought by Feed the Hungry between April and June 2023 reveals an approximate 8% uplift in basic items in just two months;
    b) the average cost of food purchased for the food parcels in 2022/23 was £10.65 per parcel. Uplifting that by 20% (in line with Office of National Statistics figures which put annual inflation of food at 19.2% in March 2023), takes the food parcel contribution to £12.78 which has been used for this financial projection. To mitigate this the pantry membership fee could be increased to £6 per visit;
    c) the rising cost of food is also reflected in the rising cost of Fareshare membership. The pantries have experienced a deterioration in supply (diversity of products in particular). It is hoped that this situation will resolve over the coming months, but lack of diversity increases the amount of food that needs to be purchased;
    d) the contribution to community centres rental was introduced for Camp Hill and New Arley at the start of the project, £5,000 per community centre;
    e) the capital costs of buying fridges, freezers, and gondolas for New Arley so it can operate from a static kitchen; and
    f) all assets purchased through the grant would transfer to new site operators at no cost, subject to the community pantries continuing to be operational.

2.6 The update report to Resources and Fire OSC (Appendix 1) in September 2023 showed financial benefits to members of £344,980, comprising £172,039

income maximisation, £152,296 debt addressed, and £20,645 debt written off since April 2022, showing a positive benefit to cost ratio in their first year and a half of operation in addition to the benefits of accessing affordable food.

2.7   There is no funding currently approved to resource any contribution to the community pantries beyond March 2024. Therefore, to approve the strategy of a phased transfer to community ownership/operation requires short-term funding to be identified and approved.

2.8   The funding would need to be included as a time-limited allocation in the 2024/25 MTFS. Projected financial pressures on the Council as part of the MTFS mean that it is unlikely that the Council could offer financial support beyond the next two years.

2.9   There is therefore some risk around the long-term sustainability of the pantries, even if Council approves the two-year time limited funding allocation requested. If the strategy to identify alternative sources of funding and to move to local and sustainable operational delivery is not successful, it will be necessary to close the pantries. However, providing two years' funding would give a reasonable time for the pantries to move to a self-sustaining model, while helping communities during a time of ongoing cost-of-living pressures.

3.   Environmental Implications

3.1   Feed the Hungry is aware of the Council's emerging Sustainable Futures Strategy and has its own complementary commitments around climate change and biodiversity.

4.   Supporting Information

4.1   The community pantries proof of concept has been a successful project. Demand for services at all three locations has surpassed the capacity stated in the grant agreement and continues to increase, intensified by the ongoing cost-of-living challenges. While we would want to avoid residents and families becoming dependent on this type of provision, it is also recognised that it will take some time for cost-of-living challenges to lessen and in the meantime, this local support provides a lifeline for some. The wraparound services provided from the pantry sites have also engaged with people who would not normally be engaged with, supporting them out of crisis by addressing other issues that they face (such as access to benefits and debt management) and helping them to reduce reliance on the pantries. This is evidenced by data collated by Feed the Hungry which shows that out of total membership of 906 people, 524 no longer need support, for a variety of reasons including:

- membership lapsing;
- member experiencing an improvement in circumstances, such as:
  - o Finding employment;

- o Benefits were maximisation; and
- o Debt being addressed;
- the member has moved out of the area covered by the pantry;
- the member failed to engage with wraparound services;
- the membership was terminated by the pantry (continued poor behaviour and rudeness to staff and volunteers); and
- the member passed away.

Those engaging with the pantries are presenting with more complex issues and need longer and/or multiple appointments to address their issues. The case studies have shown the positive impact the service is having on pantry members, including improvements to mental health, energy and/or food security, and support with ongoing issues with children or finances, as detailed in Appendix 1.

4.2 The operation of the pantries aligns well with the Countywide Approach to Levelling Up document and its principles, adopted by Cabinet in July 2022. The locations of the three pantries, all high on the Indices of Multiple Deprivation, correlate to the "places" theme, and known challenges in the three locations correlate to the "people" and "countywide priorities" theme, for example around income levels, connectivity, health, and skills and employment.

4.3 The pantries embed principles of community power in their operation, responding to locally identified priorities and involving the community in their delivery, for example through involving local volunteers and community groups, the latter especially in respect of the wraparound support elements.

4.4 The first annual report on the performance of the community pantries was taken to Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 13 September 2023, and was well received and supported. The full report is attached at Appendix 1.

4.5 Predicting how cost-of-living pressures will continue to impact on communities over coming years is challenging, with the factors driving the pressures becoming increasingly unpredictable and volatile, and influenced by global circumstances including the conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East. Office for National Statistics data points to a continuation over at least the next two years of elevated food, energy, and housing costs relative to household incomes, despite inflation slowing over recent months. The cost-of-living update report for Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 13 September 2023 contains more data and statistical references around cost-of-living pressures. The report is attached as Appendix 2.

4.6 Taking over a community pantry is, for many organisations/groups, a significant operational and financial responsibility with many factors to be considered to ensure the transfer is sound and sustainable. Conversations with relevant local community organisations are ongoing at all 3 locations.

4.7 To support this phased medium-term approach the Council will need to provide 100% of the funding for community pantries in 2024/25 reducing to 80% in 2025/26. It is then anticipated that alternative sources of funding and/or an alternative delivery model will be in place for the remaining three years of the five-year transfer programme.

4.8 Lillington (Pound Lane Adult Education Centre)
The Lillington Pantry is co-located with Adult Education at the Pound Lane Adult Education Site. It is a static pantry operation open on Thursdays and Fridays and is well attended with around 130 families accessing support each week. It does much more than provide food with support from the Warm Hub, Citizens Advice and Family Information Services.

There is no desire to relocate the Lillington Pantry from the Pound Lane Adult Education Centre. It is well placed for the people who most need it in the community and has sufficient space to be able to connect with clients and provide them support services. However, most successful independent models of a community pantry can generate income through grant funding for activities that are secondary to the provision of food (e.g., cook and eat well programmes, sow to grow, English for Speakers of other Languages) and these grants can assist in covering the costs of operating the pantry.

At Pound Lane, because of the space available to Feed the Hungry, these opportunities are very limited. Three options exist to generate income to support the pantry and are currently under consideration, although more work is required before a final way forward can be agreed:

i. the asset transfer of the Pound Lane Adult Education Centre (or part thereof) to Feed the Hungry. The scope and term of this proposal is being considered by Strategic Asset Management as part of the Estates Master Planning review on the basis that it should not compromise service delivery at the site, nor should it prevent future flexibility for the Council to use the site for its own purposes; and/or

ii. establishing a charity shop in Crown Way, Lillington possibly in partnership with a local church in Lillington; and/or

iii. develop corporate relationships with local businesses to effectively "sponsor" or "adopt" a community pantry as part of their local investment through Corporate Social Responsibility or Environmental, Social, and Governance programmes. We understand that this has had some success in other areas.

4.9 Nuneaton - Camp Hill (St. Mary and St. John Church Hall)
Feed the Hungry have worked very closely with the incumbent curate of St. Mary and St. John Church, Camp Hill. The static pantry is in the Church Hall, serves more than 30 families each week, and is already supported by members of the Church. While the curate is enthusiastic about the pantry operation, his priority is to bring the church back to full functionality after being largely disused for the last few years due to roof issues.

4.10 **New Arley (Community Centre)**
New Arley presents the most complex transition. The St. Michael's and New Arley Community Centre hosts the mobile pantry. The mobile pantry cannot be transferred to a local community group. Feed the Hungry's current strategy at New Arley involves converting this operation from a mobile to a static solution. The facilities at the site are excellent and include a kitchen and café area, but these are not currently available to Feed the Hungry.

The church is owned by the Diocese of Coventry and Warwickshire, but the operations of the centre, on a day-to-day basis, rests with a legally separate management team. Discussion on the future use of this facility is ongoing between the Diocese and the centre management.

If Feed the Hungry are unable to continue here, then they could support the local community with ambient food parcels distributed either through a primary care provider or a local school. Feed the Hungry has experience of providing this service in Leicestershire.

4.11 **Assumptions for the funding proposal**
Finding a local partner willing to succeed Feed the Hungry and take on the financial risk and operational responsibilities of operating a food pantry has proved to be difficult. While the best solution for the pantries would be local ownership (a local church, community centre or pantry), running a pantry is as complex as running a small business such as a shop, coupled with nuances of understanding the social support landscape of the area in which it operates.

The primary assumption is that Feed the Hungry will carry on at the current locations with the responsibility for operation transferring to a local team over time. There will be a drive towards a delivery model based on greater levels of volunteering headed up by a small paid team and/or exploration that involves more mobile provision that could secure greater reach across the county, however that equally requires a willing local community organisation and sufficient volunteers to operate.

The model assumes the continued support by Feed the Hungry. With charitable status, this could improve the organisation's ability to secure external funding for years 3 to 5 of the transition plan, and to achieve the aim of transferring ownership into local hands.

4.12 Feed the Hungry has developed a strategy paper for taking advantage of bulk offers (donated and purchased) and securing sustainable food sources for the region. Resolving food insecurity requires big thinking. Relationships with wholesalers and manufacturers means being able to receive, break down, and redistribute volume purchases and donations. Feed the Hungry is also in discussions with food organisations in Leicester and Sheffield about shared supply chains to take advantage of volume procurement and sharing this between regions. Should these discussions prove successful, this could be valuable for Warwickshire, benefitting from a more regional approach to food supply, however it is recognised that this may take some time.

4.13   The Lillington Community Pantry has been proactive in seeking out corporate partnerships with a variety of local businesses. They are keen to provide opportunities that allow individuals to create real practical change and have had volunteers from a range of businesses in the area, all of whom have been vital to providing support on a practical level to the pantry.

4.14   Corporate volunteer days of these kind have allowed Feed the Hungry to form longer-term relationships with each of these businesses. For example, Feed the Hungry has been invited by Sodexo to talk at its annual conference about the work of the pantry, encouraging those attending to bring donations of food. Feed the Hungry has also been Leamington Tennis Club's "Charity of the Year", whereby they have hosted various events with the funds being donated to the Lillington Pantry.

4.15   As a community organisation, Feed the Hungry works with local groups, businesses and partners to bring people together to work towards the same goal of lifting people out of poverty and into a place of stability. Engagement is often leveraged through Corporate Social Responsibility or Environmental, Social, and Governance policies adopted by large corporate organisations. At Feed the Hungry head office in Coventry such programmes are already being used with great success to receive volunteer and financial support.

5.   Timescales associated with the decision and next steps

5.1   The community pantries are funded until 31 March 2024. If funding is ended, then Feed the Hungry will begin to scope their exit strategy from the three pantry sites. If further investment can be made for the next two years the Council will continue to work with Feed the Hungry to explore and implement sustainability options beyond March 2026. Full Council will consider the further two-year time limited investment proposal at its budget meeting on 8 February 2024.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Community Pantries Proof of Concept, Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee,13 September 2023
Appendix 2: Cost-of-living Update, Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee,13 September 2023

Background Papers
None

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The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Local Member(s): Cllr Boad, Cllr Humphreys, Cllr Beetham

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Agenda Item 8

Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee
13th September 2023

Community Pantries Proof of Concept

Recommendation

That the Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers and comments on the progress made on the Community Pantries Proof of Concept that has taken place between March 2022 and March 2023 so as to help shape the future options to be brought to Cabinet before the end of this calendar year

1. Executive Summary

1.1. In March 2022, Warwickshire County Council commissioned Feed the Hungry to undertake a proof-of-concept project around community pantries which met the needs of rural and urban communities. The pantries were intended to help people move beyond immediate food crises (which the the Food Bank model addresses) in an empowering and community-led way. The Feed the Hungry team have extensive experience of setting up static provision, but as part of the proof of concept wanted to also trial a mobile offer in more rural areas where a static provision would be more challenging to provide.

1.2. The pantries provide access to food based on a membership fee (currently £5 per visit). This provides a dignified shopping experience of quality food for people who live in crisis, backed up by a 'wrap-around' family support offer by Citizens Advice and Warwickshire County Council's Family Information Service. The pantries provide access to other essential items such as toiletries, clothing, and cleaning products. Memberships are for a duration of six months but can be renewed for an additional six months if further support is needed.

1.3. There are three community pantry sites: Lillington, Camp Hill and New Arley, which went live during March/ April 2022:

- Lillington Community Pantry: based in the Adult Education Centre, Pound Lane Lillington (Thursdays and Fridays 11am – 3pm)
- New Arley Mobile Pantry: based in the Arley & St. Michael's Community Centre (Thursdays 11am – 3pm)
- Camp Hill Mobile Pantry based in the church hall associated with St Mary and St John Church (Fridays 11am – 3pm)

1.4. The community pantries at Lillington, New Arley and Camp Hill have now been open for a year and have seen a steady increase in membership applications

and usage. Figure 1 shows the active membership per month, the number of active memberships is calculated as the distinct count of members that have attended the pantry they are registered with per month. For Lillington, the number of active members peaked at 213 during November and December 2022, while for Camp Hill and New Arley, active memberships reached their peak during October, with 63 and 52 members.

Figure 1: The number of active memberships per month for each of the three pantries.
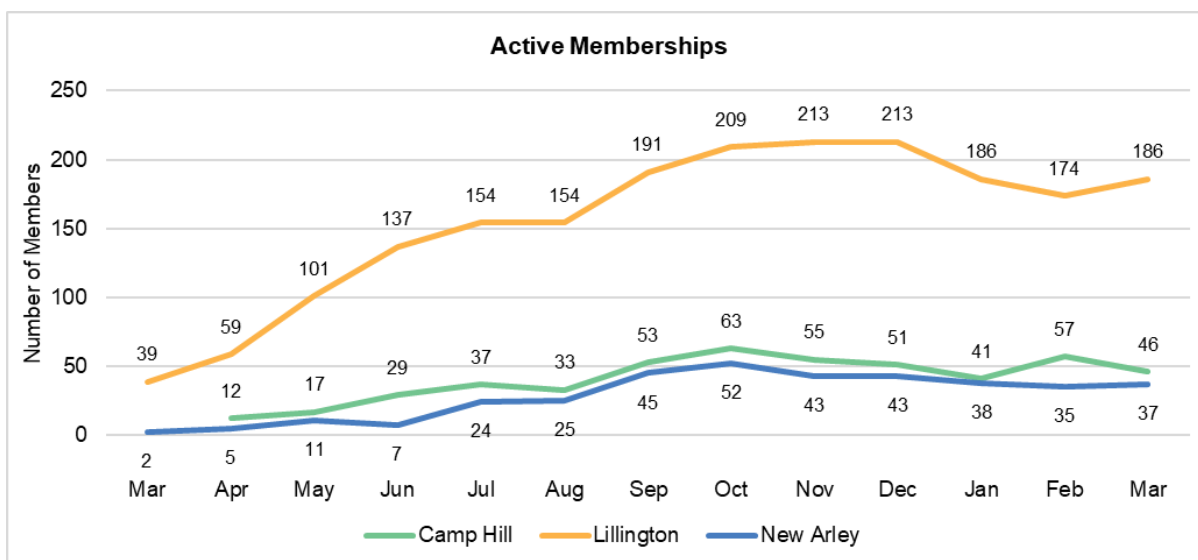
NB for those viewing in black & white
Top line = Lillington,
Middle line = Camp Hill,
Bottom line = New Arley

1.5   All three pantries are regularly supporting a higher number of families than was originally budgeted for (100 per week for Lillington and 20 per week for each of Camp Hill and New Arley).

1.6   Table 1 below highlights the number of activities undertaken by pantry members over the 12 months, and clearly shows the increase in demand over each quarter.

1.7   As well as food parcels members can purchase toiletries and cleaning products. To help members budget and ensure they have access to food over time, they can build up credit and purchase vouchers in advance.

1.8   Since the opening of the pantries the current data includes the following:

- Number of members = 733
- Number of members no longer needing support = 341
- Number of food parcels bought = 6,484
- Number of members who have become volunteers at the pantries = 18

- Number of members engaged with Citizens Advice = 207
- Amount of debt members have received advice on = £152,296
- Amount of debt members have been supported to have written off = £20,645
- Amount members have been supported to gain in income maximisation = £172,039

Table 1: Membership Metrics for the three Community Pantries 2022/2023

	New Arley				Camp Hill				Lillington			
	Q1	Q1-Q2	Q1-Q3	Q1-Q4	Q1	Q1-Q2	Q1-Q3	Q1-Q4	Q1	Q1-Q2	Q1-Q3	Q1-Q4
Number of members (and new members joined during the quarter)	14	55 (+41)	74 (+19)	**83 (+9)**	52	96 (+44)	134 (+38)	**153 (+19)**	202	340 (+138)	434 (+94)	**497 (+48)**
Number of food parcels bought	26	268 (+242)	632 (+364)	**965 (+333)**	95	365 (+270)	765 (+400)	**1127 (+362)**	594	1,702 (+1,108)	3,129 (+1,427)	**4,392 (+1,263)**
Number of toiletries bought	0	21 (+21)	53 (+32)	**53 (±0)**	100	166 (+66)	189 (+23)	**189 (±0)**	54	162 (+108)	269 (+107)	**371 (+102)**
Number of cleaning products bought	0	18 (+18)	52 (+34)	**52 (±0)**	14	23 (+9)	39 (+16)	**40 (+1)**	53	163 (+110)	265 (+102)	**378 (+113)**
Number of vouchers bought[1]	5	12 (+7)	29 (+17)	**31 (+2)**	7	17 (+10)	52 (+35)	**65 (+13)**	0	0	0	**0**
Number of special purchases[2]	25	119 (+94)	244 (+125)	**369 (+125)**	25	93 (+68)	138 (+45)	**262 (+124)**	271	509 (+238)	737 (+228)	**804 (+67)**
Number of members who no longer need support	0	3 (+3)	13 (+10)	**37 (+24)**	0	12 (+12)	42 (+30)	**88 (+46)**	0	57 (+57)	122 (+65)	**216 (+94)**
Number of members who become volunteers	0	0	1 (+1)	**2 (+1)**	0	3 (+3)	5 (+2)	**5 (±0)**	0	7 (+7)	7 (±0)	**11 (+4)**

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[1] Vouchers are a form of credit a member can buy in advance, which can help members budget and ensure they have access to food over time.

[2] Special purchases usually refer to bundles of toiletries, with individual items priced at £0.50 each. This measure shows the number of items that were bought.

1.8 Supporting members to move forward with their lives is key to the pantry model. Originally the time frame for this was 6 months but this has been extended to 12 – 18 months due to the complexity of issues members presented with and the ongoing cost-of-living crisis challenges. Reasons why members no longer need support include the following:

Lillington Pantry

- A large number of Ukrainian families joined for a short period when they first arrived in the local area. They were linked up with English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL) lessons and checked whether they have applied for Universal Credit (UC). As these members rarely have the same housing and utility costs as other members, they needed support for a shorter period. Some have returned once they have moved on from their sponsors' house and into their own accommodation.
- Member's situation has improved, through finding work or another change in circumstances and that they no longer need to access the food provision.
- Member has passed away.

Camp Hill and New Arley Pantries

- The membership lapsed
- The member experienced an improvement in circumstances, such as:
  - The member has found employment
  - The member's benefits were maximised
  - The member's debt was addressed
- The member has moved out of the area covered by the pantry
- The member failed to engage with wrap-around services
- The membership was terminated by the pantry (continued poor behaviour and rudeness to staff and volunteers)
- The member passed away.

1.9 **Wrap-around services**

Citizens Advice has supported pantry members with over 700 appointments over the first year of operation, through a variety of pre- booked and drop- in appointments
  - Lillington Community Pantry works alongside Citizens Advice South Warwickshire (CASW), and CASW support pantry members on two days a week, engaging with 84 members
  - New Arley Community Pantry works alongside North Warwickshire Citizens Advice (NWCA), with NWCA supporting pantry members one day a week engaging with 45 members

o Camp Hill Community Pantry works alongside Bedworth, Rugby and Nuneaton Citizens Advice (BRANCAB), with BRANCAB supporting pantry members two days a week, engaging with 78 members

Across the three pantries, Citizens Advice has engaged with 207 members. Members have received advice on debt totalling £152,296, members have been supported to have £20,645 of debt written off and members have been give support and advice to gain a total of £172,039 in income maximisation.

The Family Information Service has engaged with 62 members. The Service has supported them on a wide range of support including housing, childcare, special educational needs and disabilities.

Table 2: Wrap-Around Services provided at the Community Pantries

Cumulative Numbers	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4/Total
No of Clients Engaged				
Lillington	28	45	64	84
New Arley	17	19	39	45
Camp Hill	19	49	60	78
Debt Addressed (1)				
Lillington	£8,281	£15,248	£29,443	£96,246
New Arley	£0	£3,800	£19,161	£28,595
Camp Hill	£3,599	£14,817	£16,500	£27,455
Debt Written off (2)				
Lillington	£6,920	£4,892	£16,345	£20,000
New Arley	£0	£1,400	£15,860	£0
Camp Hill	£1,300	£915	£12,000	£645
Income Maximisation (3)				
Lillington	£37,065	£64,379	£48,866	£77,167
New Arley	£8,705	£39,866	£8,573	£24,595
Camp Hill	£3,473	£51,957	£83,003	£70,277
Top Issues				
Lillington	Benefits, Charity Goods, Health, Housing	Benefits, Charity Goods, Health, Housing	Benefits, Housing, Charity Goods, Health	Benefits, Charity Goods, Housing, Health
New Arley	Benefits, Relationships, Financial Capability	Benefits,	Benefits, Universal Credit,	Benefits, Financial Capability,

Cumulative Numbers	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4/Total
Camp Hill	Energy costs, Debt, Universal Credit	Financial Capability, Utilities Council Tax Arrears, Energy price hike, Correct benefits not received	Charitable Support Personal Independence Payments (PIP), Universal Credit, Housing Issues	Utilities Applications and appeals (for PIP, Universal Credit, Employment Support Allowance (ESA) and Attendance Allowance), Foodbank & Fuel Vouchers, Universal Queries

[1] Debt Addressed refers to a plan or debt solution being put in place to help the client manage their debt.

[2] Debt Written Off includes all debt that the service supports someone to write off such that they are no longer liable for the debt. E.g., DRO

[3] Income Maximisation refers to any financial gain recorded within the period, either projected or confirmed. A financial gain can include (but is not limited to) benefits and tax credits (including back payments), compensation, rent rebates, insurance pay-outs, court/ tribunal awards, grants and redundancy pay awards. It can include one-off payments and regular income. Income gains are annualised in accordance with National CA methodology

1.10   Members are also signposted to a wide range of agencies for advice and support including:

- o Housing advice
- o Family Information Service for brokerage support
- o Bereavement counselling
- o Support with gardening upkeep and garden clearances
- o Advocacy with utility companies
- o Advocacy on housing issues
- o Support for furniture and white goods
- o Warwickshire Local Welfare Scheme
- o Act on Energy
- o Debt Team Specialists

As well as the above data, the case studies in the appendices (Appendix 1: Case Studies of Pantry Members, Appendix 2: Citizens Advice Case Studies, Appendix 3: Family Information Service Case Study, Appendix 4: Community Pantries Member Feedback) detail how the community pantries have impacted members' lives, including improvements to mental health, energy and/or food security and support with ongoing issues with children and finances.

2.   Financial Implications:

2.1.   Funding for the proof-of-concept 2022 – 2023 was allocated from Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) (£306,749).   This funding was allocated as follows:

- £199,949 for Lillington Community Pantry and £55,000 for the Mobile Pantries in New Arley and Camp Hill. Out of this £25,000 was allocated to capital costs of setting up the project, with the remaining funding being used for the running of the three sites
- £41,800 was allocated to the Citizens Advice for provision of wrap around services
- £10,000 was allocated for rental of the community centres in Camp Hill and New Arley

2.2   The funding for the second year (March 2023 – 31st March 2024) has been identified from the Cost-of-Living one-off budget and is £262,000 (£45,000 for Citizens Advice, £10,000 for two community centres rental). Funding for Citizens Advice is administered through a grant agreement.

2.3   Continuation of the pantries would create a further financial pressure for the MTFS, although this is anticipated to be phased out over a period of time, potentially 3 years.

3.   Environmental Implications
None

4.   Supporting Information

4.1 The Community Pantries proof of concept has been a successful project. Demand for services at all three locations have surpassed the capacity stated in the grant agreement and continue to increase, intensified by the ongoing cost-of-living challenges.

4.2 The wrap-around services have engaged with people who they would not normally have come into contact with. Members are presenting with more complex issues and need longer and/or multiple appointments to address their issues.

4.3 The case studies in the appendices show the positive impact the service is having on pantry members, including improvements to mental health, energy and/or food security and support with ongoing issues with children or finances.

4.4 As the project is a proof of concept, it allowed those involved the flexibility to test out different services and options, all have provided refreshments and an informal meeting area with visits from the mobile library service and the Warwickshire Rural Community Council (WRCC) mobile barista van. The largest pantry is Lillington, situated at Pound Lane and has access to both inside and outside space, various activities were trialled, including summer fetes, affordable credit options with CitySave, budgeting and money management courses and a Breakfast with Santa event.

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4.5 The pantry managers have fed back that the project has been well received and supported at the three sites. They regularly receive referrals from outside of the locations of the pantries and signpost to other services for support. All sites have introduced waiting lists because of the high demand, currently only Camp Hill has an active waiting list.

5. Next Steps and Timescales

5.1. The Council has extended the funding for the Community Pantries Project for a further 12 months, up until 31st March 2024. Feed the Hungry, commissioned to deliver the services are currently working with Council officers on a Community Pantries Sustainable Options paper, which will be submitted to Cabinet on 12th October 2023.

5.2. Options will include a three-year transitional plan to transfer the pantries into local, community ownership, with tapering costs over a period of three years.

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Case Studies of Pantry Members
Appendix 2: Citizens Advice Case Studies
Appendix 3: Family Information Service Case Study
Appendix 4: Community Pantries Member Feedback

Appendices: All Names in the Appendices have been changed to ensure anonymity

Appendix 1: Case Studies of Pantry Members

1. Pantry One

Candy first visited us in September 2022. Candy is a single mother to young child. When she first visited us, Candy was facing low income due to working shifts whilst also looking after her young child. This meant that due to her zero hours contract she had inconsistent incomes, making it difficult to know what was coming in and going out.

In the period of us knowing Candy, she has faced some challenges. In February, Candy had an injury which meant she was unable to work. She spoke to Citizens Advice as she was not receiving sick pay from her employer. With her unable to return to work, due to her injury, she found herself applying for Universal Credit. We were able to refer her to speak to Citizens Advice and work with her to speak to her employer but also do a benefit entitlement check.

During this period of time, Candy experienced a lot of anxiety and stress, and therefore spent time with the team in the cafe area at the Pantry but also volunteered with the Pantry. This gave Candy an opportunity to spend time with the rest of the team and take her mind off the circumstances she was facing. This was essential for Candy at this time.

Sadly, for Candy, the chaos didn't stop there. In this time, she split up from her partner, found herself needing to sell her house and move out, all whilst being on little to no income and waiting for Universal Credit to come through. She had outgoings she was unable to pay, an injury which required surgery and a child who needed taking care of.

This led to a further referral to Citizens Advice to register for home choice and start the process of finding a council property for herself and her child. Obviously with physical, financial and emotional stress taking its toll, we again provided as much emotional support as possible. Although this is ongoing, Candy knows that the pantry is a safe place for her to come to for professional advice from Citizens Advice but also a place where she can feel supported whilst she deals with the upheaval of these significant life changes.

We first met **Madeleine** in August 2022. Madeleine discovered the pantry whilst searching for local support online. When we first met Madeleine, we could see she was financially stressed and anxious about the future. Madeleine is a full-time carer for her parents. This means that Madeleine is providing around the clock care and support for her parents. Although her parents were taking on some financial responsibility, their savings were also rapidly depleting.

Madeleine has always been very independent, especially since the passing of her husband some years ago, therefore Madeleine struggled with the idea of being on Universal Credit, let alone asking for support for food. Although she reached out for support, with her seeking advice from the team about low level support such as discounts on water bills through 'The Big Difference Scheme' and also the Broadband discount, she did not purely want to use the pantry as a member but also wanted to give back.

Since Madeleine joined as a member, she has also become a regular part of our team. She volunteers on a weekly basis, and has also helped with events. She has explained that this is her time to escape from the caring responsibilities and give something back. In December, she spoke with one of the team to return her card, explaining that the pantry was a "lifesaver in an extremely sticky patch", and although she still has periods of financial instability, she is no longer in a crisis point, and therefore decided she no longer needs to use the service. However, we are grateful that she is still a key volunteer and wants to continue to support the pantry as and when she can.

2. Pantry Two

John is a single man in his fifties. He lives alone with no dependants. He is claiming Universal Credit. John used to work, but in recent years, his health has prevented him from working. As he does not drive and is reliant on public transport, which is limited, he feels isolated.

When John joined the pantry, he was quite reserved. As the weeks passed by, he began to open up. Citizens Advice were able to help him sort out his benefits and deal with a few other issues. John then started volunteering, making teas and coffees for the members. He would chat with the members whilst they waited or just sat in the hall enjoying a brew and a natter.

With the Pantry, it provided John with a social setting where he felt of use once again, and part of a community

Outcomes delivered:
- Improved Mental Health and improved self-esteem
- Energy security
- Food security
- Citizens Advice assistance with resolving money issues

3. Pantry Three

Coco was originally referred to the pantry via the Foodbank. Recently widowed, Coco lives in a privately rented house, and her financial circumstances had taken a nosedive. During her initial visits, she was working closely with the advisor from Citizens Advice, who was able to help Coco navigate through and resolve her benefit issues. Coco very quickly utilized our facility of paying credit on her account, when her Universal Credit was paid, thus ensuring access to food during the following month. Visit after visit she would stay and started to help out at the Pantry.

Coco then became one of our first volunteers at Pantry Three. Volunteering at the pantry has given Coco some purpose after the loss of her husband. Coco enjoys interacting with the members, making a brew, and assisting the members with their shopping. Coco has now manged to get her benefits in order, and has successfully applied for PIP with the invaluable help from Citizens Advice.

As a long-term resident of the local area, Coco used to be a member of the church when it was opened. Coco has joined one of the groups now run in the church hall and is a regular at one of the Church's clubs.

Outcomes:
- Improved Mental Health
- Improved Social activities
- Energy Security
- Food security
- Citizens Advice has helped in improving her financial circumstances, and assistance with ongoing issues.
- Now volunteering within the community

1.   Appendix 2: Citizens Advice Case Studies

1. Lillington Pantry

The service provided by Citizens Advice South Warwickshire (CASW) at the Lillington Community Pantry fulfils a community need, assisting Pantry customers with a wide range of issues and improving their wellbeing.

CASW supports the Community Pantry with two advisers, who both enjoy working here. There is always an exciting buzz about the place, and it is always busy. The Pantry staff refer their customers where they think we might be able to help, mostly via a shared spreadsheet of appointments. CASW also accepts "drop-in" customers where time allows and there are a few 'frequent flyers' who they have seen several times.

The issues Citizens Advice assist with are quite varied - in addition to the usual Personal Independence Payments (PIP) / Attendance Allowance (AA) / Universal Credit queries. It has advised on issues as diverse as divorce, helping clients with European Union Settlement Scheme, Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) entitlement and housing disrepair issues involving the Housing Ombudsman. It also offers budgeting advice and "managing your money" chats, where appropriate. It is probable that many clients assisted at the Pantry CASW service would not otherwise have sought assistance from a centralised CASW service.

Jasmine was referred to CASW at the Lillington Community Pantry.

Jasmine lives with her retired husband and adult child in their owner-occupied property. Jasmine is aged below state pension age, husband receives the new state pension. Jasmine's child is in their twenties, has a low income and receives Universal Credit. Jasmine says that the household is struggling financially, and this is affecting mental health.

Jasmine wanted some advice on what benefits as a household they could claim.

What did CASW do:

Provided bespoke advice to Jasmine about the benefits that as a household they would be eligible for.
What was the impact on the client:

Jasmine was pleased with the explanation and the possibility of their eligibility as a household.

Jasmine had not been aware of some of the benefits they were entitled to and was able to take action as a result.

Outcomes achieved for the client:

Jasmine's household will receive additional benefit payments and reduced income tax in tax year 23/24 amounting to a maximum of over £3000:

Feedback from Citizens Advice Worker:

In Addition to the General Comments above, here are some keynotes:

1. Most Pantry customers who receive advice from CASW in situ there have multiple issues, with some complex cases involving various agencies.
2. The CASW service comprises a drop-in facility and an appointment booking process, administered

by Pantry staff. The no-show count for appointments in Q4 was 5%.

3. CASW include "managing your money" discussions with Pantry customers who seek advice about Benefits, with an Income/Expenditure check when permitted.

4. The Health issues include completing Personal Independence Payments (PIP), Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and Attendance Allowance (AA) forms with clients.

5. The Housing issues include assisting customers with DHP claims.

6. The Charity issues include issuing Food Bank and/or Fuel Bank vouchers.

7. Debt write-off excludes unknown outcomes from Debt Relief Order applications administered by a specialist Debt Team after a MECC referral

2. New Arley Pantry:

Client was referred via Community Pantry. They are 75 years old and live alone in a property that they own outright. Client receives State Pension and Pension Credit. Client also receives a small amount from their late spouse's private pension. Client has no savings and is not in any debt

Client came to the Pantry as they wanted advice regarding their energy bills doubling in cost and also not being able to cook meals properly due to their cooker being broken, client was unable to repair/replace it due to her low income.

The adviser completed a benefit check to ensure the client was in receipt of entitled benefits. Advisor also identified the client had a number of health issues and was not claiming any disability benefits.

The client was referred to an Energy Advisor who looked into the client's energy bills and provided them with a Carbon Monoxide Monitor. Advisor made a charity application on behalf of the client for a cooker. Client was awarded a £300 cooker from a local grant

Impact on client:

Client was extremely happy, as they are able to cook proper meals. The adviser also advised the client about Attendance Allowance and a follow up appointment was made to complete the form. The client was awarded Attendance Allowance.

Client stated that they were grateful for help and increase in monthly income due to Attendance Allowance, they felt less anxious about increasing costs to keep warm

Feedback from CA worker:

- This quarter the issues raised have demonstrated clients' concern about energy costs - help with utilities is now in the top three of issues clients are helped and supported with.
- Three clients were provided with free fuel vouchers and supported with budgeting and income maximisation.
- Local clients are accessing advice and support from Citizens Advice via referrals from Community Pantry and from other agencies using St Michaels on a Thursday afternoon (CAVA and Warm Hub

3. Camp Hill Pantry:

It is common in many relationships that one partner is found responsible for handling the household finances and administration, i.e. paying of bills, organising household maintenance, liaising with banks, Building Societies, Local Councils etc. The problem is that when that partner is no longer there it can leave the remaining partner in a very vulnerable position with not knowing what to deal with or what the situation is regarding prioritising issues etc.

We had such a situation at Camp Hill where a client walked in and reservedly walked up to my table. When asked if we could help them, they became very negative in their approach. They were very emotional and tearful.

What did BRANCAB do:

I asked the client to sit down which they reluctantly did, and we slowly but surely engaged in conversation. The client said that their partner of many years passed away in November 2022 and they organised everything to do with the house and finances, the client said that they were struggling with issues such as Rent, Council tax etc. Their partner's funeral had been sorted but the client said that they need to come to terms with the daily issues. The client lives in a private rented building and is in receipt of State pension with no other income.

I felt at that stage that they client had had enough, and I suggested that we meet next week to go through a Benefit check to establish whether they are entitled to any further income. The client wasn't sure about this but after I explained the ethos of the benefits check they were fine with it.

Impact on the client:

We met the following week and the client was far more relaxed, we went through the Benefits check and established that they were eligible for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support. I explained the ethos of the Severn Trent Big Difference Scheme (BDS) and they expressed a wish to apply.

The following week the client had obtained a local Council Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support form, which they had completed on their own and brought it in to be checked over; it was fine. They also brought in the information for the BDS application which was passed on to the relevant Team.

Client then took the Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support form to the Council Offices for processing, and they are awaiting the result.

Client now shows more confidence and although all of their emotional problems haven't gone away they are able to sort their daily issues out. The client was very grateful for the assistance.

Feedback from the CA worker:

The Community Pantry at Camp Hill is now well established and serving the Community well with many people returning to take advantage when the need arises. Generally when talking to the members they do try to manage without it but with the continuing worry of the unpredictable energy increases and other rising costs they feel that they are needing to use the Pantry. I am still heartened by the "Community Spirit" encompassed within the Pantry and people sit around having a "Cuppa" and sharing their "good bits" and their woes; it is a good atmosphere there.

Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council (NBBC) were recently distributing free basic Insulation Kits which we were handing out at the Pantry. These consisted of two Energy Saving lightbulbs, insulating foil for placing behind radiators and some Draughtproofing strip to seal gaps around doors and windows. The kit also included a leaflet providing instructions on how to fit the items and also giving some good energy saving tips.

The response to this was really encouraging because no one refused the kits and the people I spoke to showed a genuine interest in how to save money and stay warm.
It was a good initiative that worked as does the Pantry

Appendix 3: Family Information Service Case Study

The Family Information Service (FIS) Team are developing relationships at the three community pantries and working towards our aim of attending each pantry monthly. Although Q4 has been challenging for us in terms of staffing (we need to prioritise staffing our helpline and we have been carrying vacancies, which we have now recruited to), we have been able to attend multiple sessions across the three pantries. At each session, we speak to many individuals, which resulted in seven FIS referrals for Lillington, three FIS referrals for Camp Hill members, and two FIS referrals for New Arley pantry members. This means that the parent was contacted by a member of the FIS team to offer ongoing support, which can relate to a large range of subjects, such as Housing, Finance, Childcare, Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and many more.

In addition to the parents we have spoken with directly at the pantries, the FIS team ensure that they network with the professionals at the events to ensure that they understand the role of FIS so that they can make appropriate referrals to the team when we are not there.

Sherry is a regular at one of the Pantries and the team suggested to her to speak with the Family Information Service to see what support could be offered to her.

Sherry is on a low income and not currently working as her pregnancy is complicated. Her ex partner is also currently going through the Courts process for Domestic Violence offences. She is worried about finance and asked for support to get baby essentials.

The FIS Officer made a Baby Basics referral and a Citizens Advice referral for benefit and Child Support Agency (CSA) support. The FIS Officer also gained consent for a Brokerage referral to get some baby essentials and also some mental health support. She is already in contact with other support agencies.

Appendix 4: Community Pantries Member Feedback

"This place is a great life line of help for people in Camp Hill and loads of support. It helped me a lot."

"The place is amazing I've made loads of friends."

"All Community Pantry workers [are] pleasant.
Food variety [is] very good.
Nothing negative to say.
Even [name of volunteer] is ok :) "

"It helped [me] massively through [a] hard time and [a] time of need. [I've] been help[ed] [by] many professional[s] within the community centre and always [have] been pointed in the right direction by [the] lead of the pantry. I can't thank everyone for all the support. "

"This pantry hub is the thing that has kept me and the many people who I've met going through this very cold snap. The people who run it are all very friendly and so helpful. I look forward to Thursdays because I know I'm going to see people and have a good natter and hot drinks [and] biscuits. The CAB have even sorted me a brand new cooker. It's lovely to be able to cook a roast dinner for my grandkids. I couldn't believe it when it arrived. I will always be thankful for the support that I have had. The most friendliest people ever."

Background Papers

None.

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The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Local Member(s):
Cllr Boad - Lillington
Cllr Humphreys - New Arley
Cllr Beetham - Camp Hill

Other members:
Cllr Warwick,
Cllr Birdi,
Cllr Roberts,
Cllr Feeney

Resources and Fire & Rescue
Overview and Scrutiny Committee

13 September 2023

Cost-of-Living Support Update

Recommendations

That the Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers and comments on the progress and impact of the cost-of-living support initiatives put in place so far, and endorses the continuing approach to addressing cost-of-living pressures

1.   Executive Summary

1.1   In October 2022, Cabinet approved an approach to addressing cost-of-living pressures in Warwickshire and approved a funding package of up to £1million from the Revenue Investment Fund for a range of initiatives to support residents and communities. Cabinet delegated authority to the Executive Director for Resources to allocate this funding, in consultation with the Leader, the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Property, and the Portfolio Holder for Environment, Climate, and Culture. £732,000 of the £1million has been spent or is committed to be spent as of 15 August 2023.

1.2   In October 2022, Cabinet approved the allocation of the Household Support Fund grant between October 2022 and March 2023, to be distributed through the Warwickshire Local Welfare Scheme. Subsequently, in April 2023, Cabinet approved the allocation of the £6.94million Household Support Fund grant between April 2023 and March 2024, to again be distributed through the Warwickshire Local Welfare Scheme.

1.3   Cost-of-living pressures continue to have a significant impact on residents and communities, and plans need to be in place for a further period of elevated prices, reduced household incomes, and increased housing costs.

1.4   Businesses have been hit hard by cost-of-living (and "cost-of-operating") pressures. Inflation has pushed up the cost of energy and supplies, and a tight labour market has led to recruitment and retention difficulties and upward pressure on salaries.

1.5   This report describes the support initiatives invested in so far and their impact, effectiveness, value for money, and any lessons learnt. The report invites feedback on the proposed use of the remaining funding (£268,000 as of 15 August 2023) to support residents and communities through winter 2023/2024 and beyond. Final decisions will be taken by the Executive Director for

Resources, in consultation with the Leader, the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Property, and the Portfolio Holder for Environment, Climate, and Culture, in accordance with the delegated power given to them by Cabinet in October 2022.

1.6   This report gives an update on the Household Support Fund, which, alongside the Revenue Investment Fund package of support, represents much of the Council's investment in addressing cost-of-living pressures.

1.7   This report builds on the Team Warwickshire approach referenced in previous reports, recognising that the response to cost-of-living pressures in Warwickshire will be most effective through a collaborative muti-agency approach that draws upon the full range of partner contributions.

2.   Financial Implications

2.1   The further package of support initiatives described in Appendix 1 can be funded through the remainder of the up to £1million Revenue Investment Funding approved by Cabinet in October 2022. There is £268,000 remaining as of 15 August 2023.

2.2   The further package of support initiatives described in Appendix 1 is separate to, although complements and adds value to, the support provided through the allocation of the Household Support Fund grant between April 2023 and March 2024, as described in Appendix 5.

2.3   Funding for the continuation of the Community Supermarkets (Community Pantries) beyond the end of March 2024 is not intended to be covered by the remainder of the Revenue Investment Funding approved by Cabinet in October 2022. Work is ongoing to develop options to sustain the Community Supermarkets.

2.4   The one-off nature of the resources being allocated means it is crucial that the support initiatives described in Appendix 1 proceed on an understanding of them being time-limited, and without creating dependency or ongoing need.

2.5   In recommending the use of the remaining Revenue Investment Funding as described in Appendix 1, officers will undertake further evaluation of each proposal before implementation, to ensure that it:

- complements other initiatives and does not duplicate;
- has a sufficiently robust evidence base to justify the intervention;
- is an effective and justifiable use of the available funding;
- maximises the scope for longer term sustainability;
- has an appropriate exit strategy recognising that this is one off funding; and
- undertakes an Equality Impact Assessment to ensure decision making processes are fair and no group is disadvantaged or discouraged from participating.

3. Environmental Implications

3.1 The link between cost-of-living pressures and climate change is highlighted in the Council's Sustainable Futures Strategy. Long-term key elements of the Strategy will be critical to providing options and alternatives to current cost-of-living challenges, particularly in relation to securing sustainable energy supply and pricing.

3.2 All initiatives and projects supported by the funding streams referenced in this report are assessed against the Council's commitments to reducing climate change and increasing biodiversity. The Council will not fund anything deemed to be at odds with these commitments.

4. Supporting Information

Existing support initiatives

4.1 A range of support initiatives for residents and communities, funded through the Revenue Investment Fund up to £1million, were put in place to cover winter 2022/2023, extending into spring and summer 2023, and some extending further still. These can be seen in Appendix 1, where comment is made as to their impact, effectiveness, value for money, and any lessons learnt. The initiatives fell into the six categories specified in the Cabinet report from October 2022.

　　1. Food poverty, including the extension of the community supermarkets (community pantries) proof-of-concept, support for food banks, and free school meals work.

　　2. Fuel poverty, including support for warm hubs.

　　3. Financial hardship, including investment in the Citizens Advice Telephony Service, and support for voluntary and community transport schemes.

　　4. Keeping warm, including support for warm hubs, libraries' extended hours, and museums' extended hours.

　　5. Information and advice, including the Warwickshire cost-of-living website, printed materials, broadcast advertising, and the November 2022 cost-of-living summit.

　　6. Support fund: the Cost-of-Living Support Fund, which provided fast-track grants of up to £1,000 to local voluntary and community sector groups for projects and initiatives relating to cost-of-living support.

4.2 Appendix 2 provides an update from Citizens Advice on the new Telephony Service, referencing a 366% increase in telephone calls answered during the

service's first month of operation. Please note that names and certain other details have been changed to ensure anonymisation.

4.3   Appendix 3 contains case studies provided by Warwickshire Rural Community Council relating to some of the 80 plus community warm hubs established during winter 2022/23 as part of the charity's Winter Warm Hubs programme. Many of these hubs continue to operate and will play a crucial role during winter 2023/2024. Again, please note that certain details have been changed to ensure anonymisation.

4.4   Appendix 4 provides a list of the 98 recipients of funding from the Cost-of-Living Grant Fund, which provided quick turnaround grants of up to £1,000 for local voluntary and community organisations. In total £92,000 was awarded. In a first for the Council, each of the 98 awards came with a condition to link to the Family Information Service (FIS), reflecting the work of FIS in providing cost-of-living support to families, and the role of voluntary and community organisations in providing a conduit for this support.

4.5   Since April 2023, The Household Support Fund, providing help for the most vulnerable households around food, energy, and water bills, has provided:

- Cost-of-living payments to families/carers with children eligible for benefits related free school meals. In May 2023, automatic cost-of-living payments were issued: 19,392 eligible children and siblings were supported with £30 per eligible child for food support; total value £581,760.

- Utilities support. In May 2023, £75 utilities' support payments were issued automatically to 11,406 households with children eligible for free school meals, total value £855,450. In June 2023, a countywide utilities campaign was open to Warwickshire residents by application, and an additional 1,049 vouchers were distributed with a total value of £78,675.

- Welfare grants to community-led groups and initiatives with a total value of £107,740. Local projects have included essential hygiene products to families with new-borns, food hampers, slow cookers alongside support for healthy food preparation, essential home starter packs, and hot nutritious meals for vulnerable residents.

A round of automatic cost-of-living payments to families/carers with children eligible for benefits related free school meals took place in August 2023, and a further utilities campaign will take place in September 2023.

Further support initiatives over winter 2023/2024, and beyond

4.6   Any further range of local support initiatives must consider the national support measures that are in place and as described in Appendix 6.

4.7   Any further range of support initiatives must complement and add value to the allocation of the £6.94 million Household Support Fund grant between April 2023 and March 2024, as shown in Appendix 5.

4.8   In addition to investing in cost-of-living support initiatives, especially around the most vulnerable residents and communities, the role of the Council will continue to be one of convenor and coordinator of cost-of-living support across the County. Examples of this role include organising the cost-of-living summit in November 2022 and the upcoming cost-of-living event in October 2023, the Council's coordination of the multi-agency partnership group that has operated since November 2022, and the provision of frontline worker training for both internal and external (partner) staff.

4.9   The Council will continue to be evidence-led, both through data and the lived experience of communities and residents. It will target resource towards the residents and communities that need it most and allocate funding to optimise impact and deliver sustainable outcomes.

4.10   A further cost-of-living event in October 2023 will build upon the commitments to work collaboratively that came out of the cost-of-living summit held in November 2022, but with an even greater focus on practical delivery and outcomes for the most vulnerable residents and communities, strongly aligning to the countywide approach to Levelling Up and its core principles. The event, attended by representatives from across the public, private, and voluntary, community and social enterprise sectors, will take place at the CHESS Centre in Camp Hill, and will focus heavily on health outcomes and the importance of strong local economies in addressing longer-term cost-of-living changes.

4.11   Support initiatives over winter 2023/2024 will further embed a community-powered approach: involving communities and the wider voluntary, community, and social enterprise sector in decision making; working alongside communities to take practical action; and enabling communities to lead. The willingness and ability of communities to take the lead has been shown once again over the last 12 months, through the establishment of community-led warm hubs and other local cost-of-living support activities.

4.12   The Council will continue to work with partners beyond Warwickshire, such as Coventry City Council, the Coventry and Warwickshire Integrated Care Board, and the West Midlands Combined Authority, to align and amplify cost-of-living approaches wherever possible.

4.13   The Council's communications, messages, and engagement will be clear, concise, and accessible. They will evolve and build upon the success of the countywide shared website www.costoflivingwarwickshire.co.uk, as well as continuing to recognise the need for alternative communication and engagement methods including poster sites, broadcast advertising, and hard copy information.

4.14   Appendix 1 proposes a series of further, specific support initiatives over winter 2023/2024.

- There are repeat initiatives from winter 2022/2023, where these were effective and delivered a good return on investment.

- There are new initiatives reflecting identified gaps in support.

- Some initiatives from winter 2022/23 are not proposed to be repeated for winter 2023/2024, either because of changed circumstances, duplication with other initiatives, or because initiatives from winter 2022/2023 continue to cover winter 2023/2024.

- Funding to continue the Community Supermarkets (Community Pantries) beyond the end of March 2024 is not intended to be covered by the remainder of the Revenue Investment Funding and is subject to ongoing work on options to sustain the facilities.

4.15   The following table consolidates the proposed initiatives and internal support costs from Appendix 1.

Proposed initiative / internal support costs	Value
Food bank support fund	£30,000
Additional volunteer coordinator capacity, libraries	£15,000
Extend library and museum activities as warm hubs	£33,000
Further support for "You Can Online" project (laptop lending)	£20,000
Warwickshire Rural Community Council's "Winter Warm Hubs"	£30,000
Voluntary and community transport, medical and social journeys	£50,000
Cost-of-Living event October 2023	£5,000
Free school meals promotion work	£5,000
Family Information Service, Tackling Social Inequalities post	£40,000
Subtotal initiatives	£228,000
Marketing and communications	£3,750
Legal	£1,000
Business Support	£2,000
Communities and Partnerships	£7,500
Subtotal internal support costs	£14,250
Total	£242,250

4.16   In total, £242,000 of the remaining £268,000 is proposed to be allocated. This will leave a further £26,000 to be allocated in response to emerging pressures over winter 2023/2024, and if needed.

4.17   Sitting alongside the proposed support initiatives:

- The Warwickshire Food Strategy, approved by Cabinet in April 2023 and assisted by the countywide Food Forum, is expected to provide a shared, collaborative approach and a plan of action which agencies across the

sectors can commit to with key priorities for the short-, medium-, and longer-term. The Strategy aims to deliver a shared approach to better learning and understanding the root causes of food poverty and the cultural needs around food. This will enable us to decide and implement the highest-impact interventions. The Food Strategy and its Delivery Plan is accompanied by a £120,000 budget approved by Council in February 2023.

- The Warwickshire Financial Inclusion Partnership continues its aim of "Minimising the likelihood and impact of financial exclusion in Warwickshire through the provision of advice, support and project delivery in a co-ordinated manner that demonstrates value for money, builds financial resilience and maximises benefits to the communities of Warwickshire." The Partnership has been successful in delivering targeted interventions since its inception in 2008. Partnership activity has focussed on issues relating to child poverty, food poverty, affordable credit, affordable warmth, and welfare reforms / Universal Credit.

Support for businesses

4.18   The Council's Economy and Skills Service will continue to support businesses.

- The Small Capital Grants' Programme, digital and creative grants, and working with intermediaries to provide advice and support to businesses.

- Exploring the potential of utilising the Warwickshire Recovery and Investment Fund to provide finance for investment in energy efficient and low-carbon equipment.

- Working with Coventry City Council to promote the Coventry and Warwickshire Green Business Programme and establishing the Council's own Green Recovery Grant Scheme aimed at the retail, hospitality, and leisure sectors. This has provided free energy audits to 42 businesses and provided grants to six businesses towards the costs of energy efficiency improvements and low carbon adoption.

- The new Business Resilience Programme being commissioned in partnership with the Borough and District Councils, using funding from the United Kingdom Shared Prosperity Fund. This will support businesses to tackle the impacts of existing and emerging events such as the Pandemic, cost-of-living pressures, Brexit, and the war in Ukraine.

Longer-term support

4.19   The Council's Community Powered Warwickshire programme will be an essential part of the response to longer-term cost-of-living pressures.

4.20   The countywide approach to Levelling Up in Warwickshire, approved by Cabinet in July 2022, is a fundamental part of the Council's longer-term response to cost-of-living pressures. The approach aims to tackle longstanding inequalities and disparities by working collaboratively with partners to focus effort on priority communities and places whilst recognising and protecting the strengths of other areas across the County. A key part of this work, already underway, is to develop local Levelling Up Plans with each Borough and District and Council, and a series of pilots to test different approaches to tackling inequality and disparity in a community-powered way.

5.   Timescales associated with the decision and next steps

5.1

- Deliver the further support initiatives described in Appendix 1 (September 2023 to March 2024).

- Work with partners to further evolve the Warwickshire cost-of-living website, and progress other shared communications activities (September 2023 to March 2024).

- Organise the cost-of-living event for October 2023.

- Ongoing work on options for the sustainability of the Community Supermarkets (Community Pantries) beyond March 2024 will come forward for consideration over Autumn 2023.

- Continue to work collaboratively with partners such as the Borough and District Councils, Health, Town and Parish Councils, and voluntary, community, and social enterprise sector organisations to ensure a coordinated offer supported by joined up delivery mechanisms and appropriate signposting to services (September 2023 to March 2024).

Appendices

1.   Appendix 1 - Existing and proposed support initiatives.
2.   Appendix 2 - Citizens Advice Telephony Service update.
3.   Appendix 3 - Warwickshire Rural Community Council Winter Warm Hubs Programme, case studies.
4.   Appendix 4 – Cost-of-Living Grant Fund recipients.
5.   Appendix 5 - Household Support Fund grant allocation April 2023 to March 2024.
6.   Appendix 6 – Statistical background and national support measures.

Background papers

None

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The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Local Member(s): None

Other members: Cllrs Adrian Warwick, Parminder Singh Birdi, Sarah Boad, Sarah Feeney, and Will Roberts.

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Cabinet

14 December 2023

Proposed changes to on-street Pay & Display Parking

Recommendations

That Cabinet approves

1.   the increase of on-street charges in Leamington, Warwick, Kenilworth, Stratford and Rugby as set out at paragraphs 4.3 and 4.4, subject to completion of the required statutory process'*.*

2.   requests the Executive Director for Communities in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Planning to undertake an annual review of the on-street Pay and Display charges that considers the District and Borough off-street pricing structures.

3.   requests the Executive Director for Communities in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Planning to undertake a review of the existing on-street Pay and Display hours of restriction to create a more consistent and simplified model across the town centres, and authorises the Executive Director for Communities to take such steps and to make any changes as are necessary to achieve such a model subject to the completion of the required statutory process.

1.   Executive Summary

1.1   It is proposed that the Council increases on-street pay and display charges in Leamington, Warwick, Kenilworth, Rugby and Stratford-on-Avon, effective from 1st March 2024, to bring them in line with existing off-street car park charges in those areas as recommended by the Department for Transport (DfT) and to ensure consistency across the county. There will be no change to parking charges in other areas at this time.

1.2   It is further proposed that the Council undertakes an annual review of all District and Borough off-street parking charges, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Planning, to ensure on-street charges remain inline with off street parking charges moving forward.

1.3   A review and standardisation of hours of restriction across all bays is also proposed to enable paid parking to address the existing inconsistency and the subsequent confusion caused by differing approaches across the county.

2. Financial Implications

2.1 All changes will incur low level internal legal and operational costs, but these will be managed within existing service budget.

2.2 Where the review concludes that it is appropriate to increase Pay & Display rates in the identified towns, this will increase income received. However, any surplus generated from parking payments or through enforcement must be invested in Highways improvements or mobility purposes as set out under the Road Traffic Act (RTA) 1984 (3a).

3. Environmental Implications

General guidance from the Department for Transport (DfT) recommends that on-street pay and display pricing is designed to support short-stay use of limited parking capacity within areas of high demand. The price of parking should be such that it encourages those who wish to stay longer to either use alternative methods of transport, or to park in off-street car parks. These are generally located on the periphery of the core centres, thus reducing through traffic in these areas with consequent environmental and air quality benefits. The proposed review will be undertaken with this principle in mind.

4. Supporting Information

4.1 The Department for Transport (DfT) Guidance recommends that when setting on and off-street parking charges, authorities should consider lower charges off-street than on-street. This would encourage drivers to park off-street, thus minimising on-street congestion caused by vehicles searching for spaces and supporting the environmental benefits mentioned above. The DfT further recommends that regular and planned price increases are favoured over larger sporadic increases which can cause confusion.

Increase to existing Pay and Display charges

4.2 The on-street pay and display charges have remained at their current charges since 2018, these were applied at a flat rate across the County (apart from Kenilworth which is currently slightly lower at £1.00 per hour.

4.3 It is proposed to implement an increase to the hourly on-street pay and display charges to all on-street locations from £1.10 up to £1.40 to reflect the advice given by the DfT and after reviewing the District and Borough off-street charges. This increase is broadly in line, although slightly below, RPI inflation that has occurred during the period 2018-2023.

4.4 To support the town economy and a regular turnover of visitors, it is proposed to introduce a 15 min stay to all locations at a reduced rate of 25p. This is a 10% reduction in the current pricing rate (28p) and creates a simple flat rate for these very short parking sessions such as for collections and deliveries.

Annual review of on-street parking charges

4.5   It is proposed that officers undertake a county wide annual review of the individual District and Borough off-street pricing structures in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Planning and to formally consult as required by statute on the suggested adjustments arising from that review. A County-wide benchmarking exercise confirmed that off-street parking charged by the District and Borough Councils are subject to annual reviews with the recommended adjustments consulted on and implemented each year.

4.6   Such a review will enable the Council to ensure that the pricing of on street parking moving forwards supports the approach recommended in DfT Guidance and avoids the need for larger periodic price rises.

Review of existing on-street restricted hours

4.7   There is a considerable disparity in the hours of restrictions in bays offering pay and display parking. The hours of restriction vary across the County, generally speaking their commencement is consistent within each town, starting at either 7am or 8am across all bays. However, bays offering paid parking vary in when the restricted hours end. This can be between 5pm and 10pm often with considerable variance in streets neighbouring each other.

4.8   This variance causes confusion for visitors unsure whether payment is required, and how long to make payment for and results in a number of Penalty Charge Notices (PCN's) being issued to visitors falling foul of the different restricted hours.

4.9   This variance also impacts on the enforcement effectiveness requiring Civil Enforcement Officers (CEO's) to patrol in a disjointed manner later in the day. There are high levels of non-compliance in many areas of the County due to the challenges faced by our enforcement provider which are emphasised by this disparity.

4.10   It is proposed that officers undertake a review of all existing hours of restrictions in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Planning with a view to standardising and streamlining the approach. Standardised hours of restriction will increase visitor confidence and convenience and increase the enforcement effectiveness and increase compliance levels.

5.   Timescales associated with the decision and next steps

5.1   Following Cabinet approval (if granted) to increase pay and display charges, the Authority is required by statute to issue a public notice to be published locally in all affected areas and for the notice to be in place for 21 days. The Authority will affix notices on all pay and display machines informing customers for 28 days prior to the change and advertise as required in local press.

5.2   If Cabinet approves a review of on street charges to consider alignment with the District and Boroughs, officers will engage and consult with all District and Borough Councils. This review would then take place annually with any changes to pricing implemented once a year.

5.3   If Cabinet approves a review of the restricted hours for all pay and display bays, any subsequent changes to existing restrictions will require a full Traffic Regulation Order consultation and change, alongside new on street signage.

5.4   In respect of annual reviews proposed within this report, any changes to charges required following each review will be subject to any relevant statutory or governance process applicable at that time to include the approval of Portfolio Holder where constitutionally required.

Appendices

1.   Appendix 1 – On-Street Parking Payment Schedule

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The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Local Member(s):   Councillors Sarah Boad, Sarah Feeney, John Holland, Sarah Millar, Kate Rolfe, Tim Sinclair, Parminder Singh Birdi and Rik Spencer.

Appendix 1

On-street parking pricing schedule

The following pricing schedule is proposed to be implemented across all on street pay and display locations.

Parking duration	existing pricing	new pricing	change
15 min	£0.28	£0.25	-£0.03
30 min	£0.55	£0.70	£0.15
1 hour	£1.10	£1.40	£0.30
1.5 hours	£1.65	£2.10	£0.45
2 hours	£2.20	£2.80	£0.60

Please note, the proposed increases will be applied to the incremental durations detailed above only, in line with the new incremental schedule which has been consulted on, and approved, as required by statute.

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Cabinet

14 December 2023

Accommodation Related Support Services Approval to Tender

Recommendations

That Cabinet:

1.   Approves proceeding with the proposals to re-structure Housing Related Support (HRS) services to support delivery of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) savings 2025 – 2026; endorsing the recommendations on the service redesign outlined in section 5 of this report.

2.   Authorises the commencement of procurement activity to implement the proposals and delegates to the Executive Directors for Children and Young People and Social Care and Health (in consultation with the Portfolio Holders for Children and Families and Social Care and Health) the implementation of the proposals, including the de-commissioning of existing Housing Related Support services and the subsequent award of the redesigned Accommodation Related Support contracts and entering into of agreements required to implement this decision on terms and conditions acceptable to the Executive Director of Resources.

1.   Executive Summary

1.1.   Accommodation Related Support Services are offered to young people (16 - 25 years) and adults (25+). Young People and Adult Accommodation Related Support Services offers early intervention and prevention and supports the Local Authority to meet the requirements outlined in Children and Families and Adult Social Care legislation.

1.2.   The Council MTFS savings require a budget reduction of £1 million in 2025-26. To align with current contract length new services will be procured to commence from April 2025.

1.3.   A public consultation on the redesign proposals opened on 22nd May 2023 and closed on 11th August 2023. (Appendix 1 - HRS Redesign Public Information Document). The consultation report outlines feedback on the redesign proposals which have informed the final redesigned service model to be commissioned. (Appendices 2 and 3). Key messages from the consultation feedback are summarised in this report.

1.4.   The proposed new services will be referred to as Accommodation Related Support Services. The services will offer holistic and personalised support to meet need; promoting wellbeing, safety, resilience, independence, recovery and reablement to prevent, reduce and/or delay an individual's need for on-going care and support.

1.5.   To realise our duties under the Equalities Act 2010 and having due regard for the impact of these proposals on protected groups under the Act, we have reviewed and updated the Equality Impact Assessment after the consultation and final service redesign proposed; Equality Impact Assessment Summary (Appendix 4), Equality Impact Assessment Version 2 Updated (Appendix 5).

1.6.   The procurement for the new Accommodation Related Support Service will commence with publication of the notice in February 2024, followed by Contract Award in June 2024 and Contract Start in April 2025.

2.   Financial Implications

2.1   As part of the statutory requirement to set a balanced budget each year, in February 2023 Warwickshire County Council reapproved a saving of £1million from the Accommodation Related Support annual budget from the 2025/26 financial year.

2.2   Consultation has been completed on the proposal for the redesign of these services to become more efficient and effective and improve the customer journey, within the reduced budget. The final proposals will to some extent reduce the impact of the funding reductions whilst targeting the resource at those in greatest need, preventing escalation to care services and maintaining a focus on positive outcomes.

2.3   Following development and consultation about the service redesign, finalised proposals have been reached to support the £1 million savings by 2025/26. The current total contract value across Adults and Young People (16-24 years) of £3,855,468 p.a. will reduce to £2,855,468 p.a. subject to any inflationary uplift that occurs in April 2024.

2.4   It is proposed that Warwickshire County Council commission the services with a contract term of five years, with options to extend for up to a further five years (5 + 5 years). The aggregate cost of a five-year term at £2,855,468 p.a. would be £14,277,340 million, and £28,554,680 million if the full ten-year extension period is realised, subject to any annual inflation award agreed by the Council. This supports greater efficiencies and reduces the risk of the reduced budget being unattractive to providers and helps stimulate the market. This ultimately provides the Council with greater choice and improved chances of securing good value for money services for its customers.

3. Environmental Implications

3.1 There are some environmental implications regarding the delivery of this work; key factors are: energy and water use, waste management, recycling, emissions and eco-friendly office and business travel policies.

3.2 We would look to undertake a rigorous tendering process and expect providers to demonstrate a good awareness and commitment to environmental factors. This may include:

- ISO 14001 approved Environmental Management System or equivalent
- All staff/volunteers receive environmental awareness training
- Targets around reduced energy consumption year-on-year in delivery
- Low emission for any company vehicles
- All offices/homes contain recycling equipment
- Preference given to refurbished and/or re-cycled products
- IT waste wiped, re-purposed, or recycled under The Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Directive (WEEE).

4. Supporting Information

4.1 The Council undertook a 12-week public consultation period on the redesign proposals (22 May 2023- 11th August 2023). The aim of the consultation was to inform Warwickshire citizens about the proposals to redesign the current Services, to ask for views on these proposals and their impact and to gather alternative proposals. The consultation also asked people's views on the equality impact assessment that was produced in relation to each proposal; whether people felt all impacts were identified, anything missing and ideas about how to reduce the impact.

4.2 Social Engine and Kaizen were commissioned to help target and tailor consultation methods and approaches for people whose voices are heard less frequently and those with lived experience and to produce an independent HRS Redesign Consultation Report. The full Consultation Analysis Report is provided at Appendices 2 and 3. The consultation report has informed the service redesign, with the key findings, feedback and all relevant factors that need to inform the redesign of the service model (Appendix 8). A consultation Community Report has also been produced. (Appendix 9).

4.3 A range of consultation methods were used to ensure the consultation was informed by a wide range of people, with regular reviews throughout the 12-week period to consider how to extend the reach of the consultation and target any groups that were not represented who wanted to feed back on the HRS redesign and give views on the options. There was good engagement with the consultation, with 583 responses across the various engagement methods and channels.

- A public survey was hosted on Ask Warwickshire with an Easy Read version available on request and to download. Surveys could be completed online or on paper, with the option to receive the questionnaire in a different format or language and to request support with completing the survey. The consultation survey was promoted in a number of ways, including press, social media and direct mail to individuals and organisations. EQUIP and CAVA supported access and promotion to the voluntary sector and community groups. The survey is available at Appendix 1 and Easy Read version Appendix 6, with a summary of the Communication Log at Appendix 7.
- The Ask Warwickshire survey was completed by 129 people, which included 9 organisational responses. The Easy Read consultation was completed and returned by 25 people.
- Four email responses were received including one from Warwickshire Heads of Housing and three interested citizens.
- Social Engine facilitated a consultation workshop with organisations who work with people who are homeless and with HRS services across the voluntary and third sector including commissioned and non-commissioned services and public sectors with a focus on those that refer people to HRS services and receive referrals for specialist support. 30 professionals participated.
- Kaizen undertook outreach work in community settings to reach those with lived experience and seldom heard individuals and groups reaching 310 people. This included visiting services for homeless and vulnerably housed people and those in financial hardship, as well as conducting outreach within the wider community, speaking to current, previous and potential users of HRS services.
- Social Engine and Warwickshire County Council held seven focus groups. This included:

  - Three young people's groups, involving 19 young people.
  - Two community groups, involving 44 people.
  - Two Social Care and Support teams, involving 22 workers.

4.4 For each proposal, people were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the proposal, and their reasons for this, how the proposal would impact on them and other people/organisations and what could be done instead.

The proposals consulted on were:
- Retaining both floating and accommodation-based support in the same proportions as the current services. Please note these are the current terminology for the types of support offered and the language used by the provider market.
  - floating support is support for those people in their own accommodation or temporary accommodation. It is not linked to any specific accommodation but moves with the person receiving it wherever they live.
  - Accommodation-based support is where temporary housing and short-term support are delivered together. The support is linked to their

accommodation and can only be received whilst living in the allocated accommodation.

- Stopping the dedicated disabled floating support service and creating two inclusive floating support services one for young people 16 –24 years and adults 25+ that continues to support people with disabilities.
- Introducing a range of flexible shorter, tailored interventions accessed through triage based on needs.
- Reducing the maximum duration of services.
- Views on a new name for the services from HRS services to 'Supporting Independence Services'.
- Additional services delivered by the incumbent provider beyond the service specification, proposed not to be included in future tendering

4.5   Across all methods of consultation a broad range of people participated including age, gender, sexuality, ethnic background, and people who identified as having a disability or long-term condition. The outreach approach enabled the consultation to reach people facing multiple disadvantages who may not always engage in traditional consultation channels. Equality data was gathered in the Ask Warwickshire survey and within outreach to demonstrate this.

- A range of ages responded to the consultation. While fewer young people 16-25 years responded to the Ask Warwickshire survey, other methods such as focus groups and outreach were targeted to reach this group.
- In terms of ethnicity, the consultation was less successful at reaching people who described themselves as Asian. This is an area identified within the equality impact assessment and we will continue to explore how we address this.
- During the consultation, concern was expressed that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller were not identified specifically within the equality impact assessment and were only included in the 'other' classification. To address this, stakeholders were asked to promote the surveys and engagement with diverse communities via EQUIP and the Council's Gypsy, Roma and Traveller team.
- There was very good engagement with people living with disabilities, who were identified in the equality impact assessment for consideration due to the potential impacts of the changes, with the proportion of responses from people with disabilities higher than the proportion of people with disabilities in Warwickshire.
- The consultation gathered a range of views in terms of gender, although more women than men participated.
- In terms of sexual orientation this was only asked within the Ask Warwickshire survey, 68% identified as heterosexual, (the Warwickshire population total is estimated at 90.9%), 13.96% of respondents described themselves in a variety of non-heterosexual orientations and 13.95% preferred not to say.
- Geographically we have a good distribution of responses across the county.

4.6 The consultation asked for feedback on Equality Impact Assessment (EIA), whether people felt all impacts had been covered and the impacts could be mitigated or reduced. The consultation included considerations for young people, particularly 16 –17 years, disabilities, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. The Equality Impact Assessment has been updated and an Equality Impact Assessment Summary produced, which will inform the service specification and performance monitoring of the contract. (Appendices 4/5).

5. Recommendations

In relation to the specific proposed changes, the following recommendations are made following consultation:

5.1 **Recommendation 1 – keeping both floating and accommodation-based support, allocating budget in similar proportions as current commissioned services.** Both professionals and service users (and potential service users) welcomed the retention of both accommodation–based and floating support services. There was a widespread perception that demand for support was already higher than the services can meet. However, if reductions to the budget need to be made, then the general perception was that this way is both fair and reasonable.

5.2 **Recommendation 2 – integrating disabled people's service into inclusive floating support services for young people 16-25 years and adults 25+ years.** To support consistency in service and quality, within the specification we shall strengthen the staff training requirements around trauma informed care, psychologically informed environments, autism, learning disability, visual impairment awareness training. Providers will be expected to evidence that staff members are adequately trained and experienced for supporting disabled customers. This may result in providers choosing to have specialist staff with dedicated caseloads or adopting alternative ways to address this. We will also build in monitoring of accessibility and outcomes to ensure we understand how inclusive our services are for people living with disabilities.

5.3 **Recommendation 3 – offering flexible, shorter interventions**. **We recommend proceeding with an enhanced triage process that offers early information, advice, signposting and brief intervention.** This supports resolving issues at the earliest stage and only offering short-term support for those that require on-going support. This will improve the customer's journey to get the right service at the right time, telling their story only once to services.

5.4 **Recommendation 4 – shortening the maximum duration of services. For young people's support services, we recommend not reducing the time limits. For adults' support services we recommend the reductions are taken forward**. All services will offer holistic and personalised support to meet need, promoting wellbeing, safety, resilience, independence to prevent, reduce and/or delay an individual's need for ongoing care and support. Clarity will be given within the specification with allowance for exceptions where

necessary to support clients whose outcomes have not been met within the expected timescale. This may be particularly challenging for accommodation-based services due to the lack of affordable move-on accommodation across Warwickshire. We will also work with District and Borough Housing to review their move-on protocol for the support services.

5.5 **Recommendation 5 – not changing the current names to Supporting Independence services.**
The proposal to change the name to Supporting Independence Services was not supported by the majority of respondents. Although some respondents were in favour of emphasising independence, a more substantial number were not in favour of the change. Many participants indicated that the proposed name lacks clarity and specificity in relation to the service being about housing support and may risk being confused with other services. We recommend tendering two services: Young People (16-25 years) and Adults (25+) and changing the name to Accommodation Related Support Services.

5.6 **Recommendation 6 – current additional services (Street Outreach and Hubs in Nuneaton and Rugby) are not included in future service specification.**
P3, the incumbent provider, chose to offer additional services in their tender submission which were not part of the specification required. These additional services were Street Outreach and Navigation Hubs in Nuneaton and Rugby. These services have been delivered by P3 without any additional budget. Warwick District Council (WDC) and Stratford upon Avon District Council (SDC) did supplement the street outreach team with funding for two workers up to 31st March 2023 and one worker from 1st April 2023 – 31st March 2024.

Whilst these services were valued, opinion was fairly divided on the proposal not to include additional services in the revised service specification. There was concern that rough sleeping and homelessness may increase and put further burdens on community and voluntary organisations. However, there was an acknowledgment regarding the financial constraints facing the Council. It was suggested that the redesign with clearer signposting, more streamlined services and working smarter with other hubs/community spaces across Warwickshire could help mitigate some of the impact.

6. Timescales associated with the decision and next steps

6.1 The expected timescale for delivering the procurement and tendering of the new services is shown in Table 1. To mitigate impact on current and future customers a mobilisation plan will be drawn up with the successful providers to ensure a smooth transition, alongside decommissioning plans where required by incumbent providers.

Table 1: Procurement and Commissioning Time Plan

Description	Dates
Seek approval from Cabinet to procure final design	14/12/23
Find a Tender Contract Notice	February 2024
Tender Period	February- April 2024
Evaluation	April – May 2024
Bidder presentation and selection	May 2024
Approval and Tender Report/Contract Award Report	May 2024
Confirm award	June 2024
Commence mobilisation and implementation	June 2024 - 31/3/25
Commence decommissioning/reduction of services	June 2024 - 31/3/25
New Services contracts start date	1/4/25

7.   Appendices

Appendix 1: HRS Redesign Public Information Document
Appendix 2: Consultation Report
Appendix 3: Consultation Report Appendices
Appendix 4: Equality Impact Assessment Summary
Appendix 5: Equality Impact Assessment Version 2 Updated
Appendix 6: Easy Read Redesign Survey
Please note the Easy Read version on the Ask Warwickshire website had an error which was identified on 29.6.23 and removed with the corrected version uploaded on 30.6 23 (25 days). All Easy Read returns completed (25) were on the corrected version.
Appendix 7: Summary of Communication Log
Appendix 8: Summary of Consultation Findings
Appendix 9: Consultation Community Report

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The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:
Local Member(s): N/A – This is a countywide matter.
Other members: Councillors Jo Barker, Barbara Brown, Tracey Drew, John Holland, Marian Humphreys, Kate Rolfe, and Jerry Roodhouse

Public Information Document

Appendix 1:Consultation on the Redesign of Housing Related Support Services

Background
We want to know your views on the redesign of Housing Related Support Services. The following information sets out why changes are being proposed, what the proposed changes are and how you can have your say about the changes.

What are these Support Services?
These services in Warwickshire support vulnerable people to enable them to attain the skills required to be able to live independently in the community. They aim to reduce the need for more intensive/longer-term social care support and/or health care, or risk of homelessness. They support people who are in need and eligible as determined by a Care Act 2014 assessment or who are assessed as vulnerable to not being able to sustain their independence.

Vulnerability is likely to be a key issue identified through multiple needs (for example mental health needs, debt and financial issues and risk of homelessness) with one main need being complicated by others or a combination of lower-level issues that together give cause for concerns in terms of ability to maintain independence ('edge of care').

Warwickshire County Council ('the Council') pays providers to deliver services that support customers to acquire living skills thus enabling them to live independently after the support ends. This can include support for customers to enable them to:
- stay safe within the home and local community
- manage finances, including budgeting, utilities and benefits
- acquire general housekeeping skills
- maintain independence, good health and wellbeing
- access and maintain a secure tenancy in accommodation
- participate in training and/or education
- obtain paid work or volunteering opportunities

There are two types of services available to anyone over the age of 16 with support needs:
- Accommodation-based: temporary housing and short-term support are delivered together
- Floating support: short term support for those in their own accommodation or temporary accommodation.

For the accommodation-based service, the Council pays providers for the cost of support only, not property/rental costs. All rental costs, including housing management, are paid via Housing Benefit claims payable by the relevant Local Housing Authority (LHA) and/or customer contributions where applicable.

Services are currently provided to customers for up to 2 years for accommodation-based support; up to 2 years for floating support for people aged 16-25 and 1 year for floating support services for people with disabilities aged 16+ years and for adults aged 25+ years.

To check whether this includes services you use please see the lists at page 13 at the end of this document.

In addition to the services we asked the current provider of support services for people aged 25+ to deliver, the provider offered to provide some additional services including Street Outreach services and 'Navigator' hubs in Nuneaton and Rugby. Additional services are those services that were not part of the specification the Council tendered.

The Street Outreach service is countywide and offers support to rough sleepers to encourage and motivate them to engage with services including drug and alcohol treatment, healthcare, assistance with benefits, reconnection to their local area/country and move into safe accommodation. This team is part funded by a Department for Levelling Up and Communities grant in Warwick and Stratford Districts.

The 'Navigator' hubs are shop premises in Rugby and Nuneaton town centre. People can get advice or support and be helped to access other services to improve their situation or circumstances. We are not proposing to specifically include these additional services in the redesigned services although potential providers may decide to include additional services like this in the bids they submit to us. We will be asking for your views on this approach in the consultation questionnaire.

What is happening in Warwickshire?
We are consulting on re-designing these services to become more efficient and effective within a reduced budget, while still focussing on those people in the greatest need and those whose support will prevent them needing care services.

We have developed the proposals, with input from strategic partners and stakeholders, including housing teams in the five District and Borough Councils; Warwickshire Probation Service; Warwickshire County Council Adult Social Care and Support; and Children and Families Service. The proposals have been developed to maximise the impact of the funding and to ensure that wherever possible, the commissioned services will help people with targeted, time-limited and effective support that equips and enables them to self-manage once the service ends.

How did we develop these proposals?
In order to develop possible options for re-designing the services, we engaged with customers to understand their experiences and priorities and conducted a survey across all stakeholders and strategic partners, including voluntary sector organisations, housing teams in the five District and Borough Councils; Warwickshire Probation Service; Warwickshire County Council Adult Social Care and Support; and Children and Families Service.

The findings from these activities and our performance and quality monitoring data informed a series of redesign workshops which involved strategic partner identified above. Together we looked at how we could deliver a more efficient and cost-effective service through re-design and ensure people who need support get the right service at the right time.

The redesign workshops looked at each type of service in detail. They considered the customer journey into service as well as the delivery. They considered if the services offer timely support that resolves issues at the earliest point. They also looked at the level of demand and ways to create efficiencies in the service. They also looked at the situations and needs of people who were being referred into the service.

The redesign work highlighted the importance of trauma informed interventions, psychologically informed environments and starting from strengths/ relationship approach to build independence alongside the value of working well in partnership. These insights will be incorporated into the specification of the proposed future model.

A common feature from the workshop feedback looked to limit the impact on services to young people (16-25yrs) and considered options which promoted early intervention and support with the aim of reducing risk of homeless earlier and therefore reliance on adult services later in life. Furthermore, accommodation-based services for people with chaotic lifestyles and multiple disadvantages/vulnerabilities was considered vital due to the lack of alternative provision and opportunities it presents to support engagement with relevant support services, reduce re-offending and minimise homelessness.

The workshops concluded that all the services were valued by customers and the organisations that work to support them. We noticed that the length of the support was not clearly related to the need and so we explored ways to better triage referrals and be as efficient as possible in delivering support proportionate to a citizen's situation.

We considered approaches which sought to disproportionality reduce some of the services to maintain the same level of funding for another. We felt this would result in a larger group of people being negatively impacted, the impact being felt more by those with protected characteristics. We concluded that decommissioning any of the individual services would create a risk of increased homelessness or needs for social care support and that this was not an option we would want to pursue.

What does this mean?
The Council is therefore proposing the new budget is distributed in a way that means each service area would receive the same percentage reduction in spend. This will support the Council to maintain the range of services it delivers.

The proposed approach would retain both accommodation-based and floating support services for young people and adults by allocating the budget in the same proportions as current contract arrangements. This approach is supported by Warwickshire Housing Board and Warwickshire Probation Service.

The proposed new services would continue to offer holistic and personalised support to meet need, promoting safety, resilience, independence, recovery and reablement to prevent, reduce and/or delay an individual's need for care and support. To reflect the increased focus on reducing, delaying and preventing needs for care and support, and preventing homelessness, we are proposing that the new services will be known as the Supporting Independence Services when they are retendered to commence in January 2025.

This equal reduction across all services will unfortunately have a negative impact on the number of people it can support, and some people may find they are waiting longer for services. However, the impact of this approach has been explored and was recommended by key stakeholders as proportionately it was felt it would have the lowest impact across all groups.

Our proposed redesign will to some extent reduce the impact of the funding reduction by making the services more efficient through more effective triage; shorter, targeted services where these are appropriate for customers; and people leaving services earlier with positive outcomes.

About this Consultation
The aim of this consultation is to inform you about the proposals to redesign services and to ask for your views. What the people of Warwickshire tell us during this consultation about the impact of our proposals and what we could do instead will help us consider how we redesign services. We wish to offer and deliver as many of the right services to the right people at the right time as possible and your views about how we should do this are important.

This consultation is in two parts:
- Part One focuses on how the Council would spend the budget and how the service would be re-designed
- Part Two focuses on our Equality Impact Assessment

The consultation questionnaire asks for your views on six elements of the re-design.

Have Your Say
Why should you get involved?
The proposed redesigned support services would be different from what is provided currently. The proposals will have an impact on many people accessing support services both now and in the future. We wish to hear everyone's views on the proposed changes, including people that use these services or may use them in the future, so that we can work together to re-shape support services.

Your contribution is important and can make a difference.

How can you get involved?
We have the consultation pack on Ask Warwickshire.

You can put forward your views either individually or as part of a group in the following ways:
- Complete the questionnaire online, please go to *www.warwickshire.gov.uk/ask*
- Or you can also ask for assistance in completing the online form by using the contact information below.

- Or complete a paper copy of the questionnaire. If you require a paper version, please request this by telephone or email (contact details below) and we shall send one out to you.
- Or can ask for an easy read version of the questionnaire. If you want an easy read version, please ask for this by telephone or email (contact details below) and we shall send one out to you.
- You can also contact us if you need the questionnaire in a different format or language.
- You can respond directly in writing to: Warwickshire County Council, Housing Related Support Consultation, Shire Hall, Market Place, Warwick, CV34 4RL or by emailing peoplestrategyandcommissioning@warwickshire.gov.uk.

For help and advice about the consultation:

If you have any queries or need any help or advice about the consultation, please email peoplestrategyandcommissioning@warwickshire.gov.uk or telephone Warwickshire County Council Customer Service Centre on 01926 410410 and they will direct you to the Maintaining & Promoting Independence Team for support.

Please also ring the above number or email if you require help completing the questionnaire or would like the questionnaire in another format or language.

What will happen with all the information gathered?
We will collate all the consultation responses and use the information provided to inform the future of support services in Warwickshire.

The Consultation Analysis report and Proposal for the new services will be considered by Warwickshire County Council Cabinet later this year. If approved, tendering will start in 2024 for re-designed services to be delivered from 1st April 2025.

PART ONE – Budget and service re-design proposals

Budget

Element 1 - Retain both accommodation-based and floating support services for young people and adults by allocating the available budget in the same proportions as currently

Under the new budget the money available is reduced but the proportions of the budget that we spend on each service area would be unchanged

Why we are proposing this change
The Council are making this proposal because it enables the Council to continue to provide the range of support services that have been offered since 2015 and does not disproportionality impact more so on any one group of customers.

We want to know if you agree or disagree with this proposal and why. We also want to understand if you think this will impact you or other people or organisations or if you have any other suggestions. The consultation questionnaire will ask you about this.

Service redesign proposals.

We propose the following three service re-design proposals to enable us to improve the service and deliver it within the available budget.

Element 2 - Stop commissioning the separate floating support service for people with disabilities and meet those needs within redesigned inclusive floating support services, one for young people aged 16-25 and one for people aged 25+ years

We currently commission three Countywide Floating Support services, one for people with disabilities aged 16 and above (Together working for Wellbeing), one for young people aged 16-25 (St Basils), and a generic service for adults aged 25 + years (P3 - People, Potential, Possibilities).

We propose to stop commissioning the separate service for people with disabilities, they will instead be able to apply for support from the two re-designed services in the same way, and the two new services will be able to meet the same range of customers' needs as the current services.

We would commission:

- A floating support service for people aged 16-25
- A floating support service for people aged 25+

The proportion of the total budget that would have been spent on the separate service for people with disabilities will be added to the money spent on the two floating support services.

The proportion of the total budget that would have been spent on the separate service for people with disabilities will be added to the money spent on the two floating support services. Currently, 20% of customers in the specialist disability service are 16 – 25 years and 80% are 25 years and over. We have allocated the proposed budget to the young people and adult services to reflect this. This means the overall budget proposed for inclusive floating support changes to 25% for young people and 75% for adults.

Proportions of Total Floating Support Budget:

Current HRS
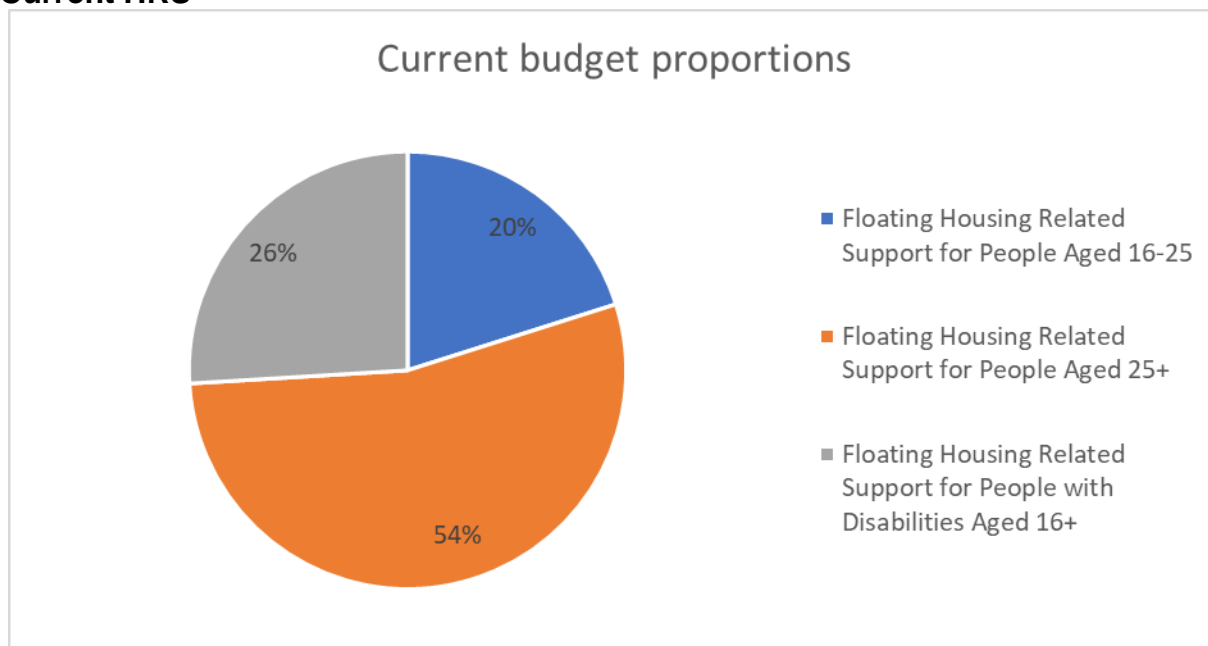
Proposed
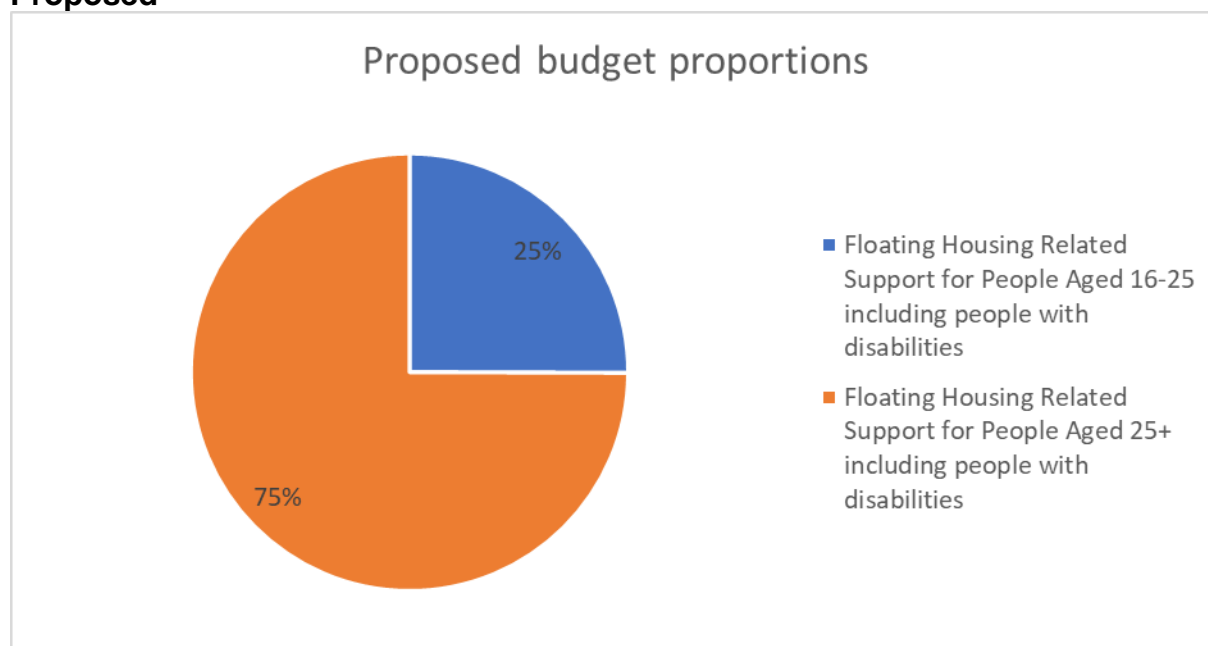
Why we are proposing this change
The current system can result in delays as people may be referred to the wrong service and after assessment will need to be referred on to a different provider and assessed again. This change will make it easier for people to access the right service to meet their diverse needs within an inclusive service, with teams able to meet the needs of those people with and without disabilities.

Our experiences since the start of the current arrangements which started in 2015 indicate that a single provider could deliver services that can be inclusive to meet the need of those with disabilities (including mental health problems) alongside support for those without disabilities. It is more costly to run two services compared to one as there are fixed costs involved in delivery and management of each contract. Reducing the number of contracts increases the proportion of our funding that is spent directly on support for people.

Element 3 - Adding a flexible range of shorter interventions that respond to individual needs as efficiently as possible and give earlier, focused support for customers who do not need longer term support.

We propose to introduce a range of flexible services accessed through triage to determine level and urgency of need. It will include:

A. Early information, advice and signposting to relevant services.

B. Brief interventions of 1-5 telephone and/or face to face support sessions.

C. 12-week short term transition/ resettlement/enablement floating services for those whose needs can be met in this time.

We propose this change for all services.

We will keep the option of both self-referral and referrals by other organisations.

Why we are proposing this change
The demand for services can be high and we need to prioritise those in most need of support services.

Currently people referred are added to a waiting list for assessment and then allocated a named support worker if they are eligible and need support services. Not everyone needs on-going support. Some people just need brief advice to resolve their issues and remain independent. This change will improve people's journeys in getting the right service at the right time, so customers need to tell their stories only once.

The redesigned floating support service will continue to offer holistic and personalised support to meet need, promoting wellbeing, safety, resilience, independence, recovery and reablement in order to prevent, reduce and/or delay an individual's need for on-going care and support.

Element 4 - Reduce the maximum duration of services:
We are proposing to reduce the maximum duration of a service intervention for an individual.

We propose to:
- Reduce the maximum duration of floating support for people aged 16-25 from 24 to 12 months
- Reduce the maximum duration of floating support for people aged 25+ from 12 months to 9 months
- Reduce the maximum duration of Accommodation-based support from 24 months to 18 months

In exceptional circumstances the period of support may be extended with approval from the Council**.**

Why we are proposing these changes
The demand for services can be high. To continue to support as many people as possible, we aim to increase the number of customers we can support by reducing the time a customer can receive the service. This will also ensure that our service providers deliver support that is focused on achieving outcomes as early as possible and preventing dependency on this support.

Element 5: A new name for the services

We are proposing to name these services 'Supporting Independence Services' and would like to understand your views on this.

Element 6: Additional services

Additional services are those services that were not part of the specification the Council tendered. We are proposing not to include the street outreach and navigator hub services in the services that we ask providers to deliver.

Why we are proposing these changes
These services were offered by the current provider as additional services and were not part of the services we originally asked them to provide. Potential providers bidding for the new services may decide to offer similar additional services, but this is not guaranteed.

The reason we are proposing not to include them in the re-designed services is because there is still no available Council budget to fund this. Potential providers bidding for the new services may decide to offer similar additional services, but this is not guaranteed.

We want to know if you agree or disagree with these proposals and why. We also want to understand if you think this will impact you or other people or organisations or if you have any other suggestions. The consultation questionnaire will ask you about this.

PART TWO- Equality Impact Assessment Summary

An Equality Impact Assessment has been developed and is available for you to view. It identifies that the proposals have the potential to have some negative impacts on people with protected characteristics and that careful consideration needs to be given to these. See Supporting Information - Equality Impact Assessment.

Our assessment suggests:

For all services

With services being reduced it may increase the number of individuals at risk of homelessness, made homeless or continuing to be homeless which may then negatively impact on their health. People experiencing socio-economic disadvantage will be negatively impacted as they may not be able to access support services if they require them due to reduced provision.

Mitigation: The Council will ensure good signposting is in place to support people to access other sources of advice and support and ensure all key partners are kept up to date with ongoing service activity.

There are some differences between the percentages of people in the general population and the service users identifying as Black or Asian. These will be considered when redesigning services.

Whilst an overall reduction in service provision may impact on these specific groups of vulnerable people, the specification (the document that sets out the requirements of providers delivering the service and forms part of the contract) will clearly state that providers are to be inclusive and non- discriminatory towards customers. We will highlight that we expect services to be accessible for all.

For Floating support

We are proposing to stop commissioning a separate disability floating support service.

Mitigation: We expect both the young people's 16-25 years and adults 25+ floating services to offer an inclusive service and meet the needs of people with disabilities as part of their contract. All providers' staff will be expected to be adequately trained to support the diverse needs of all people requiring support services including specialisms around supporting people with disabilities to reduce the impact of this change.

The overall reduction in the service offer will have an impact on all customers as well as those with protected characteristics.

For Accommodation-based support

There is currently a mother and baby hostel and a dedicated provision for young families. With service reduction the number of mothers and young families supported may decrease, negatively impacting the number of mothers and babies and young families accessing the service. For adult accommodation-based services single males and those who have experience of the criminal justice system tends to be a higher percentage of customers and consequently this group could be disproportionally impacted.

Mitigation: The Council will ensure that all service specifications require providers to be inclusive and non- discriminatory towards customers. We will highlight that we expect services to be accessible for all. The specification will also define training requirements to ensure providers' staff have sufficient knowledge to support the wide range of potential customers of support services. Service specifications will promote equality and diversity, with clear expectations around monitoring, training and quality of services.

What are your views on the potential equalities impacts of the proposed redesigned service?
The consultation questionnaire asks for your views on the impacts of our proposals.

We would like to know whether you think the proposals will create inequalities or other impacts we have not identified, and if so, what these might be and how you think they will affect you or other people.

We would also like you to tell us if you have any ideas on how we could overcome or reduce these impacts.

During the consultation we will ask for feedback and input from groups and organisations representing people with protected characteristics.

The Equality Impact Assessment will be updated after the consultation taking account of the feedback we receive.

Meaning of some terms used in the consultation

Term	What this means
Accommodation Based Support	Where accommodation and support are linked as part of the same service. An accommodation-based service can include shared housing such as hostel type accommodation and dispersed shared and self-contained flats or houses. Each customer has an allocated support worker.
Floating Support	The support worker allocated to the customer can offer support face to face at the customer's home or a community venue and/or virtually on-line or by telephone. If the customer moves home, from temporary accommodation or their own home then the support worker can continue to support them in their new home.
Adult Social Care Services	Warwickshire County Council provides adult social care to people with eligible needs caused by or related to a physical or mental impairment (such as a brain injury or learning disability) or illness, who are **unable** to do **two or more** of the following things: • manage and maintain nutrition • maintain personal hygiene • manage toilet needs • be appropriately clothed • make use of their home safely • maintain a habitable home environment • develop and maintain family or other personal relationships • access and engage in work, training, education or volunteering • make use of necessary facilities in local community, including public transport and recreational facilities • carry out any caring responsibilities they have for a child and because of the above there is, or is likely to be, a significant impact on their wellbeing.
Provider	The organisation we have commissioned (paid) to deliver the service on behalf of Warwickshire County Council
Trauma Informed Care	A trauma-informed approach to supporting people aims to provide an environment where a person who has experienced trauma feels safe and can develop trust.
Psychologically Informed Environments	Psychologically Informed Environments (PIE) are services that are designed and delivered in a way that takes into account the emotional and psychological needs of the individuals using them and working in them.
Service specification	Service specifications are the written guidelines that describe the outcomes for people using services, requirements and standards expected for delivering the service.

Overview of Current Housing Related Support Services (HRS)

Floating Support Services

1. **Floating Support Service with Disabilities aged 16 and above**

Service Provider	Local Authority District Areas
Together working for Wellbeing	Countywide

2. **Floating Support Service for Young People 16 – 25 years**

Service Provider	Local Authority District Areas
St Basils	Countywide

3. **Generic Floating Support Service for Adults 25+ years**

Service Provider	Local Authority District Areas
People, Potential, Possibilities P3	Countywide

Accommodation Based Services

4. **Accommodation-Based Support Service for Young People aged 16-25**

Service Provider	Local Authority District Areas
People, Potential, Possibilities P3	North Warwickshire Borough Council Nuneaton and Bedworth Bourgh Council Rugby Borough Council
St Basils	Stratford District Council Warwick District Council

5. **Accommodation-Based Support Service for homeless people, including ex-offenders, aged 25 and over**

Service Provider	Local Authority District Areas
People, Potential, Possibilities P3	Countywide

For further information please see:
Housing-related support – Warwickshire County Council

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SOCIAL ENGINE

Housing Related Support consultation

Final report
October 2023

Warwickshire
County Council

Contents

About Social Engine

Social Engine was founded in 2015 to support organisations to adopt an evidenced-based and insight-led approach. We work with charities, local authorities, social enterprises and other social purpose organisations to overcome organisational challenges through engagement, research and the application of evidence into practice.

Our work involves applying behavioural insights to support service improvement across a wide range of policy and service areas in order to improve outcomes for individuals and communities.

www.social-engine.co.uk

Executive Summary

Introduction

Warwickshire County Council (WCC) commissioned Social Engine to help support a consultation on the redesign of their Housing Related Support (HRS) services. The HRS services support vulnerable people – including homeless people and those at risk of becoming homeless - to acquire necessary skills for independent living.

Proposed Changes

Discussions with stakeholders resulted in six key proposals which formed the basis of the consultation:

1. Retain both Accommodation-based and Floating Support services for young people and adults by allocating the available budget in the same proportions as currently.
2. Stop commissioning the separate Floating Support service for people with disabilities and meet those needs within redesigned inclusive Floating Support services, one for young people aged 16-25 and one for people aged 25+ years.
3. Adding a flexible range of shorter interventions that respond to individual needs as efficiently as possible and give earlier, focused support for customers who do not need longer-term support.
4. Reduce the maximum duration of services. Floating support for people aged 16-25 be reduced from 24 months to 12 months, for those over 25 the maximum duration will be reduced from 12 months to 9 months and the maximum period for accommodation-based support will be reduced from 24 months to 18 months.
5. A new name for the services. The name of these services is changed from Housing Related Support to Supporting Independence Services.
6. Additional services. Not to include the Street Outreach and 'Navigator' Hubs in the services that providers are asked to deliver. These additional services were not part of the previous specification WCC tendered.

Methodology and responses to the consultation

In collaboration with commissioners and the consultation lead at WCC, a series of engagement activities were designed, to give people the opportunity to share their views on the proposed changes and to contribute ideas and experiences.

- **Ask Warwickshire** - online consultation hosted on WCC's consultation and engagement hub. 129 responses were received, 9 of these were formal responses received on behalf of organisations.
- **Email** – people could respond to the consultation via email. 5 responses to the consultation were received by email. Three of these were from individuals with experience of using HRS services, one was a formal response on behalf of Warwickshire District and Borough Heads of Housing and one was an addendum to the response from the Heads of Housing, which was submitted by Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council.
- **Easy-read survey** – designed and promoted to enable those with access requirements to respond. 25 responses to the easy-read survey were received from individuals with experience of using HRS services.

- **Outreach** – individual interview and small group discussions conducted with previous, current or potential HRS service users at locations across Warwickshire. A total of 311 people participated in the outreach, including 185 individual interviews, 126 people participating in 43 street focus groups and 3 written responses.
- **Consultation Workshop** – held with 30 key stakeholders and partners, including District and Borough Housing, health services, the voluntary sector and current HRS providers.
- **Stakeholder Focus Groups** – held with 22 support workers from the WCC Learning Disability Team and the Physical Disability & Sensory Service Team.
- **Service User Focus Groups** – held with service users from St Basil's, Doorway, the House Project and Warwickshire Vision Support. 19 young people participated in a mix of 3 online and in-person sessions and 44 participants in two in-person focus groups with sight-impaired service users.

The consultation ran from 22nd May to 11th August 2023. A total of 583 contributions to the consultation were received.

Findings
Element 1 - Retain both Accommodation-based and Floating Support services for young people and adults by allocating the available budget in the same proportions as currently.
- **Ask Warwickshire** - 129 responses were received to this question. 54% either agreed (45 people) or strongly agreed (24 people), whilst 24% either disagreed (16 people) or strongly disagreed (14 people).
- **Email responses -** District and Borough Heads of Housing expressed general agreement with element 1 of the proposed changes, however, they were unconvinced of the need to separate floating services for young people and adults.
- **Easy read findings -** No comments were made.
- **Consultation workshop** - Professionals participating in the stakeholder workshop felt both accommodation-based and floating support services were needed for young people and adults. Despite both services being essential, professionals felt it was worth considering allocating a greater proportion of the budget to floating support services and less to accommodation-based services as most people they worked with had housing.
- **Stakeholder focus groups** - Workers felt both accommodation-based and floating support services were needed for young people and adults but considered allocating more budget to floating support services and less to accommodation-based services as they felt there was greater need.
- **Service user focus groups** - Service users felt both accommodation-based and floating support services were needed for young people and adults and appreciated having access to both depending on their needs.
- **Outreach** - 153 people answered a (slightly different) question, asking whether or not they supported the council continuing to provide services to support people who are homeless and need help finding somewhere to live, and services for people that need support to prevent them becoming homeless. 137 of them (90%) strongly agreed, 6 people (4%) agreed and just 3 people (2%) disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Element 2 - Stop commissioning the separate Floating Support service for people with disabilities and meet those needs within redesigned inclusive Floating Support services, one for young people aged 16-25 and one for people aged 25+ years.

- **Ask Warwickshire** - 126 responses were received to this question. 62% either agreed (56 people) or strongly agreed (23 people), whilst 25% either disagreed (10 people) or strongly disagreed (21 people).
- **Email responses** - The three email responses from individuals with experience of using HRS services, all expressed a wish for a separate service for disabled clients to be retained. District and Borough Heads of Housing expressed general agreement with element 2 of the proposed changes, however, they were less convinced of the need to separate floating services for young people and adults.
- **Easy-read responses** - 92% (23 out of 25) of respondents disagreed (28%) or strongly disagreed (64%) with this proposal. Two respondents (8%) neither agreed nor disagreed.
- **Outreach -** 176 people answered this question and 61 people (35%) strongly agreed, whilst 61 people (35%) strongly disagreed.
- **Consultation workshop** - Participants agreed that creating inclusive support services instead of commissioning a separate service for people with disabilities could create more simplicity and streamline processes but stressed that inclusive services would need the resources and knowledge to cater to the needs of disabled service users.
- **Stakeholder focus groups** - Participants agreed that creating inclusive support services instead of commissioning a separate service for disabled people could create more simplicity and streamline processes but stressed that inclusive services would need the resources and knowledge to cater to the needs of disabled service users.
- **Service user focus groups** - While focus group participants mostly agreed that turning separate services into an inclusive service supporting disabled residents could be beneficial, they emphasised the need for specialist training for staff to ensure disabled service users would have a positive experience tailored to their needs.

Element 3 - Adding a flexible range of shorter interventions that respond to individual needs as efficiently as possible and give earlier, focused support for customers who do not need longer-term support.

- **Ask Warwickshire** - 126 responses were received to this question. 72% either agreed (56 people) or strongly agreed (35 people), whilst 18% either disagreed (13 people) or strongly disagreed (10 people).
- **Email responses** - In their collective response to element 3, District and Borough Heads of Housing stressed that services would need to be designed in a way that ensured support would be timely, concentrated and tailored to the individual.
- **Easy-read responses -** There were 21 easy-read responses to this question. 72% of respondents (15 people) either disagreed (29%) or strongly disagreed (43%). One person neither agreed nor disagreed and 5 respondents (24%) agreed.
- **Consultation workshop -** Participants felt that alongside long-term support, shorter interventions may be appropriate for people with clear-cut support needs. They were clear that this ought to be in addition to, rather than a replacement for long-term support.
- **Stakeholder focus groups -** In principle, support workers agreed that adding brief interventions and signposting could be beneficial for those clients whose needs could be met this way. However, they stressed that support would still need to be tailored to individual customers and that particularly vulnerable individuals would require longer term support.

- **Service user focus groups -** Participants felt that while shorter, flexible interventions might suit some, personalised long-term support would generally produce the best outcomes, as it facilitated a trusting relationship with support workers.

Element 4: Reducing the maximum duration of services
- **Ask Warwickshire** - 126 responses were received to this question. 39% either agreed (36 people) or strongly agreed (13 people), whilst 41% either disagreed (30 people) or strongly disagreed (21 people).
- **Email responses -** The Heads of Housing supported element 4, with the proviso that the duration of service would still be determined by individual need and exceptions were allowed to make sure the service was sustainable.
- **Easy-read responses -** There were 21 easy-read responses to this question. 85% of respondents (18 people) either disagreed (33%) or strongly disagreed (52%). One person neither agreed nor disagreed and 2 respondents (10%) agreed.
- **Consultation workshop -** Participants saw significant drawbacks in reducing the maximum duration of services, pointing out the difficulty of delivering a personalised service within a tight deadline. In particular, young people and disabled service users may need support for longer, and shortening support duration might create a "revolving door" instead of empowering service users to be fully independent.
- **Stakeholder focus groups -** Participants saw significant drawbacks in reducing the maximum duration of services, pointing out the difficulty of delivering a personalised service within a tight deadline. It was felt that there was a risk associated with reducing the support available to some clients, who might need longer-term support.
- **Service user focus groups -** Participants highlighted that clients needed sufficient time to build a trusting relationship with their support worker. Young people in the focus groups felt that support with a duration of 2 years minimum would be most useful and appropriate for young people. Most participants had no idea how long their support was due to last.

Element 5: A new name for the services. We are proposing to change the name of these services from 'Housing Related Support Services' to 'Supporting Independence Services' and would like to know if you have any views on this.
- **Ask Warwickshire** - The Ask Warwickshire consultation survey asked for comments on the proposal but no quantitative question was asked. A majority of respondents opposed the name change. Many participants felt the proposed name lacks clarity and specific connection to housing and may risk being confused with other services. Others commented on the potential costs associated with rebranding. Several participants mentioned that the name did not matter as long as the quality of the service was high.
- **Email responses -** In response to element 5, the Heads of Housing felt the word "housing" ought to be included in the name to make it less ambiguous.
- **Easy read findings -** No comments were made.
- **Consultation workshop -** This element was not discussed.
- **Stakeholder focus groups -** Support workers strongly favoured the HRS service retaining its current name, to retain its distinct housing focus.
- **Service user focus groups -** Focus group participants were not asked about their opinions on element 5 of the consultation specifically, and did not make spontaneous remarks that could be linked to these proposals.

Element 6 - additional services removed from future service specification
- **Ask Warwickshire** - 126 responses were received to this question. 29% either agreed (23 people) or strongly agreed (14 people), whilst 41% either disagreed (26 people) or strongly disagreed (25 people).
- **Easy read findings** - No comments were made.
- **Consultation workshop -** This element was not discussed.
- **Stakeholder focus groups -** Participants felt these additional services were valuable and needed but should not be included in the HRS services, as they did not see them as falling within WCC's remit.
- **Service user focus groups -** Focus group participants were not asked about their opinions on element 6 of the consultation specifically, and did not make spontaneous remarks that could be linked to these proposals.

Do you think this Equality Impact Assessment identifies the impacts of these proposals?
- **Ask Warwickshire** - 120 responses were received to this question. 42% (50 responses) said they felt the EIA identified the impacts of the proposal, 28% (34 responses) said it did not. 30% (36 responses) said they were not sure or did not know whether the EIA identified the impacts of these proposals.
- **Easy read findings** - There were 6 responses to the question from easy-read surveys. 1 respondent (17%) felt that the EIA identifies the impacts of the proposals, 2 respondents (33%) did not and 3 repsondents (50%) said they were unsure or did not know.
- **Consultation workshop** - Consideration of the equalities impact of the proposed changes were incorporated into discussion on each individual element at the workshop and the EIA was not discussed in isolation.
- **Stakeholder focus groups** - Focus group participants were not asked about their opinions on element 6 of the consultation specifically, and did not make spontaneous remarks that could be linked to these proposals.
- **Service user focus groups** - Focus group participants were not asked about their opinions on element 6 of the consultation specifically, and did not make spontaneous remarks that could be linked to these proposals.

Conclusions
The consultation findings indicate that people value the HRS and the support it provides, which is regarded as highly personalised, flexible and appropriate for the needs of service users. Whilst there was a general acceptance of the contextual factors which have contributed to a reduction in HRS funding, there was concern over reducing budgets at a time when many people face considerable hardship in the face of the rising cost of living.

Many fear that reductions in funding are likely to cause particular hardship for those with the most challenging and complex needs – whose support needs are likely to take longer and be more resource intensive. There was concern that the proposed changes may make it harder for providers to work with these clients as their needs may not be easily compatible with the redesigned service.

Element 1 - Retain both Accommodation-based and Floating Support services for young people and adults by allocating the available budget in the same proportions as currently.

It is clear that among both professionals, service users and potential service users, retaining these separate services was welcomed. There was a widespread perception that demand for support was already higher than the HRS alone can possibly meet. However, if reductions to the HRS budget need to be made, then the general perception is that doing it this way was both fair and reasonable.

Element 2 - Stop commissioning the separate Floating Support service for people with disabilities and meet those needs within redesigned inclusive Floating Support services, one for young people aged 16-25 and one for people aged 25+ years.

This proposal polarised opinion. Respondents to the Ask Warwickshire survey supported the proposal, almost all of respondents to the easy read survey disagreed with it and among those engaged through the outreach opinion was divided. The primary concern among those who disagreed with the proposal (and indeed among some of those who supported it) was about maintaining and ensuring the quality of the service provided, in particular to disabled people. Whilst many saw simplifying and streamlining services and reducing systemic inefficiency as a positive development, this was very much conditional on being able to ensure that a consistently high-quality service was maintained.

Element 3 - Adding a flexible range of shorter interventions that respond to individual needs as efficiently as possible and give earlier, focused support for customers who do not need longer-term support.

A majority of people expressed support for this proposed change. It was felt to be a positive and empowering development, if it resulted in providing appropriate support quickly and efficiently. However, many people wanted to know more about the detail of how this would work in practice and the practical implications of the proposed change, in particular what such a change might mean for clients with complex and enduring needs.

Element 4: Reducing the maximum duration of services

This proposal was somewhat contentious, with opinion divided among respondents. Whilst some saw the proposal as a positive opportunity to avoid dependency and encourage independence, others expressed concern that clients' needs can't easily be 'fixed' in this way. There was particular concern surrounding the fact that a young person being supported may reach the maximum duration before they are 18 and in a position to take on their own tenancy.

Element 5: A new name for the services.

There was little evidence of disaffection with the current name and the proposal was not strongly supported. Respondents felt that 'supporting independence services' lost the explicit housing focus which HRS services has, and felt that this should be retained.

Element 6 - additional services removed from future service specification

Opinion was fairly divided on the proposal not to include additional services in the revised service specification, although the findings suggest views were not particularly strongly-held. Around one in three respondents either didn't know, or had no clear opinion about this.

Impact on equalities groups

Whilst many respondents believed the EIA accurately reflected the impact of the proposed changes on people with protected characteristics, there were a number of respondents who said they either did not know or felt it did not wholly capture the likely impact.

Recommendations

Whilst we recognise that decisions about the proposed changes and the future of the HRS will rest with the Cabinet, we consider it our responsibility to offer our professional, independent assessment of the evidence in relation to each of the proposed changes and general design features for future HRS service design.

Flexibility - A perceived strengths of HRS is 'flexibility'. The way the HRS is currently configured enables support providers to respond to the individual and their needs and this flexibility is something which is felt to be extremely important to embed in a redesigned service going forward.

Securing simplicity whilst managing complexity - Respondents saw considerable potential in simplifying and streamlining processes. The challenge in redesigning the new service will be in ensuring that people are genuinely able to access support more quickly. Whilst simplicity is desirable, it is equally important to acknowledge that the lives and the support needs of many HRS service users are highly complex, multi-faceted and potentially long-term.

Consistency and quality assurance - We found major discrepancies in the speed of accessing support and of the usefulness of the support received. Whilst this reflects their experience of accessing support more broadly than solely HRS, it does suggest a degree of inconsistency in the experiences of homeless and vulnerably housed people. Understanding and addressing these to ensure a consistently high-quality service would be beneficial.

Clarity of offer and brand positioning - A number of findings point to the importance of a clear HRS offer and brand positioning. It is crucial that homeless and vulnerably housed people understand clearly what HRS offers, how it can support them and that it is a service which is relevant to them and their needs. Indeed, a lack of clarity is likely to create additional administration (as people try to navigate) and it may in turn lead to less good outcomes.

Element 1 - Recommendation – Our assessment of the consultation findings is that there is sufficient support for this proposal for WCC to proceed with this change.

Element 2 - Recommendation – We recommend, on the basis of the consultation findings, that WCC proceed with this proposed change only if guarantees around consistency and service quality can be secured.

Element 3 - Recommendation – We recommend, on the basis of the evidence from the consultation response, to proceed but with clear explanations of how this will be delivered and with clear guidelines to ensure support for clients with complex and enduring needs.

Element 4 - Recommendation – On the basis of the responses to the consultation, we recommend that the new time limits for young people are not taken forward, but that other proposed changes proceed with clear allowance/permission for exceptions where they are necessary to support clients with long-term support needs.

Element 5 - Recommendation – The lack of support for this proposed change and the potential risks of adverse perceptions of doing so, lead us to conclude that WCC should not proceed with the proposed name change.

Element 6 - Recommendation – Our assessment of the consultation findings is that WCC proceed with this proposed change.

The significant reduction in HRS budget is going to be a challenge to continuing to support those in need, particularly at a time when many face increased pressures and hardship. Any changes will need to be made carefully, being sensitive to the risks such changes pose in service design and delivery to mitigate, as far as possible, adverse impacts on the most vulnerable.

Introduction

Warwickshire County Council (WCC) commissioned Social Engine to help support a consultation on the redesign of their Housing Related Support (HRS) services. The HRS services support vulnerable people – including homeless people and those at risk of becoming homeless - to acquire necessary skills for independent living. HRS consists of accommodation-based and floating support services. There are currently separate services for young people and adults and there's also a service specifically for disabled people.

The Housing Related Support contracts were due to end in July 2021 and were originally extended due to the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic. In accordance with best practice commissioners undertook a strategic review of services and identified a number of changes that could be made to the existing model to improve service efficiency for the benefit of WCC customers.

In addition, WCC are now faced with the challenge of reducing the annual Housing Related Support (HRS) budget by £1 million, from the current figure of £3.8 million. WCC believe that simply reducing the budget across all the services is not sufficient and that further efficiencies are achievable through some redesign and restructuring of the way the service is delivered. Through dialogue with key stakeholders, a series of proposed changes were developed that the consultation sought views on. The consultation also sought feedback on the equalities impact assessment and ideas on how the negative impact on particular groups could be mitigated.

There are three main providers who currently deliver the HRS services across Warwickshire: **Together working for Wellbeing (Together); St Basils; and People, Potential, Possibilities (P3)**. The breakdown of services delivered across the county as part of the HRS are set out in Table 1.

Client group	Service provided	Delivery area	Provider
Disabled adults	Floating support	County-wide	Together
Young people	Floating support	County-wide	St Basils
Young people	Accommodation-based support	Stratford and Warwick District areas	St Basils
Young people	Accommodation-based support	North Warwickshire, Nuneaton & Bedworth & Rugby Borough Council areas	P3
Adults (generic service)	Floating support and accommodation-based support	County-wide	P3

Table 1 - HRS current provision and service providers

The HRS provides a wide range of services which includes (but is not limited to) help for people to:

- Access and maintain a tenancy in secure accommodation;
- Stay safe within the home and local community;
- Manage finances, including budgeting, utilities and benefits;
- Acquire general housekeeping skills;
- Maintain independence and good health and wellbeing;
- Participate in training and/or education; and
- Obtain paid work or volunteering opportunities.

Proposed Changes

Discussions with stakeholders resulted in six key proposals which formed the basis of the consultation:

1. Retain both Accommodation-based and Floating Support services for young people and adults by allocating the available budget in the same proportions as currently.
2. Stop commissioning the separate Floating Support service for people with disabilities and meet those needs within redesigned inclusive Floating Support services, one for young people aged 16-25 and one for people aged 25+ years.
3. Adding a flexible range of shorter interventions that respond to individual needs as efficiently as possible and give earlier, focused support for customers who do not need longer-term support.
4. Reduce the maximum duration of services. Floating support for people aged 16-25 be reduced from 24 months to 12 months, for those over 25 the maximum duration will be reduced from 12 months to 9 months and the maximum period for accommodation-based support will be reduced from 24 months to 18 months.
5. A new name for the services. The name of these services is changed from Housing Related Support to Supporting Independence Services.
6. Additional services. Not to include the Street Outreach and 'Navigator' Hubs in the services that providers are asked to deliver. These additional services were not part of the previous specification WCC tendered.

Equalities

As part of the process leading up to the consultation, WCC conducted an initial Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) and identified that the proposed changes had a potentially adverse effect on people with protected characteristics. A key part of the consultation was therefore to better understand the impact the changes might have, consider how to minimise the negative impact on these groups and ensure equalities considerations were at the forefront of their decision-making in redesigning the new services. WCC therefore sought feedback on the Equality Impact Assessment and thoughts and ideas on how the negative impact on specific groups could be mitigated, both directly and the impact on groups which support people with protected characteristics.

Public consultation

WCC launched a public consultation to seek views from key stakeholders from statutory bodies, public services, voluntary organisations and members of the public on the proposed changes. Additionally, it was essential to ensure that those directly affected, or potentially affected, by the proposed changes were also given an opportunity to respond.

Social Engine, alongside our partners Kaizen, worked with WCC to develop a wide-ranging engagement process that enabled homeless and vulnerably housed people, housing and homelessness professionals and other interested parties to contribute to the consultation.

The consultation ran from 22nd May to 11th August 2023.

A Note on Terminology – The Social Model of Disability

The Social Model of Disability was developed by disabled people and describes people as being disabled by barriers in society, not by impairment or difference. The Social Model states that people have impairments, they do not have disabilities. Accordingly, the term 'people with disabilities' is said to confuse impairment and disability and implies disability is caused by the individual rather than society. [1] We use the term 'disabled people' throughout this report, except when quoting directly.

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[1] https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/social-model-disability-language

Methodology

In thinking about how to meaningfully engage a wide range of stakeholders, we worked collaboratively with WCC commissioners and consultation lead to devise a series of engagement methods to bring the consultation to seldom heard groups and individuals.

This gave people the opportunity to share their views on the proposed changes, to contribute ideas and experiences and to inform the decision-making for the HRS service redesign.

The consultation was promoted in a number of ways, working closely with WCC Communications team to share across press and social media formats, targeting and direct mailing key stakeholders and partner organisations. Direct mail to stakeholders asked people to complete the survey themselves and promote it with their customers and partners. This included the support of EQUIP and Warwickshire CAVA to access and promote to Warwickshire voluntary sector and community groups. Responses to the survey were reviewed throughout the 12-week period with additional targeting of people/groups to extend reach.

The consultation ran from 22nd May to 11th August 2023.

Ask Warwickshire online survey
An online survey was hosted on WCC's consultation and engagement hub, Ask Warwickshire, and was promoted widely to the public, professionals, and those involved in support for homeless and vulnerably housed people.

The survey set out in detail WCC's proposed changes and the rationale behind each change. A wide range of additional information about the HRS and a copy of the EIA could also be accessed through the Ask Warwickshire portal.

The Ask Warwickshire consultation survey can be found in full in Appendix C.

Email responses
People were also able to respond to the consultation via email if they preferred to do this rather than complete the survey on Ask Warwickshire.

Easy-read survey
An easy-read version of the survey was also produced and promoted both through the Ask Warwickshire portal, through the outreach and through partner and stakeholder organisations, to make participating in the consultation as accessible as possible, including with the assistance of a support worker where appropriate.

The Easy-read version of the consultation survey can be found in Appendix D.

Outreach
To ensure the views of those with lived experience (previous or potential users of HRS) were included in the consultation, we worked with our partners Kaizen, to design and deliver a programme of outreach to engage homeless and vulnerably housed people in the community.

A survey was designed specifically for this purpose. In addition to asking about aspects of the proposals, the survey sought to capture broader experience and perceptions of accessing support, their views on what worked well and ways in which the service could be improved.

- Individual interviews
    - In person conversations were held with people in the community, conducted at different times of day and days of the week. Individual interviews, using the outreach survey, typically lasted 15-20 minutes each. Survey responses were recorded on paper forms and then uploaded.
- Small group conversations
    - Where the engagement team encountered small groups of people (typically 2-6), they conducted 'street focus groups' – a form of small group discussion with people who may not generally participate in traditional focus groups or individual surveys. For the Street Focus Groups, a shorter number of open questions were used to facilitate discussion. Responses to the questions were recorded on forms and later uploaded.
- Online survey
    - An online survey, identical to the outreach survey, was promoted by the engagement team to individuals and organisations engaged through the course of the outreach. Service users were able to access and complete the online survey.
- Printed survey
    - Printed copies of the outreach survey were provided to people who preferred to complete the survey in writing.

The outreach surveys used for the individual interviews and the street focus groups can be found in Appendices E and F.

Kaizen's engagement team conducted outreach in areas across Warwickshire, including Leamington, Rugby, Stratford, Nuneaton and Atherstone. They visited services for homeless and vulnerably housed people and services providing support to those in financial hardship, as well as conducting outreach within the wider community, speaking to current, previous and potential users of HRS services. The outreach took place between 12th and 28th June 2023.

Relevant services supporting people likely to be either current, previous or potential HRS service users were identified by WCC Commissioners for the engagement team to visit, including foodbanks, drop-in centres, Hubs and hostels. The engagement team also conducted interviews in the community, engaging people on the street, in parks, outside fast-food restaurants and other locations where people congregated. A list of locations visited by the outreach team is included in Appendix K.

Consultation Workshop
An engagement workshop was held in July with 30 key stakeholders and partners, including District and Borough Housing, health services, the voluntary sector and current HRS providers attending[2]. The majority of participants were from agencies delivering support and services to those with housing related needs who they may refer to HRS services or receive referrals from HRS providers.

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[2] A list of all organisations represented at the workshop is included in Appendix I.

The workshop invited participants to first reflect on what currently works well about HRS services and the barriers to a more efficient and effective service, before moving on to discuss the proposed changes. Participants were asked to consider the proposed changes in terms of the design features or characteristics of a well-designed service, the impact on equalities and how success might be measured.

Discussions were held in small groups, with each group taking notes on their discussion points, with brief feedback shared between groups.

Stakeholder Focus Groups

Two focus groups were held with staff from the Learning Disability Team and the Physical Disability & Sensory Service Team in July and August, gathering insights on the different proposals from 22 support workers.

Feedback was invited from participants on each of the 6 proposed changes and notes of the points raised taken by WCC officers.

Service User Focus Groups

Following the conclusion of the outreach, Social Engine and WCC officers ran five focus groups with HRS customers and customers of other homelessness support services for young people. These provided an opportunity to explore in greater depth their experiences and views on the service and to understand how to best support their needs through the redesign.

Three of the focus groups were carried out with young people aged 16-25 who were receiving support from St Basil's, Doorway and the House Project, to better understand young people's experiences and needs. In total, we heard from 19 young people in a mix of online and in-person sessions of which two were facilitated by WCC staff and one by Social Engine.

Two in-person focus groups were held with sight-impaired service users, made possible by Warwickshire Vision Support, with 44 individuals participating and sharing their views with council staff.

Focus groups run by WCC officers asked participants about each of the proposed changes, as well as exploring what areas of support were important to people.

Those run by Social Engine used an interview guide which explored people's experience of accessing support more widely, in order to understand how services can be designed to effectively meet the needs of service users. The focus group discussion guide used by Social Engine can be found in Appendix G.

Summarised notes of the main points of discussion were taken from all focus groups.

Approach to analysis

The research generated a significant amount of qualitative and quantitative data from across the multiple engagement methods. To guide our approach to analysis and to reduce the risks of cognitive biases and other common errors made when analysing data, we:

- Finalised data sources and the variables within each source;
- Identified covariates to be analysed;

- Devised an approach to explore each data source.

As it was not possible to quantify with any confidence the total number of potential and current HRS service users, or any reliable data on the demographic profile of this population, no attempt has been made to calculate the confidence interval for our sample. We are similarly unable to determine whether the response to the consultation is representative of HRS service users and potential service users.

Quantitative data analysis
For the quantitative data gathered through the outreach interviews, online survey and street focus groups, the headline analysis was supplemented by exploring a range of covariates to identify differences in the perspectives of different groups, in order to ensure the views of particular groups were not overlooked. For the covariate analysis, we investigated whether there are any statistical associations between certain demographic characteristics, such as gender and disability, and dependent variables, such as ease of access to support, waiting time to receive support, perceived usefulness of support and participants' agreement levels to the proposals.

The covariate analysis was performed using the Chi-square test of independence and the significance level was set at 0.05 in order to ensure that any observed statistical association did not occur due to chance.

In the report the quantitative data presented is from the individual interviews and Street Focus Groups conducted as part of the outreach and from the Ask Warwickshire online survey and easy-read survey. The labels on each chart indicate the source of each data visualisation.

Qualitative data – thematic analysis
For the qualitative data in our open survey questions, we used thematic analysis to uncover the attitudes, perceptions and behaviours among participants. Thematic analysis is a theoretically flexible qualitative analytical method which searches for themes or patterns in the data. It is a method suitable for a wide range of research questions but is particularly appropriate for questions around people's experiences, views and perceptions. To identify themes, we used the principles of 'grounded theory'. The phrase 'grounded theory' refers to theory that is developed inductively from a body of data, rather than from the preconceptions of the researchers.

Our approach followed that adopted by Braun and Clarke (2006)[3], following six stages of conducting a thematic analysis:

1. **Familiarisation with the data:** This phase involved reading and re-reading the data, to become immersed and intimately familiar with its content.
2. **Coding:** This phase involved generating succinct labels (codes) that identify important features of the data that might be relevant to answering our research questions. It involved coding the entire dataset, and then collating all the codes and all relevant data extracts, for later stages of analysis.
3. **Searching for themes:** This phase involved examining the codes and collated data to identify significant broader patterns of meaning (potential themes). We then collated data

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[3] Braun & Clarke "Using thematic analysis in psychology" Qualitative Research in Psychology Volume 3, 2006 - Issue 2 https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

relevant to each candidate theme, working with the data to review the viability of each candidate theme.

4. **Reviewing themes:** This phase involved checking the candidate themes against the dataset, to determine whether they tell a convincing story of the data, and one that answers the research question. In this phase, we refined our themes, which sometimes involves them being split, combined, or discarded.

5. **Defining and naming themes:** This phase involves developing a detailed analysis of each theme, working out the scope and focus of each theme, determining the 'story' of each. It also involves deciding on an informative name for each theme.

6. **Writing up:** This final phase involves weaving together the analytic narrative and data extracts, and contextualising the analysis in relation to existing literature.

Although these phases are sequential, and each builds on the previous phase, analysis is typically a recursive process, with movement back and forth between different phases. Consequently, it's not a wholly rigid process, and the analytic process between phases can become blurred.

For group discussions, such as focus groups and small group work at the consultation workshop, a simplified version of the process was adopted. Notes taken from the discussion were reviewed, and key themes summarised for inclusion in the wider analysis and reporting. However, no coding was undertaken since it was not deemed necessary with small amounts of data.

Finally, the analysis from all the strands of the consultation, quantitative and qualitative, were collated and then reviewed by our project team to consider the findings and develop and test our conclusions.

Responses to the consultation

Across the various engagement methods and channels which people were able to use to respond to the consultation, a total of 583 responses were received. Since many people responded anonymously, it is not possible to determine whether some people participated through more than one strand of the engagement. Consequently, the total number of respondents may be slightly lower than the number of responses and contributions received. Where people participated in more than one engagement strand, for example responding to the survey and attending the consultation workshop, the nature of the engagement was different. Whilst the workshop generated qualitative data from group discussion, the Ask Warwickshire survey provided individual responses to quantitative and qualitative questions.

Ask Warwickshire online survey - 129 responses were received to the Ask Warwickshire survey. 9 of these were formal responses received on behalf of organisations (a list of organisational responses can be found in Appendix H).

Email responses - Five responses to the consultation were received by email. Three of these were from individuals with experience of using HRS services, one was a formal response on behalf of Warwickshire District and Borough Heads of Housing and one was an addendum to the response from the Heads of Housing, which was submitted by Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council.

Easy-read survey - 25 responses to the easy-read survey were received from individuals with experience of using HRS services. These responses were all from individual customers of Together, the floating support service for disabled people. Together supported individual customers to engage in the process and submitted the responses on their behalf.

Outreach - A total of 311 people were engaged through the outreach and contributed to the consultation findings, this was made up of:
- 185 individual interviews
- 126 people participating in 43 street focus groups
- 3 written responses, which were added to the individual interviews for analysis
- No responses to the online version of the survey were received

Consultation workshop - 30 key stakeholders and partners, including District and Borough Housing, health services, the voluntary sector and current HRS providers attending[4].

Stakeholder Focus Groups – 22 participants in two focus groups with staff from the Learning Disability Team and the Physical Disability & Sensory Service Team.

Service User Focus Groups - 19 young people in a mix of 3 online and in-person sessions. 44 participants in two in-person focus groups with sight-impaired service users.

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[4] A list of all organisations represented at the workshop is included in Appendix J.

Findings

In this section, we set out our key findings across our various engagement and research channels. We set out the findings from each strand of the consultation in turn.

Ask Warwickshire online survey
Element 1 - Retain both Accommodation-based and Floating Support services for young people and adults by allocating the available budget in the same proportions as currently.
How strongly do you agree or disagree with this proposal?
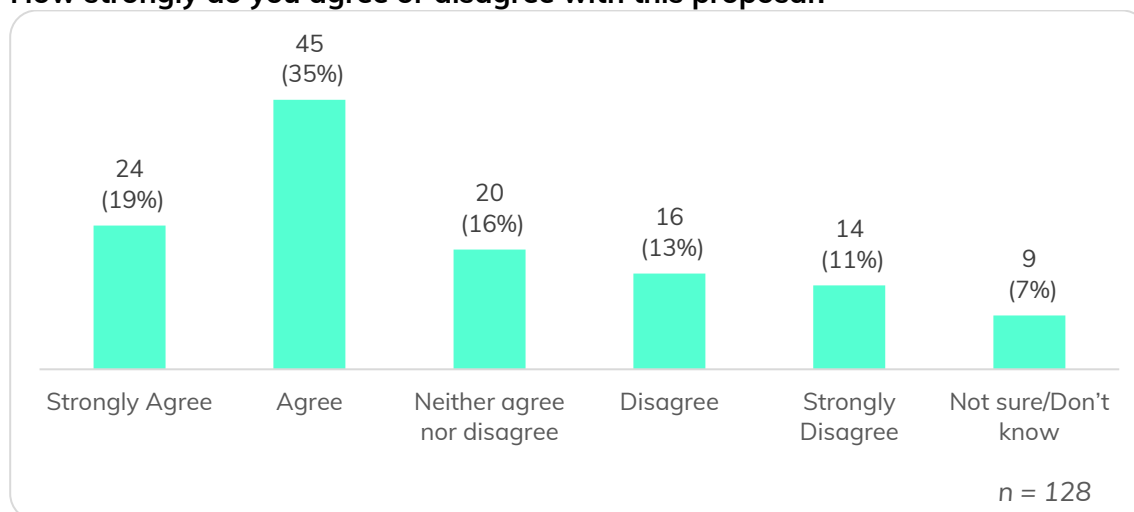
Figure 1 – Element 1, Ask Warwickshire consultation responses

Reasons given for people's responses

Agree
Respondents who agreed with the proposal strongly felt that both Accommodation-based and floating HRS services were critical in providing support to vulnerable people. Furthermore, they viewed this proposal as a balanced approach, ensuring that no single service is disproportionately affected. Some participants had personal experiences with the services and wanted to ensure others would be able to receive similar support.

1. Both services are essential
Respondents strongly felt that both Accommodation-based and floating support services were critical to providing support to vulnerable people.

"All the services currently provided are needed by Warwickshire."

"Both types of service, accommodation based and floating support are important for the people receiving support."

"This is an ESSENTIAL service and should always be a priority."

2. Fairness and equity

The proposal was viewed as a balanced approach, ensuring that no single service is disproportionately affected.

"A fair method of keeping all services going."

"I feel this would be a much fairer approach, ensuring services are available for all."

"Means equally divided."

3. Personal impact

Participants shared their personal experiences emphasising the life-changing role of these services.

"I had amazing support from together and want others to also have this."

"I currently use housing support, without I would be street homeless."

"My son and I were homeless he has a disability it needs to be addressed."

Disagree

Respondents who disagreed with the proposal expressed concerns that despite retaining both services, the budget reductions will inevitably lead to a decline in quality, effectiveness and scope of services. At the same time, respondents recognised that demand for services were increasing and the proposed budget cut doesn't align with the present and anticipated needs of society, including the rising cost of living and an aging population. Rather than cutting budgets, respondents argued, there should be a thorough evaluation of the system's inefficiencies and alternative approaches found to funding services.

1. Diminished service quality and reach

Respondents expressed concerns that despite retaining both services, the budget reductions will inevitably lead to a decline in quality and scope of services. Funding is already strained and the proposed reductions would further impact the effectiveness of the services.

"funding is already well below what is needed so a reduction in the budget... would be devastating."

"The money is reducing so although the support services continue to receive the same amount of the budget this is being reduced."

"With such a big cut of money this means that services like what I receive might not exist anymore."

2. Increasing and changing needs

Respondents noted that there are a growing number of vulnerable people in society and that service demand is increasing. The proposed budget cut is out of alignment with the societal pressures, such as cost of living, which are contributing to increased demand.

"I feel there are more vulnerable people than there were a few years ago and this number is likely to increase with an aging population."

"Homelessness is an increasing concern with benefits not in line with costs of living and local housing allowances falling short of the housing costs for even social rents."

3. Alternative Solutions

Some respondents felt that before implementing budget cuts, there should be a thorough evaluation of the system's inefficiencies. They suggested that there were alternative methods to fund these services. They also noted that more proactive and creative solutions should be sought.

"It needs to be looked at in a new way. The old system isn't working and all referrals seem to be rejected for one reason or another."

"You should fight the government or find other ways to fund. Eg. Tax the developers who are profiting from your house building programmes."

These themes specifically address the reasons why respondents disagreed with the proposed budgetary changes and underscore the potential repercussions and alternative perspectives they bring to the table.

Please tell us how you think this proposal would impact on you:
1. Concern for vulnerable and disadvantaged people

This theme represented participants' worries about the impact of the proposal on the most vulnerable people, emphasising the moral and ethical implications.

"A reduction of any kind will have an impact on those in need and therefore on everyone with compassion within the area."

"Cuts in support services can result in delays for families in crisis which then impacts on other services' time supporting those families."

"Young people should be supported in their own community and not shipped off to an area where they do not know as this increases vulnerability and isolation."

"Less support for young parents and the choices they are able to make which makes it more difficult for me to be able to support them."

2. Personal implications

This theme focused on how the proposal would affect respondents and their family/ environment.

"A lot as I live in accommodation with St Basils."

"As a pensioner with mobility problems this will soon affect me."

"As I am now 70 with no husband or partner, I am very concerned that I may not receive support that I may need after an accident or if my health declines."

"I think it's going to have a significant impact on me and my family."

3. Service continuity and efficiency

Participants emphasised the significance of maintaining existing services and expressed concerns over potential inefficiencies and/ or the lack of improvements.

"Hopefully this proposal would enable support staff to remain in their job roles to continue to help people and make a difference to housing waiting lists."

"I think this would help to keep known services available and ensure people know where to go rather than gearing up to have to go elsewhere."

"The current support services will continue as they are. I work for [Redacted] BC in housing and the floating support and supported accommodation services provided do very little to support us to prevent homelessness."

4. Financial constraints and impact on service reductions

This theme highlighted the concerns about budget cuts leading to reduced support and services.

"Due to the budget cut it is likely to lead to some delays and reduced numbers of people on probation who will receive support."

"We would likely end up with more homeless cases."

"I would be worried if I needed floating support again they couldn't give it to me, if they didn't have as much money they might not be able to support so many people."

"Funding cuts to housing related support services would likely mean that we at the Family Information Service get asked to provide more housing-related support ourselves."

5. Impact on broader community and services

Several respondents emphasised the negative effect the proposal would have on the community and interconnected services.

"I volunteer with a homeless service and Rugby foodbank, where any support is difficult to obtain for those using the services in relation to housing."

"Our services, across the county, are already seeing more and more households threatened with homelessness or actually homeless."

"We are a signposting and referral service primarily. We need good support services to signpost and refer to."

"We would really struggle to move clients on from emergency refuge accommodation to secure housing due to unavailability of affordable housing."

6. Absence of perceived impact

Several participants expressed doubts over whether the proposal would have any tangible or significant impact on their circumstances or on the larger system.

"At the moment, I cannot see that it will impact on me."

"I don't think it will change much; services have always been inconsistent."

"From what I've seen, these proposals seem like more of the same, so I don't anticipate any major shift."

"It's just another proposal. Haven't felt the difference from the previous ones, and I don't expect this one to be any different."

What could we do instead?

Instead of allocating the available reduced budget in the same proportions as currently, participants suggested increased funding for floating support with the expectation that this would constitute a more efficient use of resources. Further measures that were proposed to increase efficiencies were improved resource management, streamlining referrals, focusing on early intervention/prevention and forming more effective partnerships with local voluntary and community sectors. This included innovative community-based solutions, like setting up communal kitchens and supporting families in caring for adult family members. While these measures centred on greater efficiency given decreased funding, other respondents suggested increasing council tax to maintain or increase the resources available for HRS in general.

Funding:
- Allocate more funding to floating support instead of accommodation-based support
- Increase Council Tax to maintain or increase funding

Efficiency and collaboration:
- Streamline referrals with an easy-access form to reduce delays and increase accuracy
- Be more efficient in managing resources
- Improve the way councils interact with voluntary and community sectors
- Engage with agencies to develop partnerships and use volunteer support

Service Redesign:
- Move from accommodation-based support to more floating support tailored to individual needs
- Focus on early intervention, particularly for young people, to reduce long-term costs
- Consider merging disability-specific provision into generic age-group provision

Community involvement:
- Ask local residents to oversee allocation and location of support
- Encourage families to provide housing/care for adult family members with better support packages

Transparency and communication:
- Keep clients informed and consider changing the language from 'customer' to 'client'
- Make sure frontline staff are in place, possibly reducing management

Innovation:
- Look at creating more community-based resources, like communal kitchens
- Team up with care providers for more cohesive and efficient home care

Element 2 - Stop commissioning the separate Floating Support service for people with disabilities and meet those needs within redesigned inclusive Floating Support services, one for young people aged 16-25 and one for people aged 25+ years.

How strongly do you agree or disagree with this proposal?
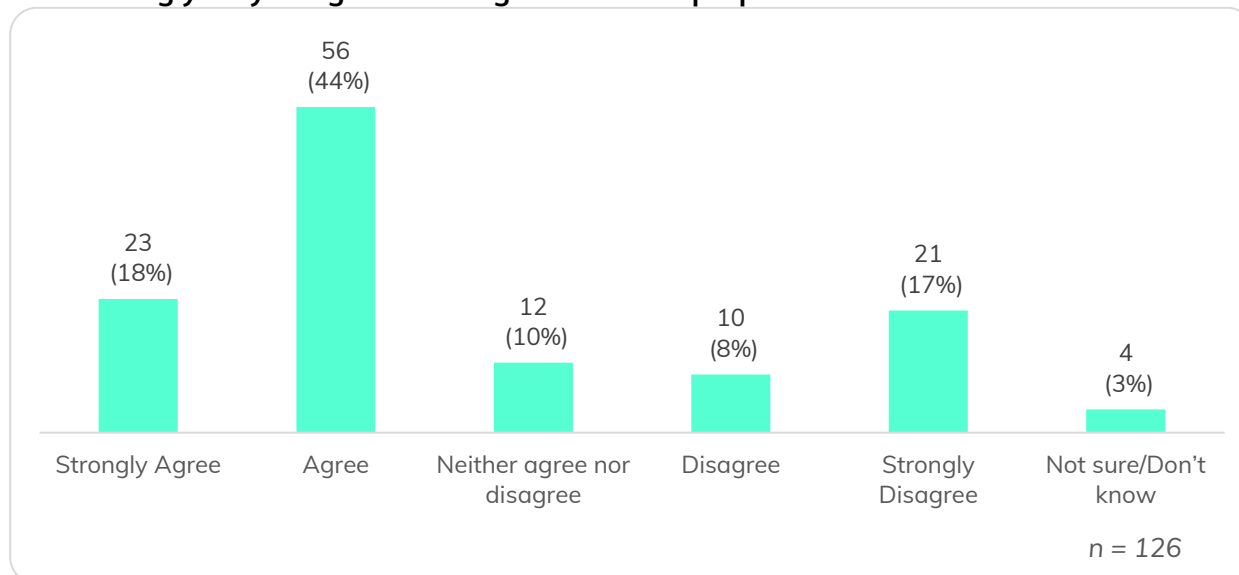
Figure 2 – Element 2, Ask Warwickshire consultation responses

Reasons given for people's responses

Agree

Respondents reasoned that combining services would make it easier for people to access the right service and reduce confusion. A unified service may further lead to cost savings and more efficient use of funds, and reduce wait times, so those in need could receive help faster. From an inclusivity perspective, participants thought that one service for all could avoid segregation and increase equality – however, respondents caveated that it is essential that quality remains high and specialised support for disabled people is still available.

Simplified Access and streamlining services

Combining services will make it easier for people to access the right service and reduce confusion.

"Access to services need to be straight forward."

"more streamlined service would save money and make it more simple."

"This would offer a more streamlined and less complicated access…"

Efficient resource allocation and budget considerations

A unified service may lead to cost savings and more efficient use of funds.

"In a time of reduced resources, it makes sense to decrease the number of providers…"

"Sounds a sensible use of limited resources."

"This seems the most effective way to maximize the support that the budget can provide."

Focus on inclusivity and equal support
One service for all would promote inclusivity and ensures all residents including disabled people, to get the support needed.

"Avoid segregation and try to drive inclusivity in design from the beginning."

"I agree on the basis of inclusivity and equalities..."

"It is good to integrate services rather than seeing disability as being different."

Service quality and specialist support concerns
While combining services, it is essential that quality remains high and specialised support for disabled people is still available.

"Agree as long as services and quality of service for people with disabilities is not impacted..."

"This sounds like a good idea in principle, as long as staff... had the specialist training and knowledge..."

"those with disabilities do need specialist support, but this should be blended into the service..."

5. Reduced waiting times and delays
One generic service might reduce waiting times and mean that those in need get help more quickly.

"This change will make it easier for people to access the right service... with less delay."

"Would hopefully enable people to access support quicker."

"Referrals will be more streamlined and services will be accessed quicker."

Disagree
Some respondents had considerable concerns regarding the potential loss of specialised support for disabled people. Respondents emphasised that a generalised service may not be able to address the unique needs of disabled people and may fail to provide the tailored support they require. Given the potential vulnerability of disabled people, respondents voiced their worries about increased risks of homelessness and inadequate support.

In addition, respondents doubted that merging services would lead to higher efficiency and effectiveness. They highlighted past positive experiences with specialised support and further argued that delays in the current system were not due to separate services but problems with the referral system.

1. **Specialised vs generalised services**
This theme highlighted concerns regarding the potential loss of specialised support for disabled people. Respondents emphasised that a generalised service may not be able to address the unique needs of disabled people and may fail to provide the tailored support they require.

"I think by not having a separate disability service runs the risk of their vulnerabilities not been seen and not be given the priority that they should receive."

"Specialised services literally saved my life as I had attempted suicide a few days before I first met my support worker."

"To remove a service that delivers directly to people with disabilities in the name of inclusivity fails to acknowledge that we do not live in a world with inclusive social infrastructure."

2. **Concerns about effectiveness and efficiency**
Respondents expressed their concerns about the effectiveness and efficiency of merging specialised services. They highlighted past positive experiences with specialised support and show scepticism about the efficiency of generic services.

"As I mentioned previously, my son has mental health needs and autism. The support he received from the specialist disability service Together UK was excellent."

"Cutting a service doesn't mean efficiency. Already short-staffed need more communication and coordination."

"It seems too generic and less specialist, younger people have different needs to older people and grouping them together would stretch staff and potentially lead to untrained staff dealing with people outside their specialist areas."

3. **Impact on vulnerable people**
This theme highlighted the concerns about the potential negative impacts on vulnerable people, especially disabled people. Respondents voiced their worries about increased risks like homelessness and inadequate support.

"I am really concerned about the impact of these proposals on disabled people."

"People with disabilities are your most vulnerable and most in need. Changes in their provision is to be avoided."

"I think this specific policy will lead to an increase in disabled people facing homelessness in the county, which is shocking."

4. **Structural and referral concerns**
Concerns were raised around the organisational and procedural challenges that might arise from the proposed changes. Respondents mentioned experiences of referral confusion and believed a more efficient referral system could mitigate delays and other issues.

"I don't believe that having the separate service for disabilities is the reason for delays or referrals being referred to the wrong service."

"From experience, there has been confusion among referrers due to services accepting inappropriate referrals. If the referral system was designed to minimise this, then delays would not happen."

Please tell us how you think this proposal would impact on you:

1. Efficiency and simplification

Many respondents commented on the potential efficiency and simplification that could be achieved by merging the services.

"As a referral and signposting service, it would streamline the service."

"Hopefully a more efficient assessment process will enable quicker decisions..."

"It would hopefully streamline to a certain extent."

2. Impact on service providers

A concern regarding the potential restructuring or retendering of services and the impact on the organisations and staff involved was mentioned.

"As an organisation, we are aware that we will have to re-tender for services."

"I think that this would mean our service would be closed or merge with another service..."

"The impact could be job loss as contract could not be delivered."

3. Quality of support for disabled individuals

A major concern was whether the redesigned services can adequately support disabled individuals.

"If people with disabilities struggle to get the extra level of support needed from the new universal services..."

"I have family members and close friends with disabilities and a future without services that acknowledge their disabilities makes me lose faith..."

"If the service was unable to adequately recognise the unique challenges disabilities can create when considering housing..."

4. Individual impact and personal experiences

There were varied reactions to how the change might personally affect individuals, with some sharing their own experiences or those of close relatives.

"I would probably still be in a substandard privately rented room or would have taken my life."

"I think it would mean I would get floating support easier without having to think which service suited me best."

"My husband is registered disabled and should he require support, this proposal would weaken his chances of gaining it."

5. Referral and service accessibility

Respondents expressed the view that the change could have implications for the clarity and ease of referrals, as well as the accessibility of the right services for users.

"Currently we refer to P3 for less complex customers and Together for more complex customers..."

"Should we need to access floating services in the future, it would be easy to identify where we needed to go."

"When I make a referral I don't have to work out which one to refer to."

6. Uncertainty and lack of clarity

Several responses indicated confusion or a lack of certainty about how the proposed changes would impact them or the larger community.

"Not sure."

"Unsure."

"To be honest I am not exactly sure what impact it would have on me personally."

What we could do instead?

Some respondents challenged this proposal directly, suggesting that specialised disabled services should remain, or argued that funding should be increased, for example by redistributing spending from other council areas. To use the available funding more efficiently, respondents suggested implementing preventative services for young people, employing support workers directly rather than via contracts, and partnering with community organisations for more holistic support, including skill-based training programmes. Improved communication between service providers and the community and a streamlined referral process were thought to improve service provision further. Participants also highlighted the special needs of disabled clients and different age groups and suggested employing trained specialist workers. Lastly, respondents emphasised the role of non-profit organisations, suggesting switching to non-profits for service provision and amplifying the voices of smaller organisations in decision-making.

Service structure and design
- Maintain specialised disability services alongside generic
- Implement a 50-50 split between services for adults and young people

Assessment and referral
- Streamline or modify the referral process for better access to appropriate services.

Funding and resource allocation
- Double the existing funding
- Redistribute spending from other less-critical council areas
- Increase allocation of budget to preventive services for young people

Communication and community engagement
- Improve communication between the service providers and the community
- Partner with community organisations for more holistic support

Skills and training
- Invest in skill-based training programs like cooking, budgeting, etc., especially for young people
- Needs for extensive training of service providers for better support

Policy and governance
- Retain or switch to non-profit organisations for service provision
- Make sure smaller organisations' voices are amplified in decision-making

Special needs and requirements
- Ensure services meet the specific needs of different age groups and disabilities
- Employ senior, specialist workers for more challenging cases

Operational efficiency
- Employ directly rather than via agencies or contracts for better long-term benefits

Element 3 - Adding a flexible range of shorter interventions that respond to individual needs as efficiently as possible and give earlier, focused support for customers who do not need longer-term support.

How strongly do you agree or disagree with this proposal?
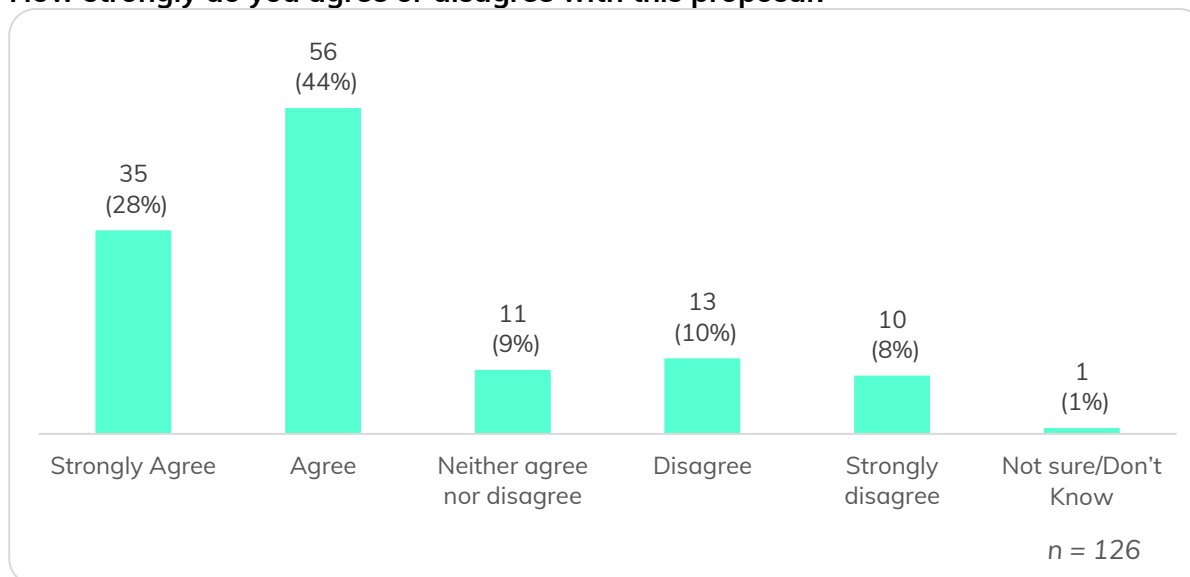
Figure 3 – Element 3, Ask Warwickshire consultation responses

Reasons given for people's responses

Agree

Respondents in favour of this proposal thought that the proposed system would be more efficient. They appreciated the idea of helping those who need minimal support quickly, thus freeing up

resources for those who require more intensive support. They also appreciated the benefits of early intervention and favoured the flexibility that allows for more personalised service based on individual needs.

While agreeing with the proposal in principle, some respondents expressed concerns about its implementation. They worried about potential negative repercussions if not executed properly and that the system might be misused to save costs, potentially at the expense of those in need of longer-term support.

1. Greater efficiency
Participants agreed that the proposed system would be more efficient. They appreciated the idea of helping those who need minimal support quickly, thus freeing up resources for those who require more intensive support.

"A triage system seems an efficient way to identify those most in need..."

"Again this sounds like a sensible approach to streamlining..."

"Faster treatment for individuals."

2. Early Intervention
A significant number of respondents appreciated the benefits of early intervention. They felt that preventing issues before they escalate was key.

"earlier access to advice and guidance to access various options..."

"early intervention is critical to the long term aftercare..."

"I believe early advice / intervention is an easy win approach..."

While agreeing with the proposal in principle, some respondents expressed concerns about its implementation. They worried about potential negative repercussions if not executed properly.

"As with other elements of these proposals, they make sense as a matter of high-level principle, but what is critical is that they are implemented quickly and well..."

"It is important that those needing immediate responses/support gain timely access..."

3. Flexibility and personalised service
Participants favoured the flexibility that allows for more personalised service based on individual needs.

"Flexible support should be provided so people dip in and out of how much support they need."

"Personalising the level of support should enable better use of resources."

"sounds more person-centred & flexible."

4. Worries about potential misuse

Some respondents feared that while the system is good in theory, it might be misused to save costs, potentially at the expense of those in need of longer-term support.

"As long as this is not used as an approach to step back from face to face in person delivery..."

"I do agree with short term interventions provided they are not at the expense of those who need more intensive floating support..."

Disagree

Respondents who were against the proposal were concerned about whether short-term interventions can meet the diverse and complex needs of clients. This was also related to the quality of interactions, including time required to establish trust and rapport and the importance of in-person sessions. Respondents also expressed scepticism that the new proposal would fit with core principles of trauma-informed care and comprehensive support. Apart from these concerns, respondents mentioned issues related to the practical implementation of the new service changes, including staffing and operational challenges, and the need for actionable support rather than mere referral.

1. Adequacy and duration of support

Concerns about whether short-term interventions can meet the diverse and complex needs of clients.

"It is difficult to ascertain how many people will fit into the early intervention/12 week criteria."

"Young people are vulnerable for a reason...these needs don't disappear after one short episode of support."

"We do not need anymore 'signposting' services... So many services are limited to 6 sessions and this isn't sufficient."

2. Quality of relationship and interaction

This theme highlighted the importance of in-person sessions and the time required to establish trust and rapport.

"Everybody is different, not all people are able to seek support they require in the first instance of speaking with organisations."

"Some customers need in person visits to understand their situation and needs."

"For customers with memory issues... the telephone calls are not sufficient."

3. Logistical and operational concerns

Respondents mentioned issues related to the practical implementation of the new service changes, including staffing and operational challenges.

"It's a money-saving exercise with reduces the service capability and people will suffer."

"It depends on how providers would implement this, but there may be difficulties if staff are appointed for different parts of the contract."

"Sounds complicated and service users vulnerable to falling through the net with this approach."

4. Alignment with core principles
Doubts about the new proposal's fit with trauma-informed care and the broader principles of comprehensive support.

"The proposal is reckless."

"The proposals are meant to be based on trauma-informed approaches... These proposals will see an increase in homelessness which is appalling."

"Targeted support that enables independence and self-reliance should always be promoted rather than creating a culture of dependency on services."

5. Current Systems and Practical Support
Participants shared their thoughts on existing services and the need for actionable support rather than mere referral.

"P3 offers a drop-in hub anyway, so that people can get one-off support, without being a floating client."

"We do not need anymore 'signposting' services... Every service signposts but we need services on the ground that actually 'do', not just 'tell'!"

Please tell us how you think this proposal would impact on you:
1. Efficiency and resource allocation
Respondents viewed the proposal as a means of making housing support services more efficient by prioritising resources.

"A triage system seems an efficient way to identify those most in need..."

"...earlier access to advice and guidance to access various options is most commonly all is needed... This would free up resources to provide more intense support to those who really need it."

2. Concerns about implementation
Some participants emphasised the importance of how the proposal is implemented, monitored and refined.

"As with other elements of these proposals, they make sense as a matter of high-level principle, but what is critical is that they are implemented quickly and well..."

"...what is critical is that the assumptions that they are designed on are tested and changed as needed during the initial phase of implementation."

3. Ensuring continuation of long-term support

Several respondents expressed concerns about how this change might impact those who require long-term support.

"Agree as long as those who require long term support can still access it."

"I would be concerned that perhaps companies would potentially choose these methods as opposed to longer term support, as cheaper to deliver."

4. Concerns about delivery method

Some responses showed apprehension about potentially reducing face-to-face interactions.

"As long as this is not used as an approach to step back from face to face in person delivery."

"We are also concerned about any move towards more remote engagements."

5. Support for the approach

Several people expressed clear support for the proposal, viewing it as aligning with existing strategies or as a positive move.

"Warwickshire County Council Public Health support this approach…"

"Brilliant idea."

"Your reasons make sense and focused short-term intervention makes sense if it works."

What we could do instead:

Respondents developed the idea of flexible interventions further. Ideas offered included combining short-term and long-term service options in a personalised support plan with options for pausing support, incorporating user perspectives in service design, focusing on preventative programmes and being outcome and data-driven in monitoring and adapting services. In addition, respondents mentioned the need to streamline paperwork and bureaucratic procedures to increase efficiency, and fostering good communication and collaboration with community organisations, stakeholders and service users.

Personalised flexible support
- Combine personalised support plans, short-term and long-term service options and the possibility to pause services for greater flexibility and customisation to individual needs

Efficient resource utilisation
- Focus on outcome-driven approaches and streamline paperwork and procedures to allocate resources more efficiently.

Enhanced communication and collaboration
- Improve communication between service providers, stakeholders, and service users. Also, foster partnerships with local governments and community organisations for more cohesive support.

Data-driven decision making
- Utilise both qualitative and quantitative data to monitor, assess and adapt services to be more effective.

User-centric and preventative approaches
- Incorporate user perspectives and needs into service design and focus on programmes that tackle the root causes of issues to prevent long-term dependencies on support systems.

Element 4: Reducing the maximum duration of services

How strongly do you agree or disagree with this proposal?

Bar chart values:
- Strongly Agree: 13 (10%)
- Agree: 36 (29%)
- Neither agree or disagree: 20 (16%)
- Disagree: 30 (24%)
- Strongly Disagree: 21 (17%)
- Not sure/Don't know: 6 (5%)

n = 126
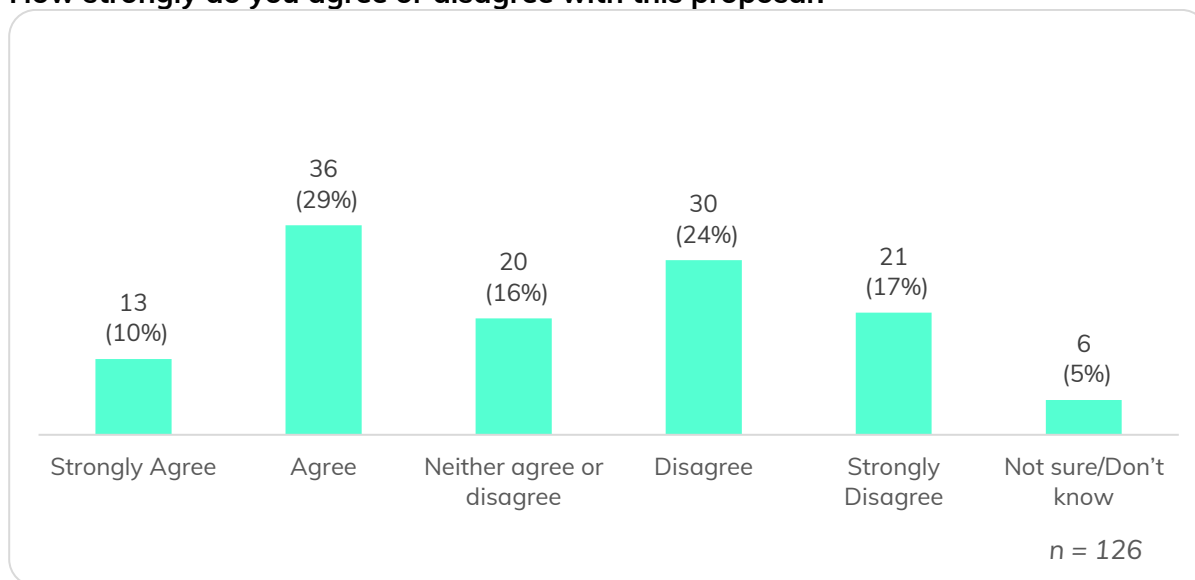
Figure 4 – Element 4, Ask Warwickshire consultation responses

Reasons given for people's responses

Agree

Many participants argued that a concentrated, results-driven approach can create greater independence in service users, cautioning against prolonged services which may create dependency. A common theme reflected participants' thoughts on the potential for shortened support durations to allow a broader reach of services. While there was acknowledgment of financial constraints, the balance between monetary savings and moral obligations was emphasised. However, respondents stressed that there may be practical challenges faced during the transition from supported to independent living and that the length of support should be different for each person depending on their needs.

1. **Efficiency and independence**

Many participants said that a concentrated, results-driven approach can create greater independence in service users, cautioning against prolonged services which may create dependency.

"a focus on results and independence is good."

"Avoid inadvertently creating a dependency."

"I don't believe this is an issue at present however historically some providers appeared to operate on the principle that "2 years of support" meant that they delivered 2 years of consistent support without moving people towards independence effectively."

"learning how to do things for self is important"

2. Logistical and system concerns

Some concerns were noted regarding the practical challenges faced during the transition from supported to independent living. The need for coordination between councils and agencies to ensure individual needs are understood was felt to be important.

"The accommodation provider must ensure that they have prepared the individual for move on and worked with other services to ensure this is a seamless transition after the period in supported accommodation."

"Floating support seems fair, and I agree. My only concern would be when I lived in accommodation the council take ages to find a suitable property..."

"However, reducing accommodation services to 18 months will only work effectively if we can work closely with local districts and boroughs around move-in options for young people."

"Yes, I agree, but with the proviso that in specific circumstances the duration of services can be extended if there are specific reasons for doing so."

3. Service reach

A common theme reflected participants' thoughts on the potential for shortened support durations to allow a broader reach of services. While there was acknowledgment of financial constraints, the balance between monetary savings and moral obligations was emphasised.

"Service demand is high so this way more people can access the services that are available."

"If this frees up money for housing, rather than support, then I agree."

"Hopefully it would be sufficient support for many people and would allow you to support many more."

4. Specific Needs and tailored support

Respondents said that the length of support should be different for each person depending on their needs. There should be room to make changes if needed.

"Agreed, however would need to a change for 16-year-olds as they would need longer term in accommodation services as cannot move on until 18 years old."

"I have some concerns around people with a learning disability as when at work, I know that transition to a different way of working can take some time."

"This still offers the individual a decent amount of time to get themselves back on their feet and to engage with services."

"This sounds like it could be a good idea and may encourage more efficient support, but I would be a bit concerned that some housing problems are very complex..."

Disagree

Respondents who disagreed stressed a need for individualised and flexible support not limited by set timeframes. Shortening the duration of support might leave certain service users without the necessary assistance they need, potentially worsening their issues. A lot of service users face complex challenges that demand time, patience and consistent support to address effectively. A notable concern was raised about young people, especially between 16-18, who might need extended support due to their age and the unique challenges they face. A situation might arise where a young person was not yet 18 and able to take on a tenancy of their own, before support was removed. Some respondents believed that the proposed changes may be driven by budget constraints rather than by focusing on the true needs of service users.

1. **Individualised and flexible support**

Many respondents believed that support should be tailored to each person's needs and not limited by set timeframes. Instead, it should adapt to changing circumstances and challenges.

"Arbitrary timeframes do not support individualism - why don't you just review at monthly intervals and leave it flexible?"

"It needs to be person led, and allow the organisations to decide on time scales appropriate to that person."

"If this is a holistic, person centred approach then it seems strange to have a one-size-fits all approach."

"support intervention should be on a case by case basis and not one approach fits all."

2. **Concerns over premature termination of support**

Shortening the duration of support might leave certain service users without the necessary assistance they need, potentially worsening their issues.

"If support is withdrawn too soon it may lead to further escalation of problems."

"Discharging people from a service without clear information about ongoing need is not viable."

"Too often people are suddenly cut adrift from support and accessing it again can be exceedingly difficult."

"If the demand is too high then the service isn't working properly or helping people effectively."

3. Complexity and time needed for real progress

A lot of service users face complex challenges that demand time, patience and consistent support to address effectively.

"Customers often have very complex circumstances with a wide range of issues and difficulties."

"Many with housing and other needs that need these services have complex needs and issues that take time, patience and ongoing support to resolve and manage."

"Some vulnerable clients who have had challenging experiences need longer to learn and establish their skills."

"It can take a long time for people to engage and feel comfortable enough with staff to move forward."

4. Special concern for young people

A notable concern was raised about young people, especially between 16-18, who might need extended support due to their age and the unique challenges they face.

"I disagree with reducing the support to one year for people 16 - 18 as one does not achieve adulthood until aged 18."

"To only provide 12 months of support to a 16 year old leaves them without support before they are even legally an adult."

"I think that young people aged 16-24 need a longer period of support than those aged over 24."

"Young people until 18 cannot sign for a tenancy. If accommodated at 16 we cannot move them on until 18."

5. Financial concerns vs quality of support

There was a belief that the proposed changes may be driven by budget constraints rather than by focusing on the true needs of service users.

"It's not sustainable in the long term if the same people have to reapply for continued service."

"You are trying to save money on an essential service whilst continuing to waste money on non-essential services."

"The rationale for making this change does not fully reflect this... something that's being actually being done to cut costs rather than to benefit those in need of these services."

"Sounds like cutting corners and leaving people vulnerable."

What could be done instead

Respondents suggested adopting a more individualised approach to service provision, focusing on clearly defined and flexible support plans co-created with clients. They emphasised the need for a collaborative relationship with local community groups to enhance services. Many highlighted the critical role of efficient case management, including regular reviews to facilitate goal achievement and potentially shortening the service duration but only where it is appropriate to do so.

Element 5: A new name for the services.

We are proposing to change the name of these services from 'Housing Related Support Services' to 'Supporting Independence Services' and would like to know if you have any views on this.

Feedback received

For the Ask Warwickshire consultation survey asked for comments on the proposal but no quantitative question was asked.

Positive

1. **Positive perception of 'independence' focus**

Some respondents liked the emphasis on independence, as it resonated with the service's aim to make users more autonomous.

> *"Better. It's help to find your independence, not to stayed supported for ever."*

> *"I feel the new name seems more appropriate to the services on offer with a focus on people having more autonomy."*

> *"We are learning to become independent so this sounds good."*

Negative

A majority of respondents were against the name change. Many participants indicated that the proposed name lacks clarity and specificity in relation to the service being about housing and may risk being confused with other services. Another theme that came up was the potential costs associated with rebranding and whether that would detract from the services offered. Several participants mentioned that the name did not matter as long as the quality of the service was high. Respondents also wondered what the intent behind the name change was.

1. **Clarity and specificity**

Many participants indicated that the proposed name lacks clarity and specificity in relation to the service being about housing.

> *"Independence" feels like a bigger area rather than housing. Will other areas of independence be included too eg cooking skills?*

> *"Confusing name, the word housing needs to be included."*

"'Independence Services' is quite vague and could potentially be confused with adult social care services."

2. Cost and Rebranding Concerns

Another theme that came up was the potential costs associated with rebranding and whether that would detract from the services offered.

"Changing the name is meaningless - the money spent on the re-branding can be better spent on the service itself."

"I like the new name, but not if the cost of rebranding cuts into the budget."

"Just keep it simple. Housing support service so you know it's housing. Not random independence services if you're only dealing with housing needs. What a waste of time that people have been paid to sit and discuss a name change and make a survey about it! Waste of time and councils money and budget yet again! Wasteful rbc."

3. Service quality over naming

A number of respondents felt that what truly matters wasn't the name, but the quality and nature of the service itself.

"Don't screw about with branding if you're making serious service changes. There are more important issues here than what you call it."

"It's not in the name! It's in the deed - name is too wide and confusing- asking for trouble as Need to keep original name as know exactly what the service is for - housing."

"Who cares what it's called as long as it is effective? We don't need to pay people to "re-brand" or "market" new names and all that this entails, eg, updating websites, leaflets, logos, etc - this is a total waste of money."

4. Concerns about confusion with other services

Several responses indicated concerns about the new name being confused with other services or not being distinctly recognisable.

"I believe that the service should remain named as Housing Related Support. SIS sounds too similar to numerous Dom Care and Supported Living Services - it also doesn't explain what it is."

"I think the new name is confusing. There are too many other similar sounding services in Health and Social Care, for people to recognise what this actually is."

"isnt clear what support its offering e.g. housing or send or disabled adults. bit confusing."

5. Scepticism about intent behind name change

A portion of respondents expressed scepticism about the true reasons behind the name change.

"Awful name. Just covers up the cuts. In what way is Independence part of this? It is just telling people to do it themselves."

"Hm….is this an Hegalian act to move any 'housing responsibility' subtly away…eg an image springs to mind of supporting independence on a park bench!"

"Seriously, this question is pathetic. Change the name and all will be alright?? Management gone mad. Best change the leaders and let real people take over."

Element 6 - additional services removed from future service specification
How strongly do you agree or disagree with this proposal?
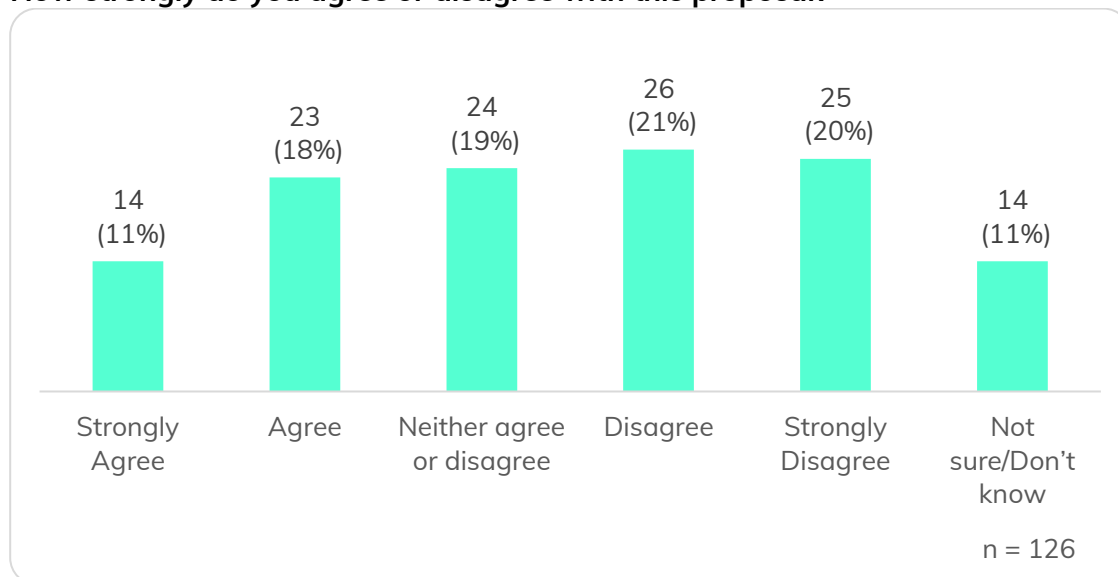
Figure 5 – Element 6, Ask Warwickshire consultation responses

Reasons given for people's responses

Agree

Respondents acknowledged the financial constraints facing WCC, viewing the removal of added value services as a necessary step given the budget restrictions. There was a perspective that if there was no budget for these services, sustaining them may lead to a decline in the quality and effectiveness of the services overall, which might be more harmful in the long run.

Some respondents who agreed with the proposal argued that the existing services such as the Hubs and outreach were inefficient. They suggested that some services such as the navigator hubs and street outreach could be removed as long as clear signposting was available, indicating a belief that more streamlined services could potentially be more effective. A point expressed was the overlapping services provided by different outreach teams. In a similar vein, participants highlighted that there were other community resources and centres that are already providing services similar to those offered through navigator hubs that may potentially fill the gap created by removing the added value services.

1. Inefficient current services

Some respondents found the existing services like P3 and outreach unsuccessful. They noted the inefficiency in the current system and believed that some services such as the navigator hubs and street outreach could be removed as long as clear signposting was available, indicating a belief that more streamlined services could potentially be more effective.

"As far as my experience goes, P3 and outreach has not been much of a success."

"In my experience, the hub would not offer accessible support for my son. He would not feel able to attend."

2. Financial pragmatism

Respondents acknowledged the financial constraints facing WCC, viewing the removal of added value services as a necessary step given the budget restrictions. There was a perspective that if there was no budget for these services, sustaining them may lead to a decline in the quality and effectiveness of the services, which might be more harmful in the long run.

"If there is no budget there is nothing we can do. Money does not grow from trees."

"if there is no budget then the council have already considered and dismissed it"

"With no money the provision would be scrappy and unregulated."

3. Alternative resources

Some participants highlighted that there were other community resources and centres that were already providing services similar to those offered through navigator hubs. They noted the existence of alternative community resources that could potentially fill the gap created by removing the added value services.

"There are community centres in Rugby--such as the Benn Partnership Centre who already provide signposting services across a range of services--I am a trustee there and we deal with housing support enquiries daily by signposting--others could do the same."

"We have provided a drop-in service for young people for more than 10 years and hubs can be a good resource but we use alternative funding for this."

4. Overlap and redundancy

A point expressed was the overlapping services provided by different outreach teams, indicating a redundancy in the current setup. Respondents saw potential in removing some services as it could eliminate the duplication of efforts and foster more streamlined assistance.

"Street Outreach by P3 overlaps with our own Outreach Team and is not needed in Rugby although I can't comment on other areas in Warwickshire."

"Providers already provide drop in sessions and services, so hubs are probably not really needed."

Disagree

Respondents who disagreed with the proposal saw it as contrary to a moral obligation to help vulnerable people and feared that removing the services would increase homelessness. In their view, the current services were essential and effective, helping many people in their communities and ensuring accessibility for all. There was a concern that removing these services would increase the burden on other community and voluntary organisations and it was felt that the proposal did not provide clear alternatives to the existing services. Some respondents argued that cutting the budget would not necessarily save money in the long run and could ultimately cost more.

1. **Moral obligation to help the vulnerable**

Individuals believed that there was a moral obligation to help the most vulnerable in society.

"Disagree because doesn't seem good to not help and support some of the most vulnerable in society because of money."

"Leaving people outside help and hope"

"Morally obnoxious"

2. **Fears of increased homelessness and suffering**

Respondents feared that removing these services would increase homelessness.

"Homelessness is a big issue and local authority should offer some support"

3. **False economy**

Some respondents argued that cutting the budget would not necessarily save money in the long run and could indeed cost more.

"We are here to heal young people of their traumas, build up their life skills and help them to rebuild their lives. Every penny spent here has the potential to save the NHS, social services, police etc a lot of money in the future."

"More cost for little or no benefit"

4. **Lack of clear alternatives**

Participants felt that the proposal did not provide clear alternatives to the existing services.

"It is unclear in the proposal whether homeless individuals/rough sleepers will continue to receive support."

"Who will be providing this service? It sounds like the plan is that we will just stop this?"

5. **Value and effectiveness of existing services**

Respondents noted that the current services were essential and effective, helping many people in their communities.

"P3's Navigator Hubs do exactly what WCC is proposing in their previous element to provide signposting, short-term support and advice."

"The outreach and navigation hubs are vital services."

6. Potential increased pressure on other services

There was a concern that removing these services would put extra burden on other community and voluntary organisations.

"Removing these services would put an excessive burden on community and voluntary organisations to provide these services."

7. Accessibility issues

Respondents pointed out that many service users do not have phones or transportation, making the outreach and navigator hubs crucial for them.

"Lots of service users do not have telephones or a means of transport. Lack of outreach and navigation hubs makes it harder for those in need to get help they may require."

"This is often the only way that some clients can access support, especially those that are street homeless."

Please tell us how you think this proposal would impact on you/ other people?

1. Negative impacts on homeless people

Many respondents expected a directly negative impact on homeless individuals, fearing that the loss of these services will leave them with decreased support.

Impact on support access:

Services may be less targeted and fewer people might be reached:

"It may mean that providers can see fewer people, deliver less targeted support."

A lack of specialised outreach services for disabled individuals:

"It would be nice if there were specialist outreach services for people with disabilities…"

2. Increased burden on alternative support systems

Respondents were concerned that discontinuing the services would place a greater burden on other agencies, charities and community groups to provide support, which may already be stretched thin.

"Cost charities more."

"I am not sure how these non-profit organisations would continue to offer their services without any funding…"

3. Potentially positive outcomes

A subset of responses acknowledged potential positive impacts, suggesting that the proposal might foster more efficient services and encourage self-sufficiency amongst those using the services.

"It would impact on those Clients who currently use the hubs. However, it could be a good turning point…"

"speed things up,"

"People will be approaching the correct service i.e., the council for housing advice…"

What could we do instead?

Respondents who disagreed with this proposal stressed the importance of continuing existing programs that cater to the needs of homeless individuals and rough sleepers. Participants further pushed for community participation and inter-agency collaboration to strengthen the effectiveness of service provision, emphasising the necessity to involve a broad range of stakeholders, including local agencies and non-profit organisations, in designing and implementing services. At the same time, respondents underlined the need to advocate for policy changes at the government level, including lobbying for increased funding and promoting investments in social housing by the central government.

1. Maintain or enhance current services

Respondents stressed the importance of continuing existing programs that cater to the needs of homeless individuals and rough sleepers.

"Continue to have an outreach service that can support rough sleepers to access services."

"Keep the services as they are, look at other ways of saving the money."

"Ensure that the service continues."

2. Collaborative and community-engaged approach

Community participation and inter-agency collaboration was seen as a means to strengthen the effectiveness of service provision, emphasising the need to involve a broad range of stakeholders, including local agencies and non-profit organisations, in designing and implementing services.

"Co-design services with other areas, e.g. health."

"Encourage joint responsibility among other agencies."

"Ask local support for the local initiatives."

3. Innovative solutions and preventative strategies

Some responses encouraged creativity in designing new solutions, focusing on early intervention and preventive work to avoid crisis points.

"Something to provide a full experience of housing support. There are services available but only for those who have reach crisis point."

"Engage with more realistic and holistic organisations and look at what is working already."

4. Government engagement and policy advocacy

Respondents underlined the need to advocate for policy changes at the government level, including lobbying for increased funding and promoting investments in social housing by the central government.

"Convince central government to invest in council (not private "social" housing)."

"Campaign central government for more public fund allocations."

"Propose to move budget form say road building or park maintenance."

Do you think this Equality Impact Assessment identifies the impacts of these proposals?

Whilst 42% of respondents felt the published EIA accurately detailed the impact of the proposed changes on marginalised and vulnerable groups, 30% felt unsure about this and almost the same percentage (28%) felt it did not do so.
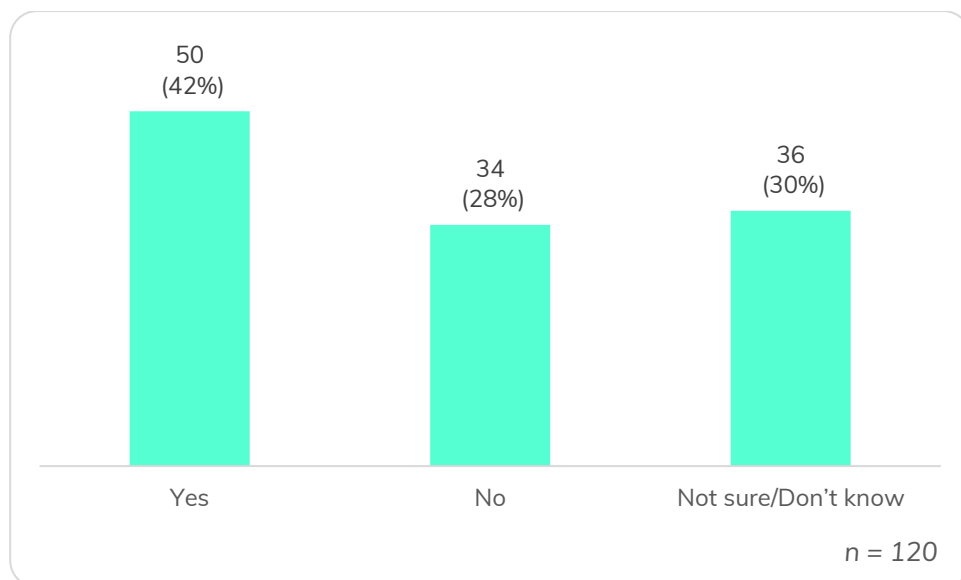
Figure 6 – Equality Impact Assessmenrt, Ask Warwickshire consultation responses

When we examined responses to this question by who responses came from ('reason for responding') we observed differences in perceptions across different groups. Whilst WCC officers and voluntary sector organisations were highly likely to say they felt the EIA did identify the impacts of the proposals; HRS providers were considerably less likely to share this perspective. Only 15% of responses from HRS providers agreed, whilst 62% did not agree – twice the proportion of all other groups. Those who use HRS services were most likely to say they did not know whether the EIA identified the impact of these proposals.

We performed a series of Chi-square tests to explore whether responses from specific groups of respondents, including WCC employees, current HRS providers, interested citizens and customers of HRS services, showed any statistical associations with their answers to whether they believe the EIA accurately reflected the impact of the proposals.
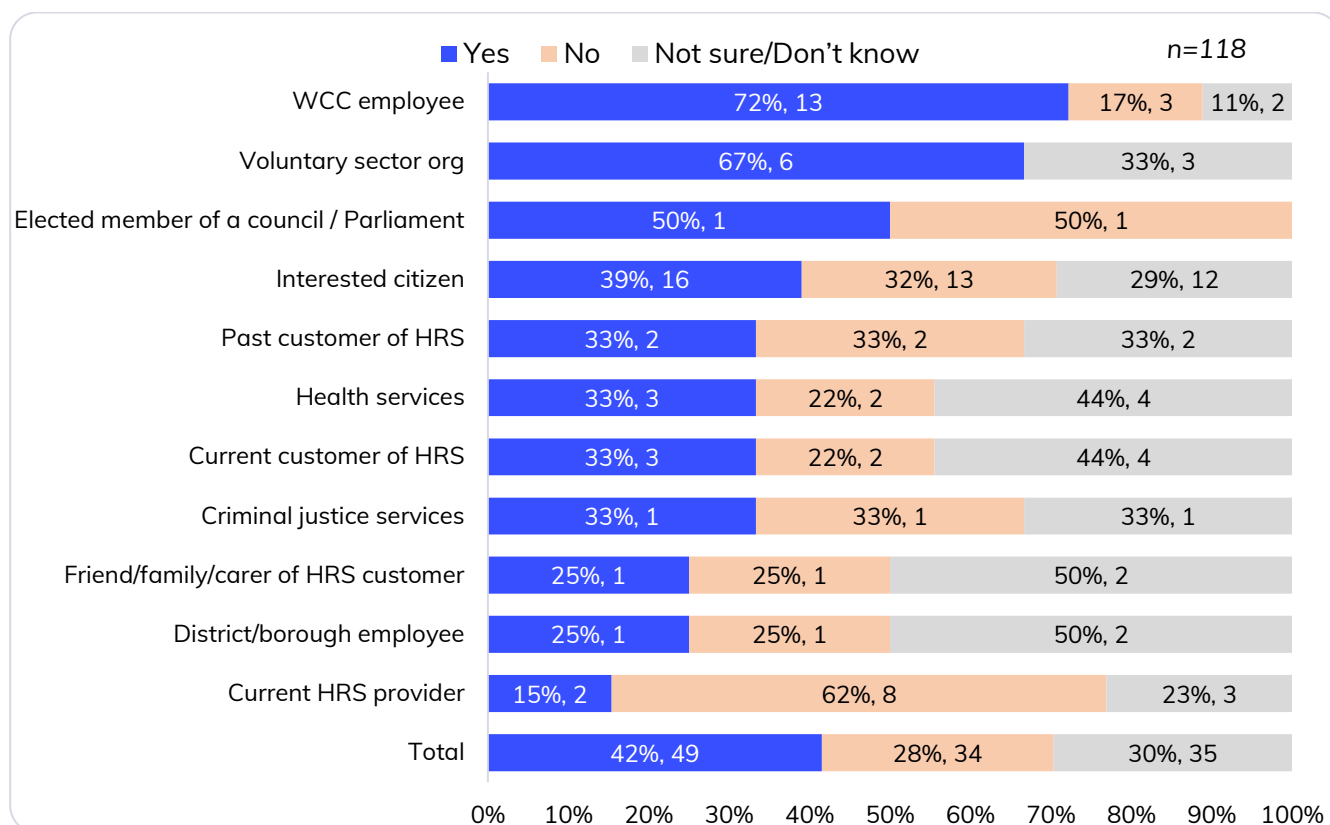
Figure 7 – respondent type by EIA response, Ask Warwickshire consultation responses

WCC Employees
According to the Chi-square test, the responses of WCC employees on the EIA question differed significantly ($p = 0.016$, chi-square statistic = 0.89) from those of other groups combined.

Current Housing Related Support Service Providers
The responses of current Housing Related Support Service providers on the EIA question also differed significantly ($p = 0.01$, chi-square statistic = 0.83) from those of other groups combined.

Interested Citizens
Analysis of the responses of interested citizens on the EIA question did not differ significantly ($p > 0.05$) from those of other groups combined.

Customers of Housing Related Support Services
Similarly, the responses of customers of Housing Related Support Service on the EIA question did not differ significantly ($p > 0.05$) from those of other groups combined.

Do you think there is anything missing from the Equality Impact Assessment?
1. Concern for specific vulnerable groups
   - Refugees, asylum seekers and those from countries at war
   - Those with disabilities, including mental health and autism

- Male offenders
- Illiterate individuals
- Young parents and their babies
- Gypsy, Roma, Travellers
- Young people
- Ex-prisoners

2. Clarity and specificity
   - Vague mitigation strategies like 'signposting'
   - Need for clearer information about who/what organisations are signposted
   - Need for detailed numerical breakdowns in the EIA
   - The proposal's impact on homelessness
   - The lack of specific data about certain areas like the south of Stratford on Avon

3. Service delivery and effectiveness
   - The potential impact of de-commissioning specialist services, especially for those with disabilities
   - Training and expertise requirements for effective support
   - Pressure on already strained services like housing, mental health, etc
   - Cost implications of changes
4. Lack of involvement and representation
   - Concerns about not involving certain stakeholders or experts
   - Need for a wider understanding of service users
   - Lack of consultation with or consideration of the thoughts of those directly impacted by the services

Do you have any ideas about how we can reduce the impact on people with protected characteristics that use the current Housing Related Support services or might use services in the future?

Staff training
- Respondents were concerned about the attitude of certain staff, finding them to be rude and not informative.
- They recommended better training for staff to understand specific needs of various groups, including individuals with disabilities

Service availability and accessibility
- The availability of staff to speak to is a recurring concern
- Services need to be easily accessible through multiple means, including face-to-face and paper format
- Some respondents emphasised the importance of having specialised services, especially for groups like young parents and individuals with disabilities

Inclusion and equality
- Several responses criticised the current system for prioritising certain groups over others (like ex-forces over refugees)
- Concerns were also raised about understanding and respecting the language, culture and dietary needs of different groups

Monitoring and accountability
- More robust forms of monitoring and data collection to understand the impact on various people
- Suggestions included close monitoring of statistics, steering groups and the use of Health Equity Assessment Tools

Communication and information
- Respondents felt that better signposting to services and improved communication channels were crucial
- There was a recommendation for professionals to be properly informed so they can adequately refer and signpost those in need

Efficiency
- Suggestions were made to have fewer points of contact to increase efficiency
- Some respondents also advocated for a more specific and specialised service rather than a "one-size-fits-all" approach

Policy and governance
- Respondents were sceptical about decisions affecting the services, including budget cuts

Specialised support
- Retaining specialised support services, especially for individuals with disabilities
- A specialised team member to oversee cases involving those with learning disabilities

Open feedback channels
- The need for open forums, regular consultations and user committees is highlighted, indicating a desire for ongoing dialogue between service providers and users

Email responses

Five email responses were received to the consultation. Three of these were from individuals with experience of using HRS services, one was a collective response from the District and Borough Heads of Housing and the final one was from the Head of Housing of Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council as an addendum to the collective submission.

The three individuals were clients receiving support from "Together". In their responses, they all expressed a wish for services to remain as they are and retaining a separate service for disabled clients. Respondents valued the support they had received and worried that the quality of support would suffer and disabled people would have a harder time receiving the support they needed from a generic service.

The Warwickshire Heads of Housing expressed general agreement with elements 1 and 2 of the proposal, However, they doubted the need to separate floating services for young people and adults. They further stressed that specialist support would need to be made available where necessary to ensure good customer service and that efforts should be made to retain accommodation assets. In response to element 3, the group stressed that services would need to be designed in a way that ensured support would be timely, concentrated and tailored to the individual. Respondents supported element 4 under the condition that the duration of service

would still be determined by individual need and exceptions were allowed to make sure the service was sustainable. Lastly, regarding element 5, respondents felt the word "housing" would need to be included in the name to make it less ambiguous.

Easy-read survey

25 responses to the easy-read survey were received from individuals with experience of using HRS services.

These responses were all from individual customers of Together, the floating support service for disabled people. Together supported individual customers to engage in the process and submitted the responses on their behalf. These responses focused on service design elements (proposals 2,3 and 4) and commenting on the equality impact assessment, but did not make any comment on proposals 1,5,6.

Element 2 - Stop commissioning the separate Floating Support service for people with disabilities and meet those needs within redesigned inclusive Floating Support services, one for young people aged 16-25 and one for people aged 25+ years.
25 people responded to this question and 92% of them (23 people) either disagreed or strongly disagreed. No one agreed with the proposal.

How strongly do you agree or disagree with this proposal?
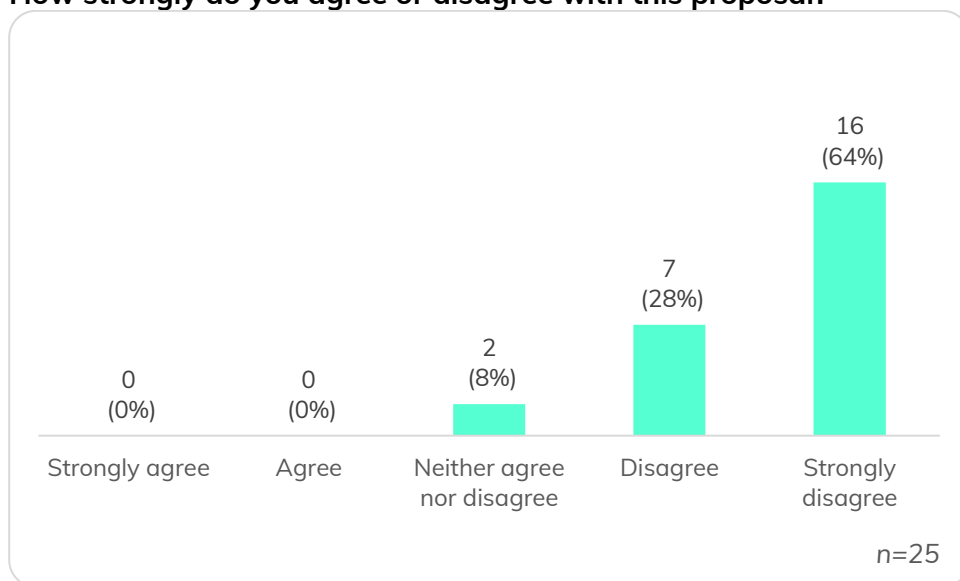
Figure 8 – Element2, Easy Read survey responses

Element 3 - Adding a flexible range of shorter interventions that respond to individual needs as efficiently as possible and give earlier, focused support for customers who do not need longer-term support.

21 people responded to this question and 72% of them (15 people) either disagreed or strongly disagreed, while 5 people (24%) agreed.

How strongly do you agree or disagree with this proposal?
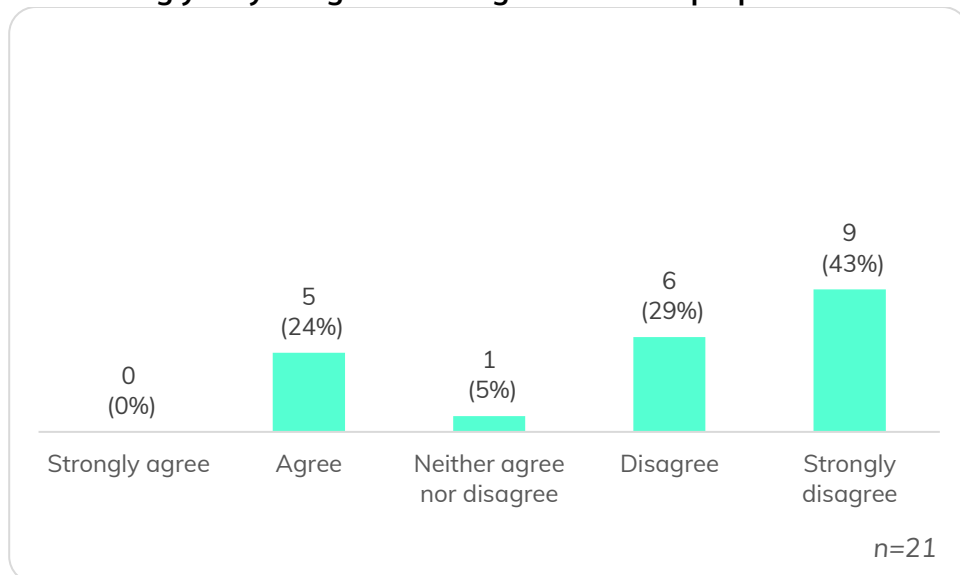
Figure 9 – Element 3, Easy Easy read survey responses

Element 4: Reducing the maximum duration of services

Of the 21 easy-read responses received, 18 (88%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the proposal, with just 2 people (10%) agreeing with it.

How strongly do you agree or disagree with this proposal?
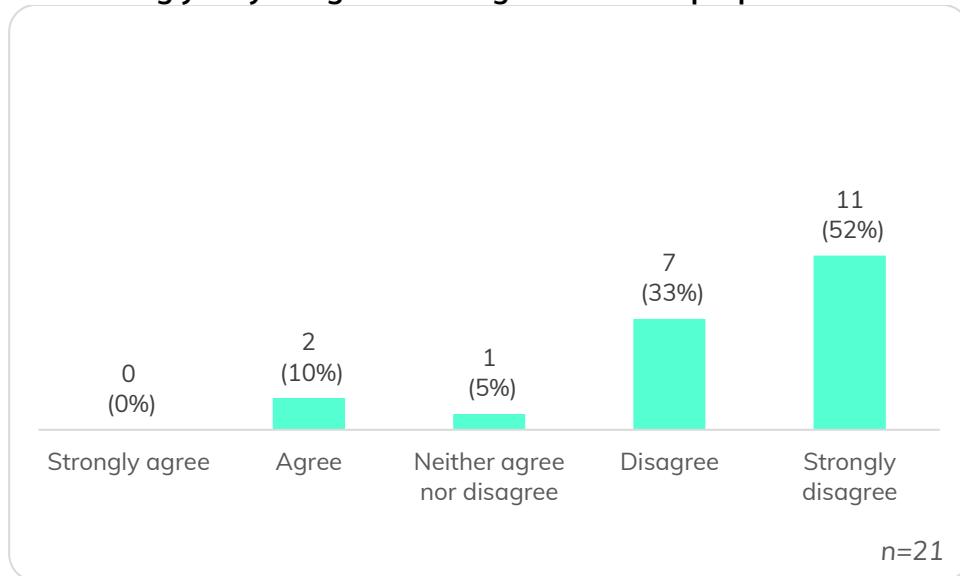
Figure 10 – Element 4, Easy read survey responses

Do you think this Equality Impact Assessment identifies the impacts of these proposals?

Only 6 people responded to this question. Three of those said they were unsure or did not know, 1 said they felt the EIA identified the impacts of the proposals and 2 said they did not.
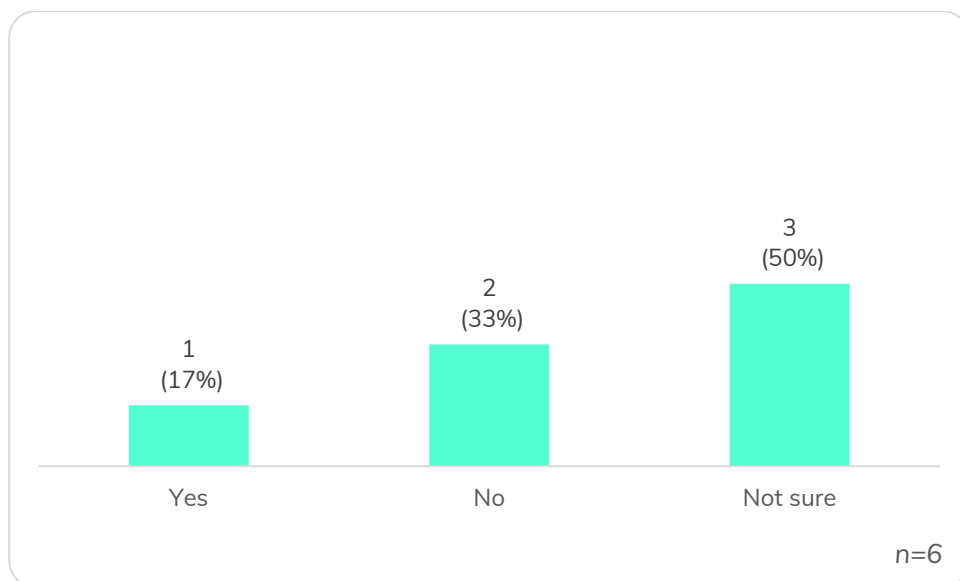
Figure 11 – Equality Impact Assessment, Easy read survey responses

Findings from the Outreach

During the outreach, we heard from homeless and vulnerably housed individuals about their experience of accessing support.

It is important to note that this related to their experience of accessing support with housing that people received in general and did not specifically or exclusively relate to Housing-Related Support services commissioned by Warwickshire County Council.

The small group discussion held in Street Focus Groups used a different, discussion guide to the structured individual interviews. The findings below indicate whether responses refer to individual interviews or Street Focus Groups.

Quantitative Analysis

The Council are thinking about making some changes to services. Please tell us to what extent you agree or disagree with these proposals:
To keep providing services to support people who are homeless and need help finding somewhere to live, and services for people that need support to prevent them becoming homeless.

153 individuals answered this question in interviews and a further 123 did so within Street Focus Groups. Almost all of them (95% in Street Focus Groups and 90% in individual interviews) strongly agreed.
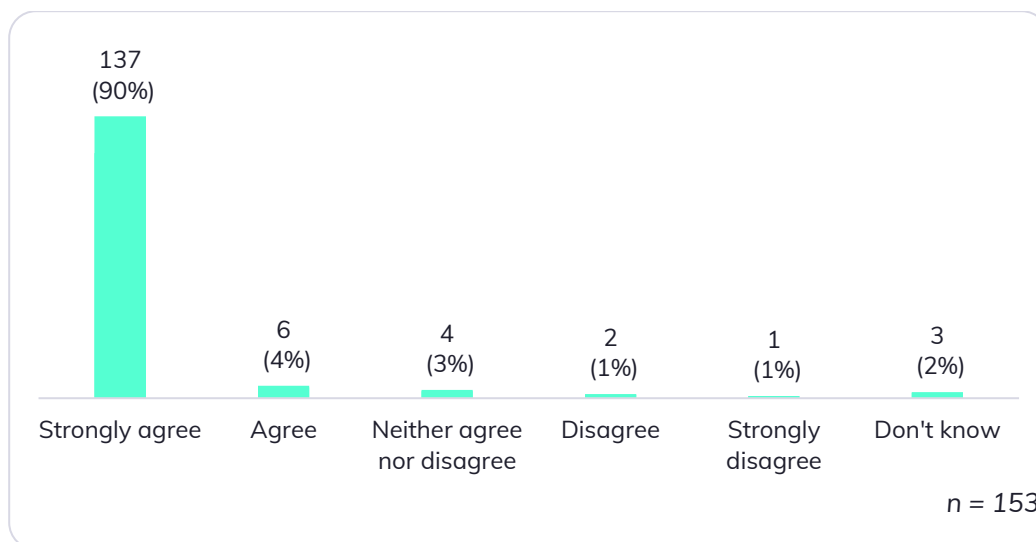
Figure 12 - Outreach survey (individual interviews)
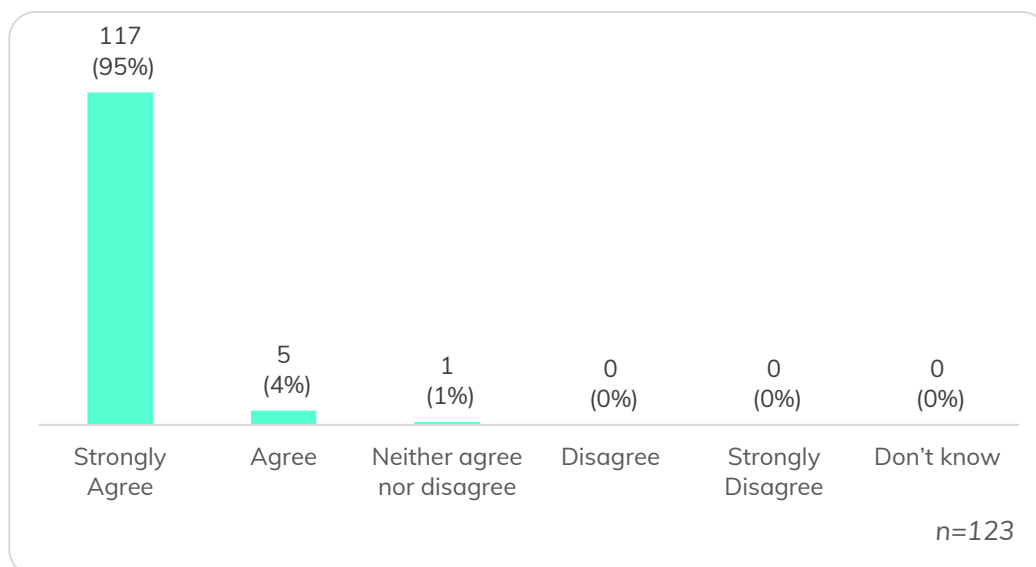
Figure 13 - Outreach survey (street focus groups)

To have a single inclusive service for disabled people and those without disabilities, rather than separate services.

The survey results show a polarised response to the Council's proposal of implementing a single inclusive service for disabled and non-disabled individuals, rather than having separate services.

A substantial 35% of respondents 'strongly agree' with this proposal and 10% 'agree', totalling 45% in favour of the change.

However, an equal proportion of respondents (35%) 'strongly disagree' with the proposal, highlighting significant opposition. Along with the 7% who 'disagree', the total against the proposal is 42%.

A small segment of respondents (6%) reported that they 'neither agree nor disagree', indicating a neutral stance. 7% of respondents expressed 'Don't know' suggesting uncertainty or lack of information to form a concrete opinion.
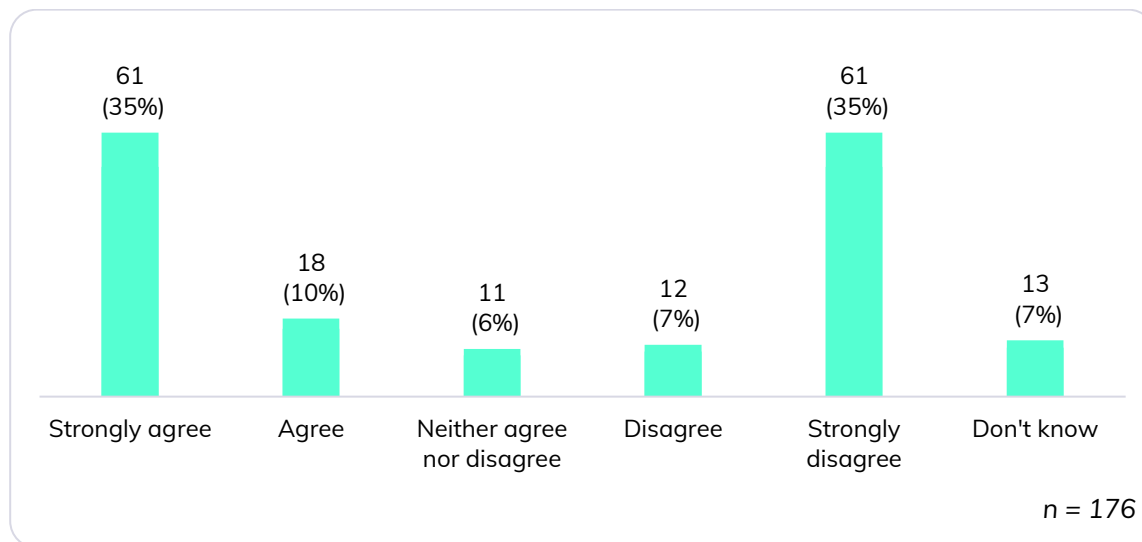
Figure 14 - Outreach survey (individual interviews only)

Responses from the Street Focus Groups were similar, with 45% (54 people) strongly agreeing and 30% (36 people) strongly disagreeing.
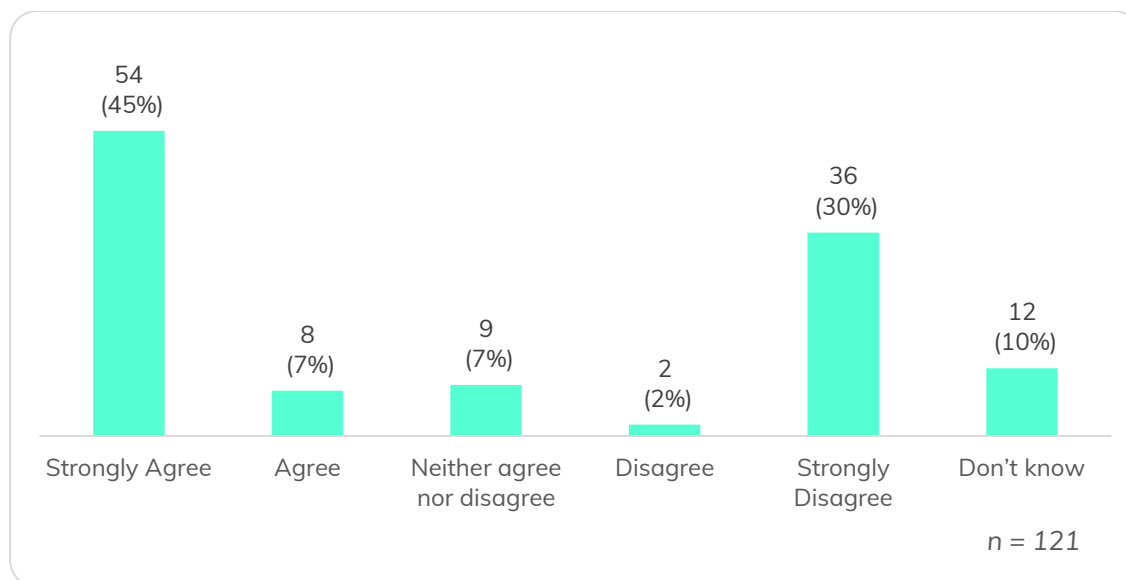
Figure 15 - Outreach survey (street focus groups)

People's experience of accessing support with their housing

The outreach asked people a number of questions about their experience of accessing support with their housing. This was not confined to their experience of HRS services, but encouraged them to draw on their wider experience. The intention in adopting this approach, was to understand the broader context of providing support to those in housing need and to learn from

their experience, both positive and negative, about accessing support. The findings below all relate to this wider experience, rather than specifically relating to their experience of HRS services.

Have you ever been worried that you might have significant difficulty in paying your rent or having a place to live, whether due to debts, money problems, loss of income, health problems, being harassed, addiction, abusive relationships etc?

20% of respondents (36 people) said they were currently experiencing concerns about their housing due to factors such as debts or health issues. An additional 48% (88 people) said that they had experienced these worries in the past.

Whilst 32% of respondents (58 people) said they have never faced such issues, we found that even among this group, their answers to subsequent questions suggested some degree of vulnerability. Despite feeling less concerned about their financial situation, they reported experience of indicators of vulnerability in their housing, health or financial situations.
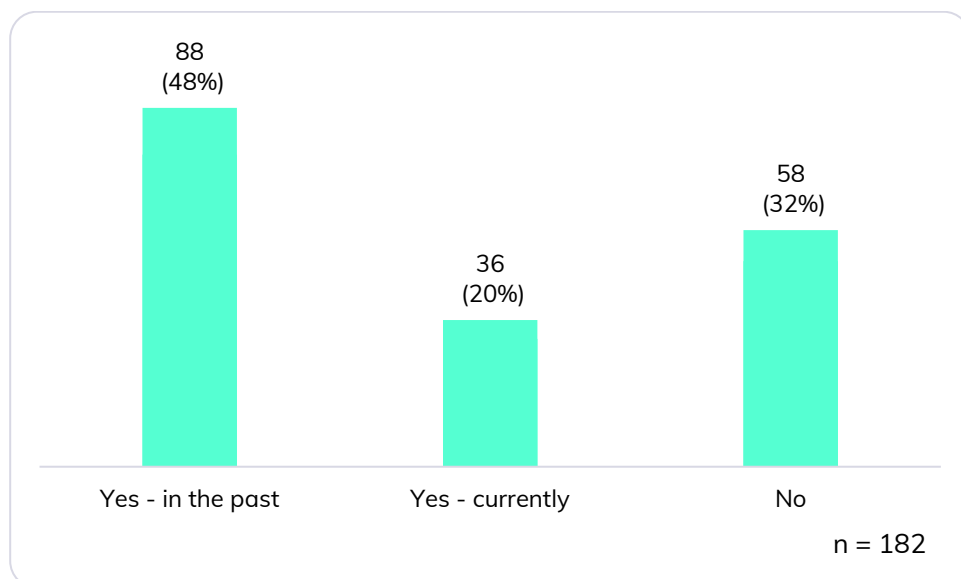
Figure 16 - Outreach survey (individual interviews)

Responses from the Street Focus Groups were somewhat different, however a similar proportion - 35% (44 people) – said they had never faced such issues. However, 36% (45 people) said they were currently experiencing such issues and 29% (37 people) said they had done so in the past.

Social Engine – Housing Related Support consultation report   55
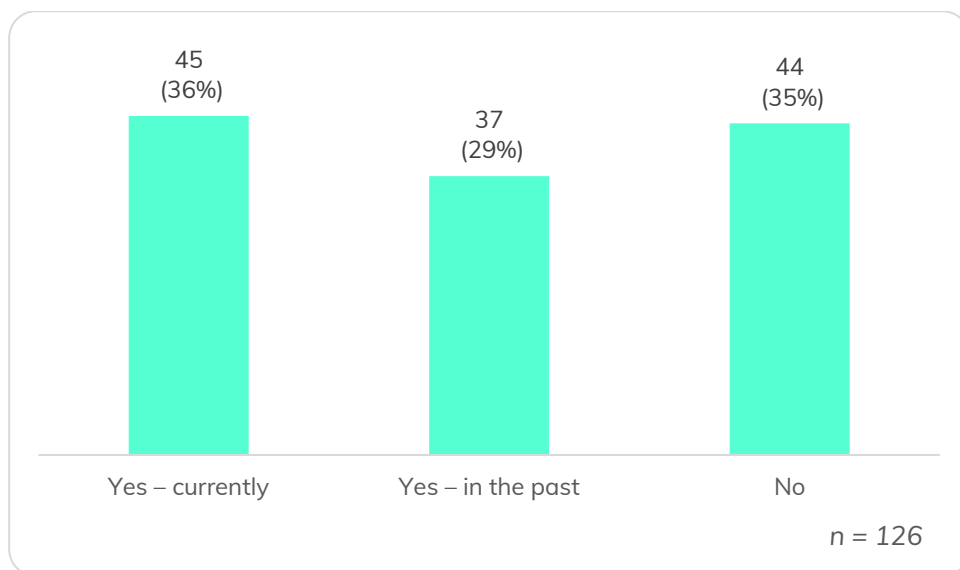
Figure 17 - Outreach survey (street focus groups)

Have you ever tried to access or ever received help or support around your housing (including help to find somewhere to live, keep you in your current home or move to a more suitable place)?

73% of respondents said they had either tried to access or have received support concerning their housing situation, which includes aid in finding a new place to live, staying in their current home, or moving to a more suitable location. On the other hand, 26% of respondents have not accessed or received such assistance.
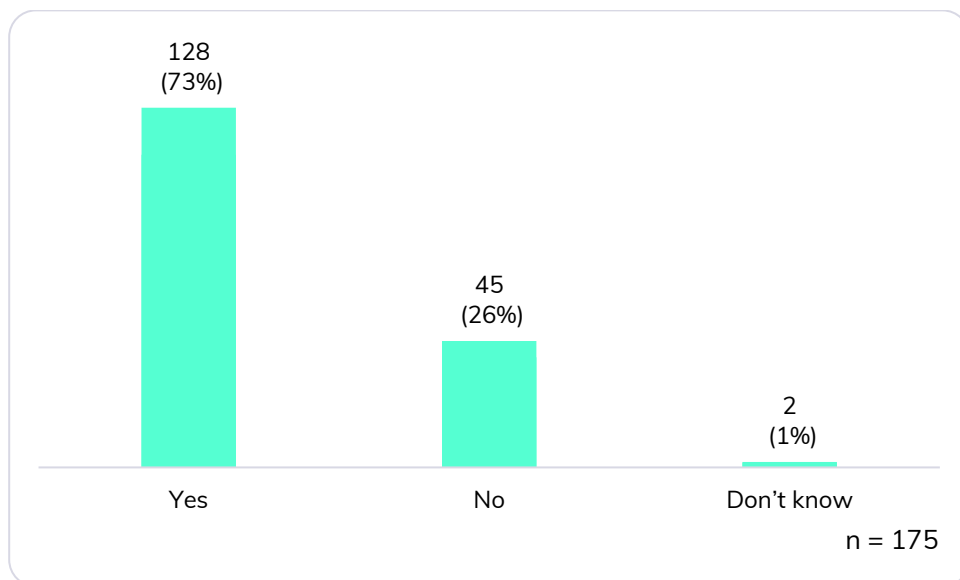
Figure 18 - Outreach survey (individual interviews)

Responses from the Street Focus Groups were fairly similar – though the proportion of those saying yes was slightly lower, with 61% (76 people) saying yes and 36% (45 people) saying no.
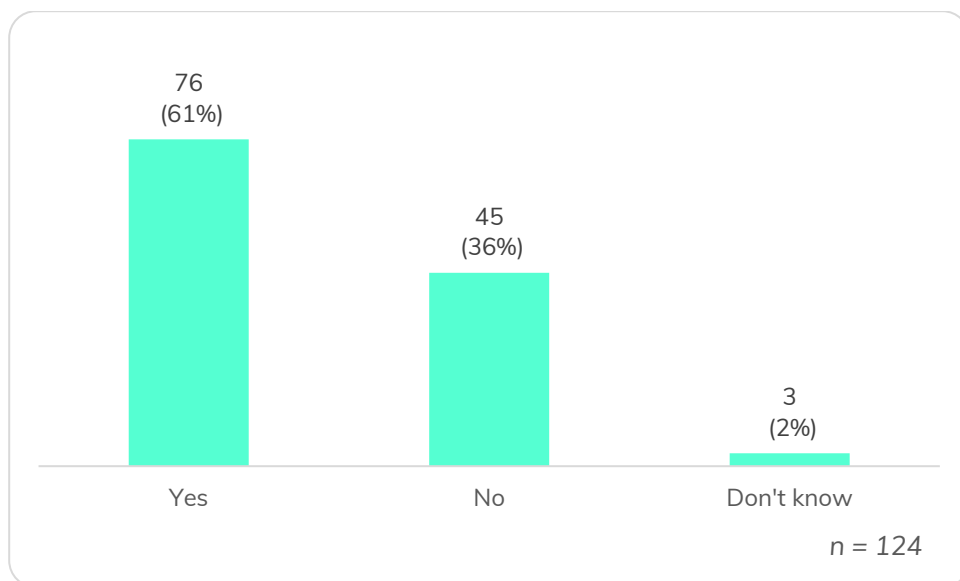
Figure 19 - Outreach survey (street focus groups)

Did you have help finding somewhere to live (Accommodation- based support) and/or support where you already lived (Floating Support)?

Of the 127 respondents who had tried to access housing support, around two-thirds (63%) confirmed that they received either accommodation-based support (help finding a new place to live) or floating support (assistance where they already live). However, 37% reported not having accessed such housing support.
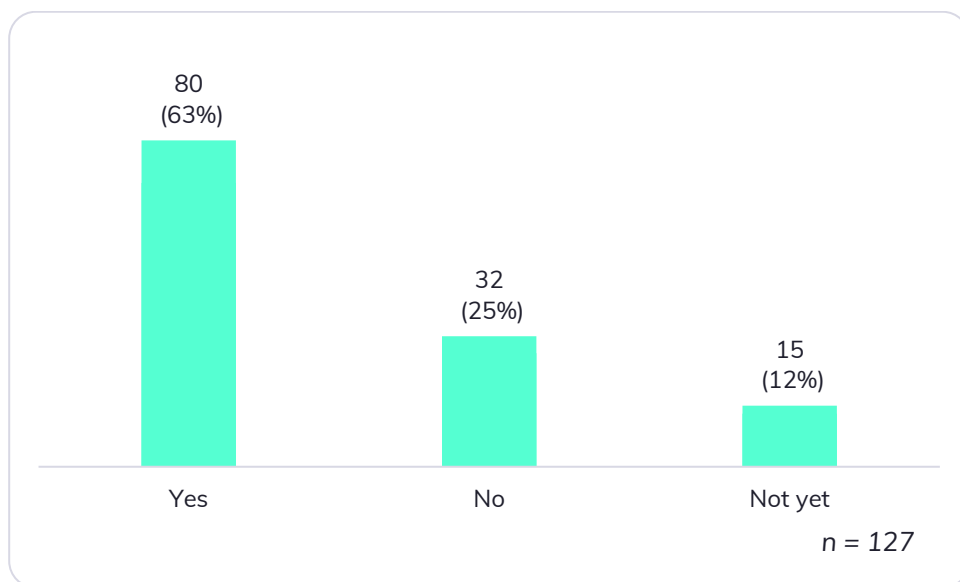
Figure 20 - Outreach survey (individual interviews)

How easy did you find it to access the support you wanted?

The results revealed diverse experiences of respondents in accessing the housing support they needed – including, but not limited to HRS services. A combined total of 28% of respondents (37 people) reported a positive experience (either 'very easy' or 'easy'), whilst 20% (27 people) reported a neutral experience, describing the process as 'neither hard nor easy'. However, over half of the

respondents encountered difficulties in getting support they required in relation to their housing. Specifically, 22% (29 people) found accessing the support 'hard', while 30% (39 people) described the process as 'very hard'. This suggests that over half of the respondents encountered difficulties in getting the housing support they sought.
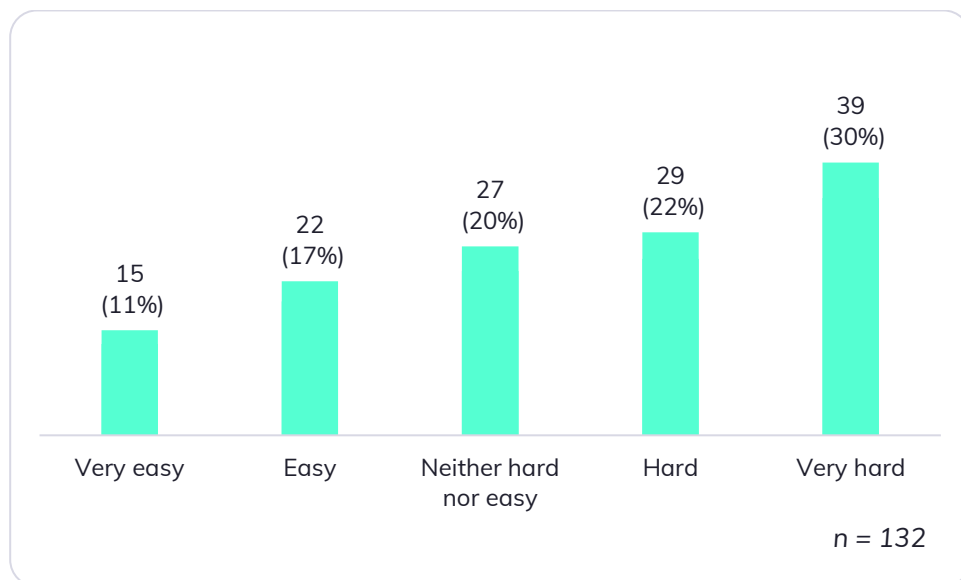
Figure 21 – Outreach survey (individual interviews)

How long did it take for you to get the support you wanted?
The survey results show varying timeframes experienced by people in receiving housing support.

Around a third (46 respondents) never received the support they wanted. 19% of respondents (26 people) waited more than 6 months. A smaller proportion (7%, 10 people) received support within a 3-6 month period and 11% (15 people) received help within 1-3 months. The quickest support was experienced by 9% of respondents (12 people) who received support in less than a month and around 1 in 5 (25 people) who received support within a week or even immediately.
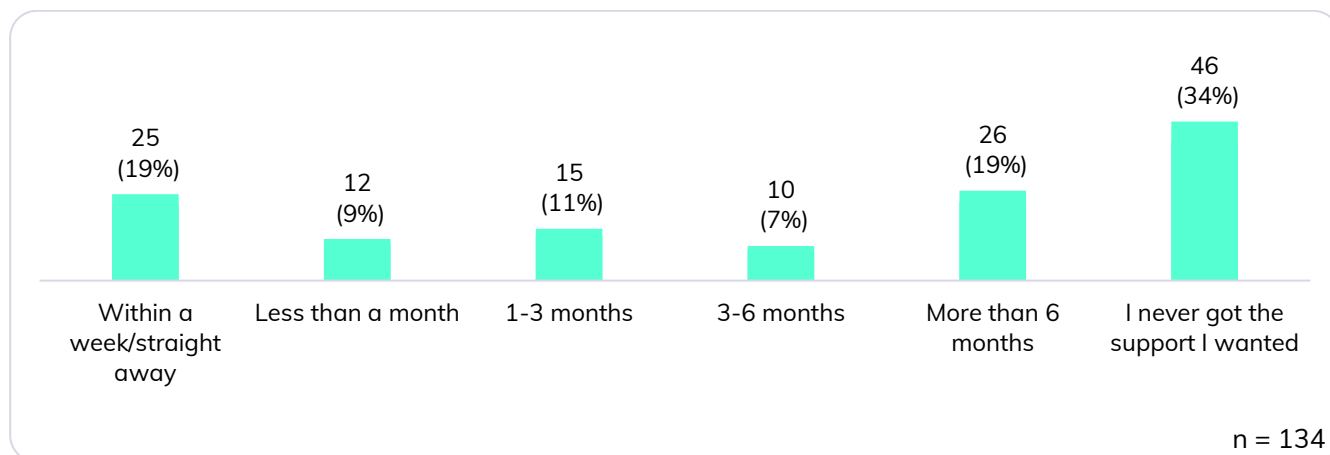
Figure 22 – Outreach survey (individual interviews

How useful was the support you received?

More than half of the respondents viewed the support positively, with 37% finding the support 'very helpful' and an additional 18% 'helpful'. However, a considerable number of respondents experienced less satisfaction with the support received. Specifically, 13% found it 'unhelpful', and 15% 'not at all helpful'.
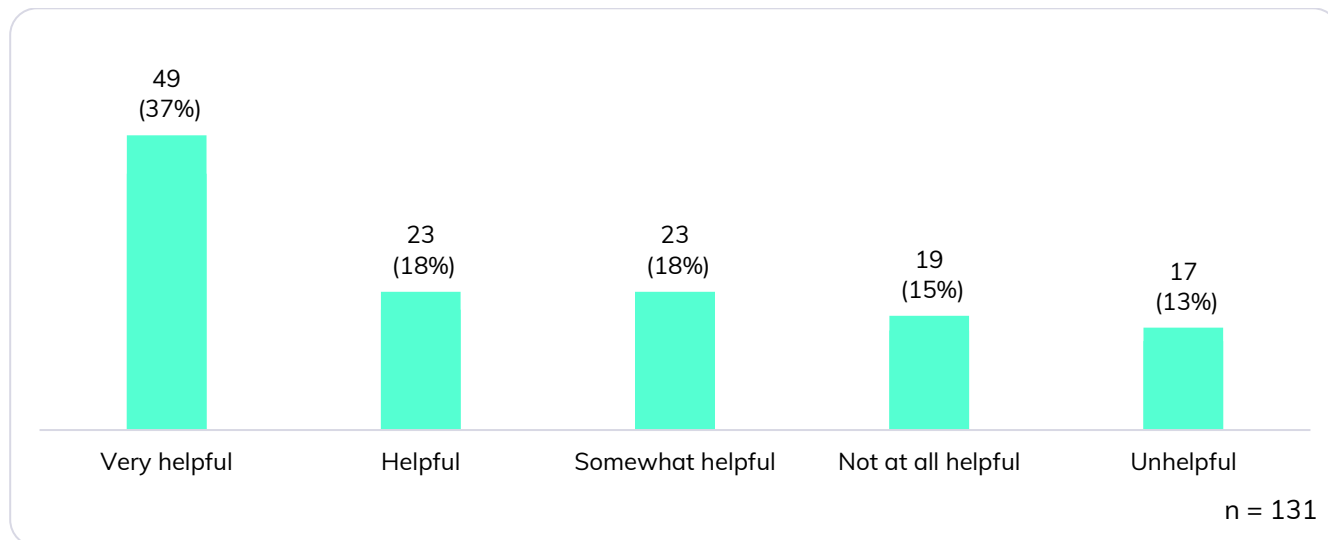
Figure 23 – Outreach survey (individual interviews)

Understanding the experience of people with protected characteristics (covariate analysis)

We carried out covariate analysis of outreach responses to explore differences between the experiences and views of respondents belonging to different demographic groups.

We considered the following key variables:

- **Ease of access to support:** This categorical variable represented participants' ratings of how easy or hard it was for them to access their desired support. We collapsed the categories into 'Easy' and 'Hard' for simplification.
- **Time to receive support:** The time it took for participants to receive the support they desired. We categorised this variable into 'Prompt' (Less than a month, Within a week/straight away), 'Moderate' (More than 6 months, 3-6 months), and 'No Support' (I never got the support I wanted) for analysis.
- **Usefulness of support:** This categorical variable reflected participants' assessments of how helpful the support they received was. We collapsed the categories into 'Helpful' and 'Unhelpful.'
- **Agreement levels to proposals:** We examined this variable to understand participants' levels of agreement with the proposals.
- **Gender:** A binary categorical variable describing the gender of the participants.
- **Disability:** A binary categorical variable indicating whether participants reported having a disability.
- **Age:** A categorical variable representing the age of respondents.

Statistical test - Chi-Square Analysis

To explore potential associations and differences, we employed the Chi-square test of independence. The Chi-square test is a non-parametric statistical test suitable for examining the relationships between categorical variables.

Results

Among the demographic variables analysed, only gender demonstrated a statistically significant association. In particular, a higher proportion of women (45%, n=29) reported finding it easy to access their desired support compared to men (20%, n = 8). Conversely, a higher proportion of men (80%, n=32), compared to women (55%, n=35) found it hard to access their desired support.

This result is statistically significant, as evidenced by a p-value of 0.016 obtained from the Chi-Square Test of Independence, yielding a Chi2 statistic of 5.82 and 1 degree of freedom.

Whilst the following differences were observed, they did not all pass standard tests for statistical significance. Whilst this does not mean they are not reliable findings; it does mean that they may be the result of chance and as such should be interpreted with a degree of caution.

Gender
- More women (45%) reported finding it 'easy' or 'very easy' to access support compared to men (20%)
- Women (32%) accessed the support they needed more quickly than men (22%)
- More men (60%) found the support they received to be helpful, compared to women (51%)

Disability
- Disabled respondents were twice as likely as non-disabled respondents to have encountered housing-related difficulties.
- A greater proportion of disabled respondents (88%) attempted to access housing support than non-disabled people
- Disabled respondents (36%) found it significantly easier to access the required support compared to non-disabled respondents (24%)

Age
- Younger people (18-24) were less likely than average to have sought out support.
- People aged 25-39 were less likely than average to have accessed accommodation-based or floating support.
- It was more difficult for people within the 25-39 age bracket to access their desired support.
- Notably, young people (18-24) were quicker at accessing support.

Qualitative analysis

The survey included five open-ended questions. We used thematic analysis to map the topics and issues respondents brought up most frequently for each question.

As previously indicated, these questions reflect people's experience of accessing support related to their housing. Whilst this includes HRS services, it also includes their experience of accessing support more generally, from Districts and Boroughs, voluntary and community organisations and wider public services.

Can you tell me about your experience of getting support/trying to get support?

1. Complicated and bureaucratic process

Respondents emphasised that their experience of getting support had involved complex bureaucratic processes that made it more complicated for them to access the help they needed.

"Constant phone calls, pillar to post until finding the right dept, with the right criteria. A bit long winded..."

"Loads of form filling! & evaluations oh and a bit of running around but all okay experience"

2. Long waiting times

Participants were at times frustrated with what they perceived to be long waiting times until they received the appropriate support, particularly when waiting for housing provision[5].

"Very difficult to be honest I had to sofa surf for 9 months before I was housed, very thankful for friends."

3. Negative emotions

Individuals shared that their experience of housing related support led to negative emotions, such as anger and frustration, as they did not feel understood.

"Sometimes it's as though you're not being heard. I can get quite angry I know it doesn't help overall, but what can I do. So frustrating."

4. Mixed experiences with staff

People reported mixed experiences with support staff, with some expressing high satisfaction while others complained about impoliteness.

"Housing officer and staff are very rude, they are better"

'I have a very good key worker. All the staff are very nice but there's not much to do here (Fred Winter).'

What worked well in your experience of getting support?

1. Effective communication and empathy from support staff

Participants valued staff's ability to empathise with clients' experiences and the effort they put into helping them with their situation.

"I found the person at the other end of the phone, very helpful/empathic. That was refreshing."

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[5] District and Borough Councils, rather than WCC provision.

"Council lady really supportive knew I was going through a hard time & did lots for me."

2. Speed and efficiency of support

Some respondents were very satisfied with how quickly they received the support they needed.

"Very helpful & quick & within 8 months was offered a place. In Coventry I was on the list for years."

"P3 very helpful, they made phone calls on my behalf (P3) obv I've no fixed abode."

3. Support through housing and accommodation

Respondents also stressed that support was effective as it helped them to get accommodation, leading to their desired outcome.

"Well, I got rehoused (bottom floor flat for accessibility) That worked well."

"The fact I got a home!"

''Have experienced many situations, some good, some horrendous, so I'll just concentrate on the ones that worked well. I'm not homeless'

What things, if any, got in the way of you getting the support you needed?

1. Bureaucracy and administrative difficulties:

Many people mentioned that administrative difficulties and bureaucratic rules made it difficult for them to access the required support and get through the assessment.

"Diagnosing my brothers PTSD. Social services, Drs notes, service records, plus hospital reports. You wouldn't believe how hard it is to get assessed."

"Takes forever It took so much time and effort, had to keep chasing, it's exhausting."

*"No help assessment showed I earned too much money to warrant the support I needed, £2 over is a bit much init!" For **** sake."*

"Sometimes the protocol/bureaucracy got in the way, also depended on who you got on the other end of the phone."

2. Communication issues:

Participants reported that they faced various communication difficulties, including inconsistency, long response times and access-related issues linked to disability and access to digital technologies.

"The Council not providing better face to face support for deaf people. I can't ring a number they gave me I can't hear."

"Terrible communication from Council."

"When you email them it's like throwing a message in a bottle into the sea. You never know when or if you'll get a reply."

"I don't even own a computer and they're sending me emails. How's that supposed to work."

3. Lack of suitable / affordable housing

Respondents stressed that the housing that is available in the area was in many cases not suitable to their needs and/or budget.

"There are no homes suitable for my disability in the area. The lack of accessibility options feels like a personal slight."

"The few properties that are affordable are in terrible condition. It feels like we're being punished for being poor."

"Every time we save enough for a deposit, the rents go up. It's like trying to hit a moving target."

''Even though I work full-time, I'm still considered low-income. The affordable housing options are just not affordable for me."

"Council offered me one inappropriate house situation and that was it, never heard from them again. Offered a shared house - unsafe for me as I had to kick out ppl from shelter I was working at."

4. Inadequate or inappropriate support

A number of respondents explained that although they received support, the support available was not appropriate to their needs and personal circumstances, making it less useful for them.

"Staff is not trained, they are incompetent, they have no experience. Worst management I have dealt in my entire life"

"Housing Officer at Council assigned for me, bad with contact. I have to go everyday to hear anything"

"They assigned me a support worker who had no knowledge of my condition. How was that supposed to help me?"

"The help they offered was not practical. I needed immediate assistance, but all they gave me was a long-term plan."

"I was put into a support programme that didn't cater to my needs. It was as if they just wanted to get rid of me."

"The support I received didn't take into account my personal circumstances. It was a one-size-fits-all approach."

5. Lack of awareness or knowledge

Some participants raised the point that lack of awareness of the support that was available kept them from accessing support.

"Knowing who to contact about accommodation & support."

"For me it was if I didn't know about this place I'd of been in a pickle. Lack of knowledge."

"Better awareness of support, struggled in private rental for ages."

6. Personal factors / circumstances (eg mental health & addiction)
A few respondents mentioned that particular personal factors, including health issues, made it difficult for them to get the support they needed.

"My addictions. I'd say these got in the way of me accessing conventional services''

"My mental health, it wasn't that good before I came to be homeless. Being homeless just made it worse!"

What would have made the service or support better for you?

1. Improved/ better communication
Many respondents indicated that there was a lack of clear, prompt, and effective communication from the support services and better communication would have improved their experience.

"Better response times."

"For them to actually answer the phone, we get ignored, no follow up."

*"Better communication. We had fire marshals with no * We'd have to leave. Why not move families out gradually? I was suddenly in temporary accommodation on Xmas Eve - it was awful, no gas, freezing."*

"Reaching Council staff easier. Shorter response times. The attention, feels rude."

2. Better support and understanding of individual circumstances:
Participants mentioned a need for more empathy, personalisation and understanding of their specific circumstances.

"Just to have someone listen. Honestly."

"Manners, sympathy, empathy are free (Council staff)."

"If people treated us with more respect."

3. Improved housing and accommodation services
People emphasised the importance of appropriate housing, quicker repair services, regular maintenance and support for specific housing situations.

"Well if I could have a ground floor flat this would have made a huge difference."

"The maintenance side could be better."

"Getting helped by Council with Council home. Council should calculate your earnings after tax & NI."

"Council need to go round & check properties more often. Council help people that sit around, don't help people that want to help themselves."

4. Fairness and equitability

This theme involved concerns about the council's decision-making process and questioned whether it treated all residents fairly. This included questions around how income is calculated for eligibility, the prioritisation of local residents for housing as well as perceptions that the council is more likely to help those who don't work compared to those who do[6].

"Council must raise earning threshold or consider individual circumstances. Help working people, we need help."

"Council help people that sit around, don't help people that want to help themselves,

"I've worked & contributed locally all my life but now I need help Council won't help - their reason is I'm over earnings threshold, 3 kids, single, can't afford private."

"Think Council should give housing to local people not people from other Countries, locals need priority. Can't afford private rental in Atherstone."

5. Individual circumstances and specific needs

Respondents expressed the desire for individual circumstances to be taken into account more, such as the need for ground-floor flats due to health issues or individual earnings after tax[6]. Also mentioned were more specific and specialised support like therapy, addiction support, mental health care, translation services and the need for staff with more experience.

''I need a ground floor flat because of my health condition. It's not a luxury; it's a necessity.''

''The council should consider individual circumstances, not just income thresholds. My kids are struggling despite being just over the earnings limit.''

''I need help with form-filling for benefits. It's a complex process, and mistakes can be costly.''

6. Clearer/ more transparent information and familiarity with the system

There was a perceived need for the services to be more straightforward, with a clearer system in place for accessing support.

"Clearer timeline: A-B, how to do access the right department."

"More clarity of what emergency services are available."

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[6] These comments appear to relate to District and Borough housing allocation policies, though no further clarification was sought on the point at the time of conducting the interviews.

"Being savvy, once you are aware of how the system works you/one gets resentful, because you want to fast track and cut through the red tape."

7. Better mental health support

Respondents expressed a need for improved mental health services and understanding from service providers**.**

"Better access to service records. Army PTSD, i.e. mental health and stigma."

"As I've said my mental health took a battering needed therapy NHS not up to it - I had to go private."

"I wish I'd known more about mental health at the time."

"Quicker mental health support or income opportunities while experiencing poor mental health."

Is there any kind of support or help would be of use to you right now?

1. Housing needs and concerns

Many respondents expressed the need for affordable and appropriate housing, whether it was a ground-floor flat, a bungalow, or a council property. They were also concerned about the lack of support for local residents. Some were unhappy with the current housing situation, mentioning arrears, repairs and the need for more council houses.

"Yes, a ground floor flat. Katie is my carer & a wet room. But a ground floor flat is a must."

"Council needs to build more houses, and not just flats. Families need space too."

"The state of my flat is terrible. I've requested repairs multiple times, but nothing's been done."

2. Support for specific circumstances and individual needs

Several respondents mentioned needing support that related to their personal circumstances, such as support for disabilities (physical, deaf, mental health etc), support for working people who are just over the earnings threshold and for pregnant women who are homeless.

"Suddenly gone blind. Need help from council to stay living in Evesham."

"Yes, I'm pregnant 6 month/24 weeks and I'm sleeping rough."

"Help working people like me (earning just over Council threshold) to get Council property. Have kids & struggling to pay private rental."

3. Financial support and advice

Some participants expressed a need for financial advice, budgeting support and help with the cost-of-living crisis. They also suggested changes to how income is calculated for council support eligibility recommending that it should be based on earnings after tax and National Insurance.

"Budgeting support, money management."

"Council should consider your earnings after tax & N.I. not before in terms of earnings threshold."

"More help with cost of living crisis."

"It's just too hard to make ends meet. We need financial help and advice on budgeting our income."

"I've been living paycheck to paycheck for years now. I don't know how to save or invest, and I need guidance."

4. Assistance with forms and benefits

Some suggested that better support for form filling, benefits, and complaints about the police would be beneficial.

"Help with form filling for benefits."

"Form filling for benefits. People for responding to call outs quicker."

"Signposting to complaints about police."

5. Job support and life skills

Several respondents mentioned the need for job support and life skills education, especially for young people. They expressed the need for advice on savings, investments and bill management.

"Help finding job (harder than it used to be)."

"Not much info as YP in how to get mortgage or rent when you get older. Life skills around money for YP - saving, investment, money, bills, etc."

6. Medical and care needs

Some individuals referred to specific medical and care needs, such as better medical support after a stroke, physical support for knee problems and help for people with ongoing health conditions.

"Better medical support (I had a stroke) for ongoing health conditions."

"Just physical support for my knees."

7. Community infrastructure and amenities

There were a few comments highlighting a desire for better community infrastructure, such as improved footpaths, more public toilets and more benches. Some also expressed their concerns regarding the environmental impact of new developments and the loss of green spaces.

"Better footpaths. Disabilities. More public Toilets."

"Few more benches. Should be more support for working people."

"Get rid of HS2 It's a blight. Greenery is gone. Train Council staff well, Training in disabilities."

8. Substance abuse and mental health support

A few participants indicated a need for support with substance abuse and mental health issues. One person mentioned needing a distraction to help with alcoholism, while another requested support with anxiety.

"A distraction to help with alcoholism. An allotment or something similar."

''Psychotherapy because I suffer from anxiety due to a back injury since 1979."

Consultation workshop

We invited professionals working in housing support to share their views on service provision and 30 key stakeholders and partners attended, including District and Borough Housing, health services, the voluntary sector and current HRS providers attending. A full list of participating organisations can be found in Appendix J.

The workshop invited participants to reflect on what currently works well about the HRS and barriers to a more efficient and effective service. Participants were asked to consider the proposed changes in terms of the design features or characteristics of a well-designed service, the impact on equalities and how success might be measured.

The main themes and points of discussion to emerge from the workshop are summarised below.

What Works Well
- Online availability of information makes accessing information easy.
- Strong knowledge of clients helps in tailoring support.
- Diverse range of services, although it can be overwhelming.
- Effective professional relationships and collaboration between teams.
- Acknowledgement that different approaches work for different individuals.
- Willingness to engage and support people with complex needs.
- Positive impact of partnership working involving various agencies.

What Gets in the Way
- Insufficient resources and funding; more resources are needed.
- Waiting lists for services.
- Confusion regarding service roles and boundaries.
- Local connection and priority needs can be unclear.
- Challenges related to the two-tier service model.
- Lack of support for individuals with personality disorders.
- Individuals with neurodivergence   falling through gaps.

Element 1 - Retain both Accommodation-based and Floating Support services for young people and adults by allocating the available budget in the same proportions as currently.

Professionals participating in the stakeholder workshop felt both accommodation-based and floating support services were needed for young people and adults. Despite both services being

essential, professionals felt it was worth considering allocating a greater proportion of the budget to floating support services and less to accommodation-based services as most people they worked with had housing.

For this element, design features, impact on equalities and measures for success were not discussed in detail.

Element 2 - Stop commissioning the separate Floating Support service for people with disabilities and meet those needs within redesigned inclusive Floating Support services, one for young people aged 16-25 and one for people aged 25+ years.

Similarly, participants at the stakeholder workshop agreed that creating inclusive support services instead of commissioning a separate service for people with disabilities could create more simplicity and streamline processes but stressed that inclusive services would need the resources and knowledge to cater to the needs of disabled service users. Their thoughts on necessary design features, impact on equalities and evaluation are set out below.

Design features, factors & characteristics
The discussion focused on the need to balance training for all staff with specialised expertise, employing robust risk assessments to ensure comprehensive support, building strong relationships through the involvement of a steering group of professionals who understand disability, and finding ways to integrate support from social services. It was emphasised that the service should find a way to merge inclusivity with the necessity for specialised knowledge and resources.

Impact on equalities
Concerns were raised about the potential exclusion of certain individuals and the potential impact on waiting lists for services. The transition to an inclusive model needs to ensure that accessibility remains a priority and that the changes do not inadvertently disadvantage any particular group.

Measuring success
The success of the proposal would be measured by tracking the number of people who access the newly inclusive services, assessing any changes in demand compared to previous periods, conducting surveys to gather feedback from service users, and consistently reviewing the outcomes and progress achieved by the service.

Element 3 - Adding a flexible range of shorter interventions that respond to individual needs as efficiently as possible and give earlier, focused support for customers who do not need longer-term support.

Professionals found that in addition to long-term offers, shorter interventions may be appropriate for people with clear-cut support needs but would not be able to replace long-term support. As detailed below, interventions tailored to clients' needs, no matter the length, were seen as paramount.

Design features, factors & characteristics
Discussions centred on the importance of offering flexible and personalised support interventions. It was stressed that even in shorter interventions, there should be mechanisms for ongoing

support, ideally with the same support worker to establish trust and maintain continuity. The focus was on designing interventions that are tailored to the individual's needs and preferences.

Impact on equalities
Concerns were raised about the possibility of certain individuals "falling through the net" due to the shorter duration of support. It was recognised that some complex cases might require more extensive assistance and that the structure should be adaptable to accommodate diverse needs.

Measuring success
To gauge the effectiveness of shorter interventions, the group discussed the implementation of long-term impact surveys that would be conducted around six months after individuals move on from the support. This would allow for an evaluation of sustained positive outcomes beyond the immediate intervention period.

Element 4: Reducing the maximum duration of services
Participants in the stakeholder workshop saw significant drawbacks in reducing the maximum duration of services, pointing out the difficulty of delivering a personalised service within a tight deadline. In particular, young people and disabled service users may need support for longer, and shortening support duration might create a "revolving door" instead of empowering service users to be fully independent.

Design features, factors & characteristics
The conversation revolved around the idea of reducing the maximum duration of services. The group emphasised that such a reduction could potentially reduce dependency on services while acknowledging the challenge that numerous and varied issues cannot always be resolved within predefined timeframes. To make this work, there was consensus that service quality should be elevated through comprehensive staff training, easy access to ongoing support, and regular feedback mechanisms from service users.

Impact on equalities
It was recognised that a reduction in service duration might have a negative impact on certain individuals with specific needs, such as those with multiple complex needs or caring responsibilities. The proposal would need to carefully consider these factors.

Measuring success
The group outlined key metrics for measuring success, including the number of individuals who successfully complete designated support programs, the extent of service user satisfaction, and evaluating whether the quality of the initial triage process affects the overall success of interventions.

Element 6 - additional services removed from future service specification
As detailed below, professionals discussed the inclusion of additional services in the context of existing alternatives

Design features, factors & characteristics
There was deliberation on the potential impact of reallocating resources to these services and the importance of leveraging partnerships, outreach efforts, and community engagement to maximise benefits.

Impact on equalities

Participants voiced concerns about potential exclusion or neglect of specific groups if certain additional services were not included in the new service specification. There was an emphasis on ensuring that accessibility and inclusivity remain a priority.

Measuring success

To evaluate the significance of additional services, the group proposed monitoring the number of successful referrals made, assessing the effects of including or excluding such services, and gathering feedback and outcomes from service users to make informed decisions.

Stakeholder focus groups

Warwickshire County Council held 2 focus groups with staff from the council's Social Care and Support team.

22 support workers from the Learning Disability Team and the Physical Disability & Sensory Service Team shared their views on the proposed changes to housing related support services. They strongly favoured that the service would keep its current name rather than changing it to "Supporting independence services".

Element 1 - Retain both Accommodation-based and Floating Support services for young people and adults by allocating the available budget in the same proportions as currently.

Workers felt both accommodation-based and floating support services were needed for young people and adults but considered allocating more budget to floating support services and less to accommodation-based services appropriate as most people they worked with had housing.

Element 2 - Stop commissioning the separate Floating Support service for people with disabilities and meet those needs within redesigned inclusive Floating Support services, one for young people aged 16-25 and one for people aged 25+ years.

Participants agreed that creating inclusive support services instead of commissioning a separate service for people with disabilities could create more simplicity and streamline processes but stressed that inclusive services would need the resources and knowledge to cater to the needs of disabled service users.

Element 3 - Adding a flexible range of shorter interventions that respond to individual needs as efficiently as possible and give earlier, focused support for customers who do not need longer-term support.

In principle, support workers agreed that adding brief interventions and signposting could be beneficial for those clients whose needs could be met this way. However, staff from both teams stressed that support would still need to be tailored to individual customers and that particularly vulnerable individuals would require longer term support with the option of face-to-face contact. According to staff from the Physical Disability & Sensory Service Team, the introduction of any short-term services would need to be accompanied by measuring customer satisfaction to ensure

customers felt they received the support they needed and be communicated clearly to referring agencies.

Element 4 – Reducing the maximum duration of services

The participants saw significant drawbacks in reducing the maximum duration of services, pointing out the difficulty of delivering a personalised service within a tight deadline. It was felt that there was a risk associated with reducing the support available to some clients, who might need longer-term support and that removing support would potentially set them back into crisis. In addition to long-term offers, shorter interventions were felt to be appropriate for people with clear-cut support needs but would not be able to replace long-term support.

Element 5 – A new name for the services

In focus groups with the Learning Disability Team and the Physical Disability & Sensory Service Team, support workers strongly favoured the HRS service retaining its current name rather than changing it to "Supporting Independence Services".

Element 6 - additional services removed from future service specification

Participants agreed that these additional street outreach services were valuable and needed but should not be included in the HRS services, as they did not see these within the remit of Warwickshire County Council social care and support budget. To make sure that these services would be accessible in the future, participants suggested working in partnership with existing hubs (Wellbeing Services and Community bases).

Service user Focus Groups

5 focus groups were held with service users receiving support from Warwickshire Vision Support, the House Project, St. Basil's and Doorway to consider their experiences, reflections on the service and thoughts about future development.

Focus Groups with sight-impaired adult service users

WCC heard from 44 adult service users receiving support from Warwickshire Vision Support. Participants highlighted the need for consistent trauma-informed and non-judgmental support by workers that had a comprehensive understanding of the needs of disabled service users – "the people working should have an understanding of the needs of blind people", a participant stated. This included building a trusting relationship and ensuring the accessibility of all resources and documents. Participants further identified a simplified triage process and good communication between services as characteristics of high-quality support. About the support they received, participants specifically appreciated the range of support offered with particular reference being made to support in learning how to cook and sorting out benefits. However, several participants noted that they did not receive sufficient support for filling out forms.

Focus Groups with young service users (under 25)

19 young people (aged 16-25) participated in the focus groups with some having been supported in this way for over a year. The majority of young people in the focus groups spoke positively about their housing outcomes, highlighting the value of receiving both emotional and practical support that felt flexible and appropriate to their life stage. A number of the focus group participants described complex personal situations; these included being care-experienced, being

a young parent, having mental health concerns or neuro-divergence. Considering their circumstances, they reflected on the importance of a support worker who got to know them, often over an extended period, enabling them to build the trust necessary to share details of their story some were not ready to share at the triage stage. Some commented on the frustration caused when key workers changed or failed to provide timely updates – "we are being kept out of the loop at the minute which is frustrating", a participant said. Often this uncertainty was felt to exacerbate complex situations.

Element 1 - Retain both Accommodation-based and Floating Support services for young people and adults by allocating the available budget in the same proportions as currently

Service users participating in focus groups felt both accommodation-based and floating support services were needed for young people and adults and appreciated having access to both depending on their needs. They appreciated the separation between services for young people and people aged 25+ as it provided clarity. A young person remarked that accessing a service for young people meant she did not feel judged - "It felt like I didn't have to know everything, I didn't feel stupid asking questions".

Element 2 - Stop commissioning the separate Floating Support service for people with disabilities and meet those needs within redesigned inclusive Floating Support services, one for young people aged 16-25 and one for people aged 25+ years

While focus group participants mostly agreed that turning separate services into an inclusive service supporting disabled residents could be beneficial, they emphasised the need for specialist training for staff to ensure disabled service users would have a positive experience tailored to their needs. As one participant mentioned, it "is good to have training and listen to the people you are supporting".

Element 3 - Adding a flexible range of shorter interventions that respond to individual needs as efficiently as possible and give earlier, focused support for customers who do not need longer-term support

Clients who participated in focus groups felt that while shorter, flexible interventions might suit some, personalised long-term support would generally produce the best outcomes, as it facilitated a trusting relationship with support workers. Overall, services should be tailored to individuals – "everyone should be given options for support and then choose what is suitable for them", a participant explained.

Element 4 - Reducing the maximum duration of services

In both groups, participants highlighted that clients needed sufficient time to build a trusting relationship with their support worker. Young people in the focus groups felt that support with a duration of 2 years minimum would be most useful and appropriate for young people. Most participants had no idea how long their support was due to continue – "Initially I didn't know anything about a timeframe, I'm assuming my support lasts until I'm 25 but I'm not sure if that's right" one of the young people said.

Elements 5 and 6

Focus group participants were not asked about their opinions on elements 5 and 6 of the consultation specifically, and did not make spontaneous remarks that could be linked to these proposals.

Conclusions

Having engaged a diverse range of professionals, partners and those with experience of housing need and homelessness, the findings show – with a couple of exceptions - a fair degree of consistency across responses on Ask Warwickshire, through the outreach and the focus groups and workshops held as part of the consultation process.

It is clear from the consultation findings that people value HRS services and the support it provides. We heard both from professionals and those who have accessed support through HRS services how well-regarded and valued it is as a service and the practical assistance it provides to those in need. The support it offers tends to be viewed as highly personalised, flexible and appropriate for the needs of service users – something which is appreciated by professionals and customers alike. Whilst there was a general acceptance of the contextual factors which have contributed to a reduction in HRS funding, we found significant concern over budget cuts at a time when many people face considerable hardship in the face of the rising cost of living.

Responses to the consultation underline how challenging it is to make significant savings to HRS services at a time when need continues to significantly outstrip supply, with a considerable number of comments highlighting the need for resources to support homeless and vulnerably housed people. Professionals and individuals facing financial hardship and housing vulnerability consistently expressed the fact that the need for support is ongoing (and many people felt it was increasing), so the need to reduce funding for this important service is likely to have an adverse effect on some of the most vulnerable members of the community.

Many fear that reductions in funding are likely to cause particular hardship for those with the most challenging and complex needs – whose support needs are likely to take longer and be more resource intensive. There is concern that the proposed changes may make it harder for providers to work with these clients as their needs may not be easily compatible with the redesigned service and the additional constraints these pose on delivering long-term, complex support.

Despite this extremely challenging context, we found a significant degree of pragmatism among respondents and perhaps a greater degree of willingness to accept these harsh realities than might be expected. This is testament to the constructive relationships between services providers in the statutory and voluntary sectors that exists across the county.

Element 1 - Retain both Accommodation-based and Floating Support services for young people and adults by allocating the available budget in the same proportions as currently

A slight majority (53%) of professionals and others responding to the Ask Warwickshire survey supported this proposal. The question asked of existing and potential customers of HRS was slightly different – asking about retaining floating support and accommodation-based support services, rather than referring to budget reductions and allocations – support for the retention of these services was even stronger. 143 out of 153 individual interviewees and 122 out of 123 Street Focus Group participants either agreed or strongly agreed. It is clear that among both professionals and service users (and potential service users) retaining these separate services was welcomed.

There was a widespread perception that demand for support among homeless and vulnerably housed people was already higher than the HRS alone can possibly meet. Consequently, any reduction in funding is going to be regarded as problematic. However, if reductions to the HRS budget need to be made, then the general perception is that doing it this way is both fair and reasonable.

Element 2 - Stop commissioning the separate Floating Support service for people with disabilities and meet those needs within redesigned inclusive Floating Support services, one for young people aged 16-25 and one for people aged 25+ years

This proposal polarised opinion, particularly among those engaged through the outreach, with around one third strongly agreeing and one third strongly disagreeing. The picture was slightly different among responses to the Ask Warwickshire survey, with 60% agreeing (strongly agree or agree), but even there around one quarter disagreed with the proposed change.

The primary concern among those who disagreed with the proposal (and indeed among some of those who supported it) was about maintaining and ensuring the quality of the service provided, in particular to disabled people. Whilst many saw simplifying and streamlining services and reducing systemic inefficiency as a positive development, this was very much conditional on being able to ensure that a consistently high-quality service was maintained.

Amongst practitioners, and to some extent more widely, there was a degree of scepticism that such a move would genuinely generate efficiency savings and maintain or improve the service. So, whilst there was minimal opposition to the intended aim of this proposed change, people were not necessarily convinced that it was likely to realise these laudable ambitions.

It was interesting to note that the level of support for this proposed change was similar among disabled and non-disabled people – with around half of respondents expressing support for the proposal. A notable exception to this was found in responses to the easy read version of the survey however, who were far more likely to disagree with the proposal. Almost all of respondents to the easy read survey (92%) expressed disagreement with the proposed change, the majority of whom reported being disabled.

Wider findings from conducting covariate analysis of the outreach findings suggest that disabled people are more likely to experience housing difficulty and need for support, but that they typically found it easier to access support than other people. Whilst this may in part be due to the current provision of a dedicated service for disabled people, a bigger factor is likely to be the fact that many disabled people will be locally classified as 'priority need', meaning they are more likely to be able to receive the support they require more immediately.

The importance of quality assuring a new general inclusive service to ensure it takes the best of the current dedicated service for disabled people cannot be overstated. Staff training, retention, knowledge, capacity and skills will all be key to providing an efficient and effective service which is able to meet the needs of disabled and non-disabled people alike. This finding is consistent across respondents who disagree with the proposed change and those who support it.

The proposed change may well feel frightening or threatening to current service users of the dedicated disabled people's service – particularly given the high regard HRS services are held in

by those using them. The prospect of losing this, understandably, has the potential to be unsettling and would be the case with recommissioning, even if the service was retained in its current form. Nonetheless it highlights the importance of careful messaging in communicating information about the commissioning process.

Element 3 - Adding a flexible range of shorter interventions that respond to individual needs as efficiently as possible and give earlier, focused support for customers who do not need longer-term support

A majority of people expressed support for this proposed change. It was felt to be a positive and empowering development, if it resulted in providing appropriate support quickly and efficiently. However, given the stated intentions of the proposed change – to provide quicker, tailored, flexible solutions to support people – we should anticipate the appeal of these aims given their inherent benefits. As with all the proposed changes, but even more so for element 3, it will be how it is delivered in practical terms that will determine people's ultimate perceptions of it.

We found an element of uncertainty in people's responses, with a number of respondents appearing to be unclear whether this approach would be in addition to the current service offer or whether it would be replacing existing services. Others wanted to know more about the detail of how this would work in practice and the practical implications of the proposed change. Such findings illustrate the importance of a clear, simple and accessible offer, ensuring professionals and service users understand what support HRS services can provide and how to access it.

Some questions were raised around what such a change might mean for clients with complex and enduring needs, with some fears being expressed that these more vulnerable service users could be excluded from accessing support from HRS if their needs were deemed to fall outside of the range of shorter interventions offered. Steps would need to be taken to ensure that those with most complex and challenging needs are able to get support and that, for service providers, taking on such clients would not adversely affect their ability to successfully deliver the HRS service.

Although this proposed change was generally supported, much depends on the detail relating to precisely what the interventions would be and how they would be offered. The support expressed therefore appears to be somewhat dependent on ensuring that the designed service genuinely meets the needs of those requiring support, that it does speed up the process service users face in accessing support and that any bureaucratic delay can be overcome through this new approach.

Element 4: Reducing the maximum duration of services

The proposal to shorten the amount of time people can be supported through the HRS was quite contentious, with opinion divided among respondents.

Whilst some saw the proposal as a positive opportunity to avoid dependency and encourage independence, others expressed concern that clients' needs can't easily be 'fixed' in this way. Clearly there is widespread acknowledgement that everyone is different and the whole premise of the HRS is to provide personalised support which is tailored to individual needs. Nonetheless, for some any move to restricted the duration was met with opposition.

There was particular concern among young homeless and vulnerably housed people about imposing stricter time constraints. This was echoed by professionals supporting young people who highlighted the fact that a young person being supported may reach the maximum duration

before they are 18 and in a position to take on their own tenancy. Clearly such a situation would be counter-productive and run contrary to the principles of the HRS services.

It is clear from people's responses that current practice within HRS services is to continue support beyond the maximum duration in exceptional circumstances. This discretionary and flexible approach may not (understandably) be widely known. Nonetheless it is likely that such flexibility will be required should the maximum duration approach be implemented (notwithstanding the need to address the specific issues relating to young people). It may be possible to allay the fears of those who did not support the proposal by acknowledging the circumstances where extension will be permissible. This point highlights the importance of providing clarity of the HRS 'offer'.

Element 5: A new name for the services.
We are proposing to change the name of these services from 'Housing Related Support Services' to 'Supporting Independence Services' and would like to know if you have any views on this

The proposal to change the name of the HRS services was not strongly supported. Whilst some respondents were in favour of emphasising independence, a more substantial number were not in favour of the change. Respondents felt that 'supporting independence services' lost the explicitly housing-specific focus which HRS services has, and felt that this should be retained.

However, a wider and potentially more significant finding is the feeling that changing the name is a distraction from the wider issues and bigger challenges that are currently faced. Some expressed the opinion that even focussing on the name was a waste of money and effort and did not benefit those in housing need in any way. Given the significant budget reduction that HRS services now faces, focussing any attention, time and money on the name of the service risks alienating or irritating people who might perceive it to be a waste of precious resource which would be better directed to protecting service funding.

Whilst in reality it is likely that little actual resource is being, or will be expended, in rebranding the service with a new name, the perception may still pose a reputational risk which could be avoided.

The findings from the consultation suggest that it is not currently clear what problem with the current name is that would necessitate a change. There was no evidence of disaffection with the current name or that the new name proposed would improve outcomes for homeless and vulnerably housed people in the county.

Element 6 - additional services removed from future service specification

Opinion was fairly divided on the proposal not to include additional services in the revised service specification, although the findings suggest views were not particularly strongly-held. Around one in three respondents either didn't know, or had no clear opinion about this.

Public sector procurement practice – in particular the way that social value is secured through contracts – is a somewhat technical process which relies on a degree of specialist knowledge. It is not clear whether service users, members of the public or even those responsible for delivering services are necessarily familiar with this process. Despite the attempt to explain this within the consultation, it is unclear whether people would necessarily understand the current approach and how it might differ in a new service specification.

What we can see from contributions to the consultation is that these additional services tend to be valued by respondents and that they provide an important role in supporting the needs of homeless and vulnerably house people. As a result, one might reasonably conclude that these additional services could usefully be part of the core services available to support homeless and vulnerably housed people. However, given the need to reduce the HRS budget significantly, there would appear to be no realistic prospect of these additional services being directly commissioned. Consequently, it would seem there is little option but to remove them from the service specification and hope that any potential supplier was willing and able to offer such additional services as part of their proposal.

Impact on equalities groups

Whilst a substantial minority (40%) believed the EIA accurately reflected the impact of the proposed changes, many respondents said they either did not know or felt that the EIA did not capture the likely impact. We observed a significant variance in responses from HRS service providers and service users – service providers were twice as likely as service users to say the EIA did not identify the proposals' impact. It is clear that HRS providers hold a markedly different view on this to other groups, suggesting further engagement and discussion with them over equalities concerns may be prudent to further develop the EIA.

Respondents identified a range of vulnerable groups who might be adversely affected by the proposed changes. Some of those mentioned – young people and disabled people – were included in the EIA; but that it did not reflect what they perceived to be the true impact on them. Other groups mentioned, such as offenders and asylum seekers, whilst potentially vulnerable, do not have protected characteristic status. Nonetheless WCC's interest and ambition to mitigate the impact on vulnerable groups does extend beyond the scope of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) . As such further consideration of these groups would be beneficial.

Gypsies, Roma and Travellers were also identified as a vulnerable group which had not been explicitly referenced in the EIA. Given that in some, but not all, circumstances Gypsies and Roma come within the PSED's protected characteristics, consideration ought to be given to the impact on them of the proposed changes as it is not clear that this has been done to date. Whilst we understand that Gypsies, Roma and Travellers were considered in WCC's assessment process, the aggregation of them within 'other' classification has resulted, understandably, in people highlighting their absence. Concerns raised about the omission of the travelling community can therefore easily be addressed by communicating this point and by avoiding raising doubts by including them as a distinct group in reporting, despite potentially small numbers involved.

Wider findings from the outreach suggest that disabled people may be more likely to experience housing difficulty and to need support, but that they typically found it easier to access support than other people. Young people, and women too, also reported more positive experiences of accessing support. This may be due to the increased likelihood of these groups falling within 'priority need' local definitions, within Local Authority allocation policies, and therefore being able to access broader housing support which would otherwise be available, however the provision of dedicated services for disabled people and young people (and in some instances for women too) may also be contributing to more positive experiences.

Recommendations

Whilst we recognise that decisions about the proposed changes and the future of HRS services will rest with the Cabinet, we consider it our responsibility to offer our professional, independent assessment of the evidence in relation to each of the proposed changes. First, we set out our recommended design features, in relation to the wider service redesign which might be incorporated into the future specification.

Desirable design features for HRS services

Flexibility

One of the perceived strengths of the current HRS services was 'flexibility'. The way HRS services is currently configured enables support providers to respond to the individual and their needs and this flexibility is something which is felt to be extremely important to embed in a redesigned services going forward.

Securing simplicity whilst managing complexity

The proposed change which received the greatest support from respondents was for the introduction of early intervention with focused and targeted support. It is apparent that respondents see considerable potential in simplifying and streamlining processes. The challenge in redesigning and then delivering the new service will be in ensuring that people are genuinely able to access support more quickly. As ever, the detail will be crucial in ensuring that the stated ambitions – to simplify, speed up and streamline the service – can be realised.

Whilst simplicity is inherently desirable in designing services, it is equally important to acknowledge that the lives and the support needs of many HRS service users are highly complex, multi-faceted and potentially long-term. Consequently, there needs to be an accommodation of complexity within the service and support offer. There remain legitimate concerns about the impact of reduced face to face interaction on those who require long term support and also how this aligns with the provision of trauma-informed care for those who need it.

Consistency and quality assurance

We found discrepancies in the speed with which different groups of service users were able to access support and of the usefulness of the support received. Whilst this reflects their experience of accessing support more broadly than solely HRS services, it does suggest a degree of inconsistency in the experiences of homeless and vulnerably housed people. While this may arise from a variety of factors, not least the provision of dedicated services available for young people and disabled people, and from different District-level definitions of priority need, understanding and addressing these to ensure a consistently high-quality service would be beneficial.

However, the findings also illustrate differences in other aspects of accessing support among different groups, such as the ease of accessing support and its usefulness. Whilst acknowledging that disabled people and young people are likely to fall within local definitions of priority need and may consequently find it easier to access support with accommodation, the differences in their experiences are worth noting. The consequences of merging the current dedicated service into an inclusive service may have an adverse effect on the experience of disabled people, unless stringent measures are put in place to ensure consistency and quality assurance. The gender disparity which we found is also something that ought to be considered in future service redesign.

Clarity of offer and brand positioning

A number of findings point to the importance of a clear HRS service offer and brand positioning. It is crucial that homeless and vulnerably housed people understand clearly what HRS services offer, how it can support them and that it is a service which is relevant to them and their needs. Indeed, a lack of clarity is likely to create additional administration and it may in turn lead to less good outcomes.

Our research with young people revealed a lack of clarity which would be beneficial to address. Specifically, we heard that their initial contact with HRS services was often by chance – hearing about it from another young person, a social worker or work colleague. This initial conversation had opened the route but even when receiving support, they were unclear of the scope or duration. This lack of understanding can be disempowering and underlines the need for clarity over what is available, signposting to other resources, and the duration of the support available.

Something worth considering in relation to the clarity of the HRS services offer is the sources of support available. In many instances individuals are likely to be in need of a wider range of support than simply housing-related. This is clearly understood both within HRS services and among other support providers. There exist a range of statutory services and voluntary sector support (or should be) for carers, or people in further education etc. Naturally, housing related support is likely to be one aspect in the wider needs of the individual and it is worth considering what aspects of support may be better delivered by other organisations. Within our research we heard about a wide range of support including emotional and budgeting, being provided by HRS services. When reviewing HRS services offer it may be useful to consider what aspects are best/can only be delivered by HRS and what other aspects might require signposting to another agency or source of support.

Element 1 - Retain both Accommodation-based and Floating Support services by allocating budgets in the same proportions as currently

Recommendation – Reducing the available funding to support homeless and vulnerably housed people through HRS services is likely to have an adverse effect on those in need. However, it is widely felt to be important to maintain the current floating support and accommodation-based services. Furthermore, if funding reductions need to be made then it is generally acknowledged that maintaining the current proportion to allocate available resources is a fair and reasonable way to do this. Our assessment of the consultation findings is that there is sufficient support for this proposal for WCC to proceed with this change.

Element 2 - Stop commissioning the separate Floating Support service for disabled people

Recommendation – both those supporting the proposed change and those opposing it highlighted the importance of ensuring a consistently high-quality service that meets the needs of disabled and non-disabled people. This measure undoubtedly poses a potential risk, given the specific needs many disabled people will have, to ensure that a generic service is truly inclusive. We therefore recommend, on the basis of the consultation findings, that WCC proceed with this proposed change only if guarantees around consistency and service quality can be secured.

Element 3 - Adding a flexible range of shorter interventions

Recommendation – aiming to reduce inefficiency and provide more tailored support more quickly is something few would oppose. Consequently, many support this proposed change, although

particular concerns were expressed over working with those who require long-term support. Many questions remain about precisely how these aims will be realised and the specific interventions which will be offered. We therefore recommend, on the basis of the evidence from the consultation response, to proceed with this proposal but with clear explanations of how this will be delivered and with clear guidelines to ensure support for clients with complex and enduring needs.

Element 4: Reducing the maximum duration of services

Recommendation – the idea of HRS services providing time-limited, focused, support was felt by many to provide positive opportunities to foster independence. One of the strengths of HRS services is their flexibility, and assurances are needed to clarify that exceptions to these maximum durations will be, in exceptional circumstances, permitted. There are also specific issues relating to supporting young people, who may not be able to access support when it is still needed under the proposed changes and these should be addressed. On the basis of the responses to the consultation, we recommend that the new time limits for young people are not taken forward, but that other proposed changes proceed but with clear allowance/permission for exceptions where they are necessary to support clients with long-term support needs.

Element 5: A new name for the services

Recommendation – there is little support for the proposed change – though some were enthusiastic about the reference to independence – and few see the need to move away from the existing name. Furthermore, there is a real risk of negative perceptions arising from focusing on the name of the service at a time when budgets are being reduced. The lack of support for this proposed change and the potential risks of adverse perceptions of doing so, lead us to conclude that WCC should not proceed with the proposed name change.

Element 6 - additional services removed from future service specification

Recommendation – the additional services offered by current HRS providers were valued and there are arguments for them to be included in the revised service specification. However, this would necessitate adequate funding to deliver these additional services – which would appear not to be realistic given current budgetary constraints. Given that, our assessment of the consultation findings is that WCC proceed with this proposed change.

Conclusion

It is clear from the consultation that HRS services are highly valued by professionals and service users alike and the support they offer is practical, appropriate and flexibly delivered to meet the specific needs of homeless and vulnerably housed people. Despite this, there are clearly improvements that can be made to ensure that those in need are able to consistently access the support they require easily and quickly. As such, the aims of the proposed changes are cautiously welcomed and reflect the experience and opinions of respondents in improvements that could be made to the service.

The significant reduction in the HRS services budget is inevitably going to be a challenge to continuing to support those in need, particularly at a time when many face increased pressures and hardship. There appears to be general acknowledgement and understanding of the financial realities faced by WCC and the implications of this on funding levels for HRS services. Any changes will need to be made carefully, being sensitive to the risks such changes pose in service design and delivery to mitigate, as far as possible, adverse impacts on the most vulnerable.

List of Appendices to the report

The following appendices to this report can be found separately:

Appendix A - Research & Engagement Plan

Appendix B – Who we heard from (demographics of respondents)

Appendix C – Ask Warwickshire Consultation Survey

Appendix D –Easy-Read Survey

Appendix E – Outreach survey (individual interviews)

Appendix F – Outreach survey (Street Focus Groups)

Appendix G – Social Engine Focus Group discussion guide

Appendix H – Formal responses on behalf of organisations

Appendix I – Consultation Workshop participating organisations

Appendix J – Location of outreach

SOCIAL ENGINE

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Appendix A - Research & Engagement Plan

Overall Questions	EW	O	AW	FG	DR
How can WCC deliver a more efficient and cost-effective service through redesign and ensure people who need support get the right service at the right time?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
How can the HRS budget be reduced in a way that minimizes the impact on people with protected characteristics that use the current HRS services or might do in the future?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Primary					
Do people support retaining separate accommodation-based and floating support services for young people and adults but with reduced budgets (with reduced funds being allocated in the same proportions as now)?	✓		✓		
If the floating support service for disabled people is rolled into the main service, how can we ensure the general services are inclusive for those customers?	✓		✓		
Will introducing more flexible, shorter interventions (e.g. early information and signposting, brief telephone or 1-2-1 support and 12-week floating services) create a more efficient service for customers that don't require long-term support?	✓	✓	✓	✓	
What will the effect be of reducing the maximum amount of time services can be offered?			✓	✓	
What are customers and potential customers experiences of accessing the HRS and other relevant support? What works well and what could be improved?		✓		✓	
Secondary					
What impact will incorporating a specialist service for disabled people into the general service have on the experience of disabled people accessing the HRS?	✓	✓	✓		
Do people support the idea of changing the name of the HRS to 'Supporting Independence Services'	✓		✓		
What support do people need which is not currently being met and how could it be provided to meet their needs most efficiently?			✓	✓	

DR – Desk Research   CW – Consultation workshop   O – Outreach   AW – Ask Warwickshire   FG – Focus Group

Appendix B – Who we heard from

All demographic data below relates to respondents from our outreach, the Ask Warwickshire survey and from easy-read survey responses. For other research strands including stakeholder sessions and focus groups, individual demographic data were not collected.

There were some differences in the way demographic data were collected via different outreach methods, as fewer characteristics were included and age bands were broader in the street focus groups compared to individual interviews. The charts below detail the demographic characteristics of participants. Chart labels indicate the data source and, for the outreach, whether they reflect street focus groups or individual interviews.

Ask Warwickshire Survey

In this section, findings from the Ask Warwickshire Survey that was carried out online will be outlined. 129 responses were received in total.

What is your main reason for responding to this survey?

Category	Value
Interested citizen	44 (34%)
WCC employee	19 (15%)
Current HRS provider	14 (11%)
Voluntary/community sector org	11 (9%)
Current customer of HRS	10 (8%)
Health services (acute and community)	10 (8%)
Past customer of HRS	6 (5%)
District/borough employee	4 (3%)
Friend/family/carer of HRS customer	4 (3%)
Criminal justice services	3 (2%)
Elected member of council or Parliament	2 (2%)
Other	2 (2%)

n = 129
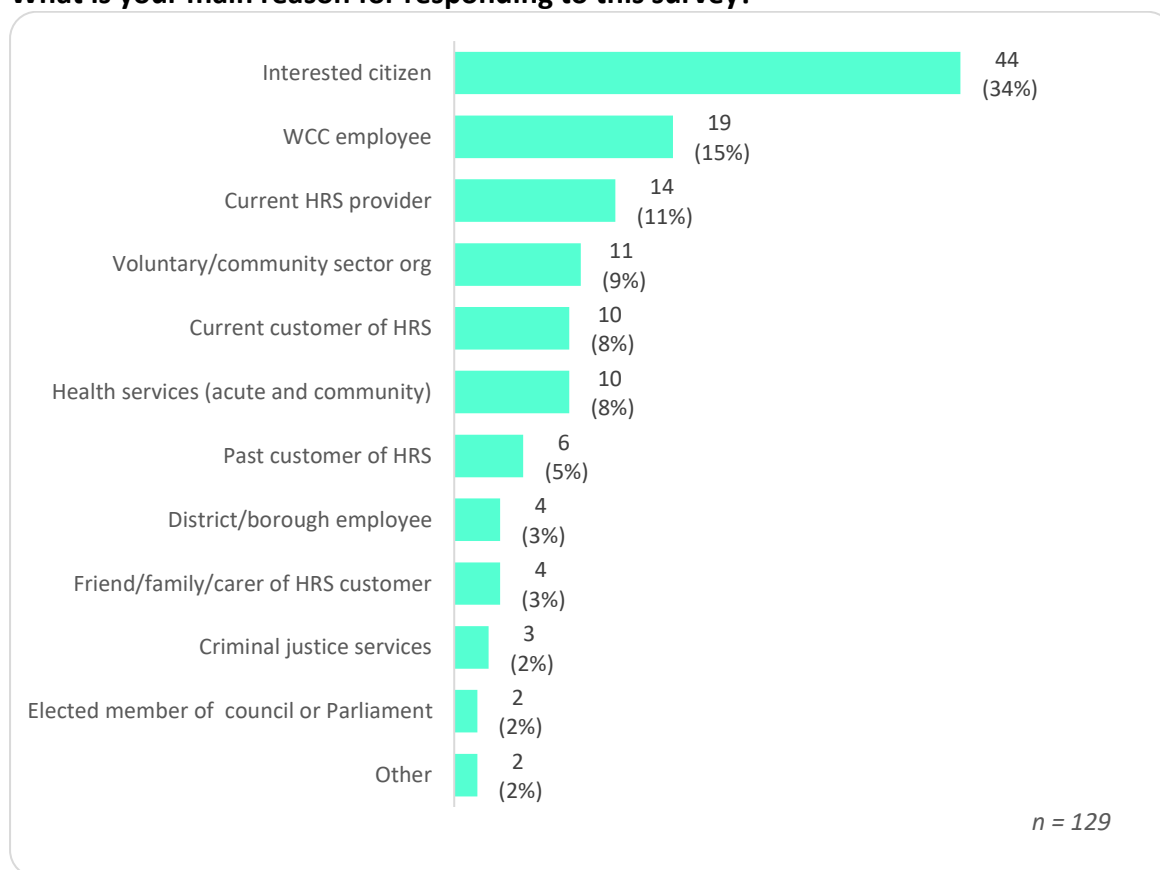
Figure 1 - Reason for responding to survey, Ask Warwickshire Survey

Respondent location (live or work)
Please select the Warwickshire district or borough where you live or undertake your role
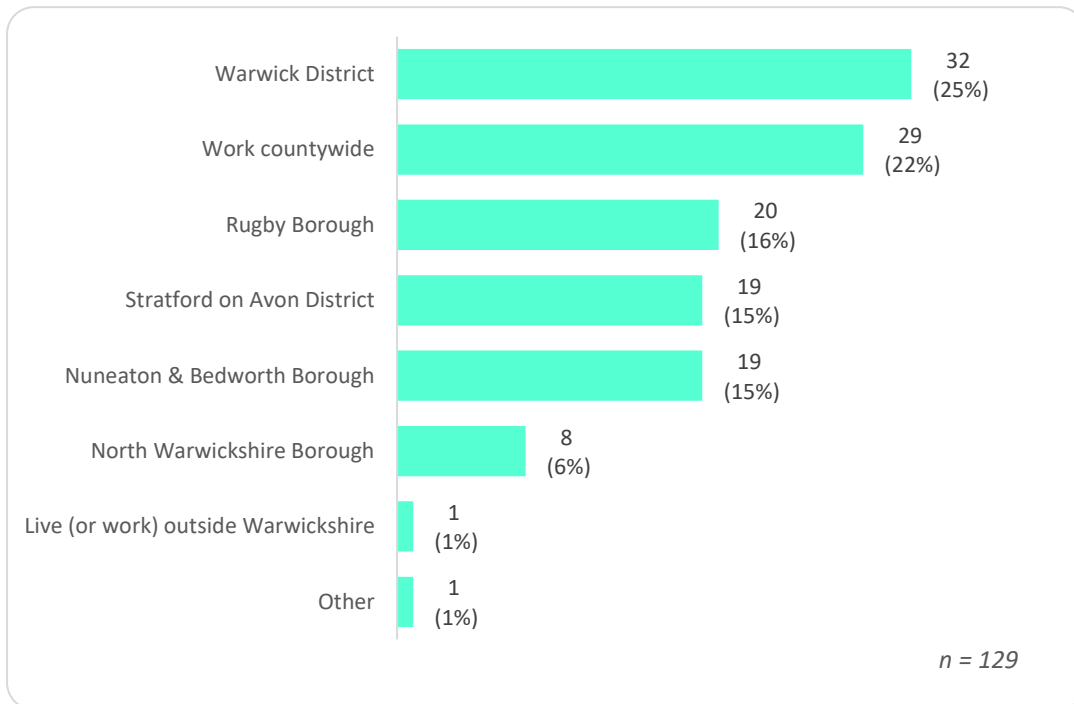
Figure 2 - Location, Ask Warwickshire Survey

Age
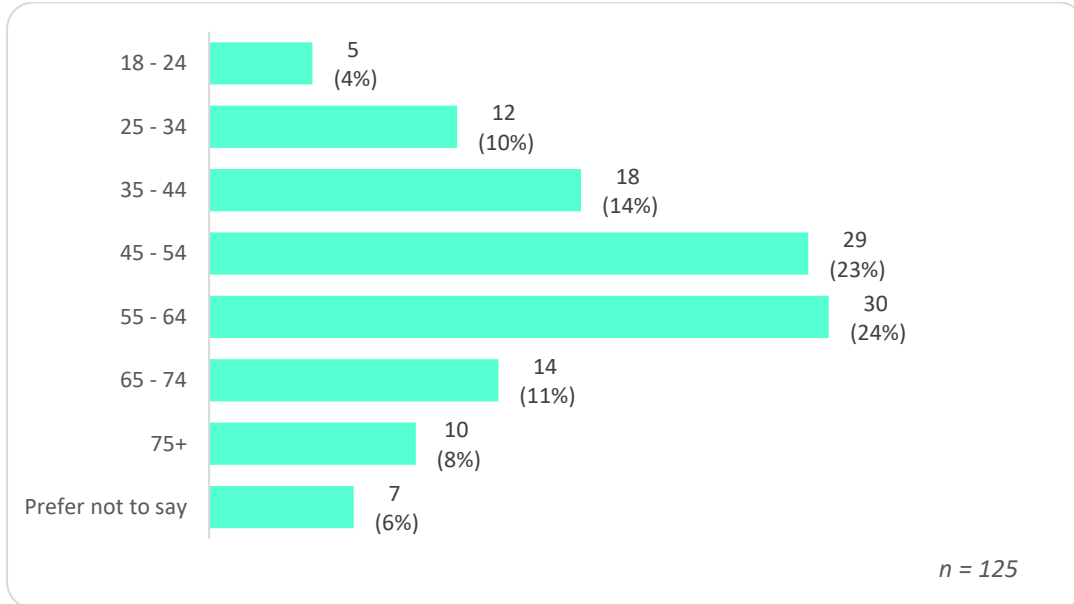
Figure 3 - Age, Ask Warwickshire Survey

Gender

- Female: 77 (63%)
- Male: 36 (29%)
- Non-binary / agender / gender-fluid: 1 (1%)
- Prefer not to say: 9 (7%)

n = 123
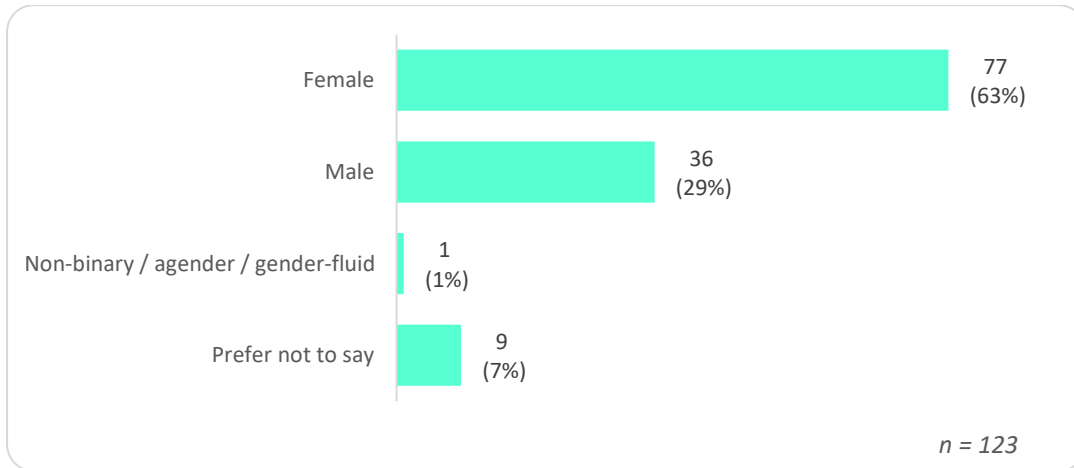
Figure 4 - Gender, Ask Warwickshire Survey

Sexuality

- Heterosexual / straight: 88 (71%)
- Gay man: 2 (2%)
- Gay woman / lesbian: 3 (2%)
- Asexual: 4 (3%)
- Bi / bisexual: 4 (3%)
- Pansexual: 3 (2%)
- Prefer not to say: 18 (15%)
- Other: 2 (2%)

n = 124
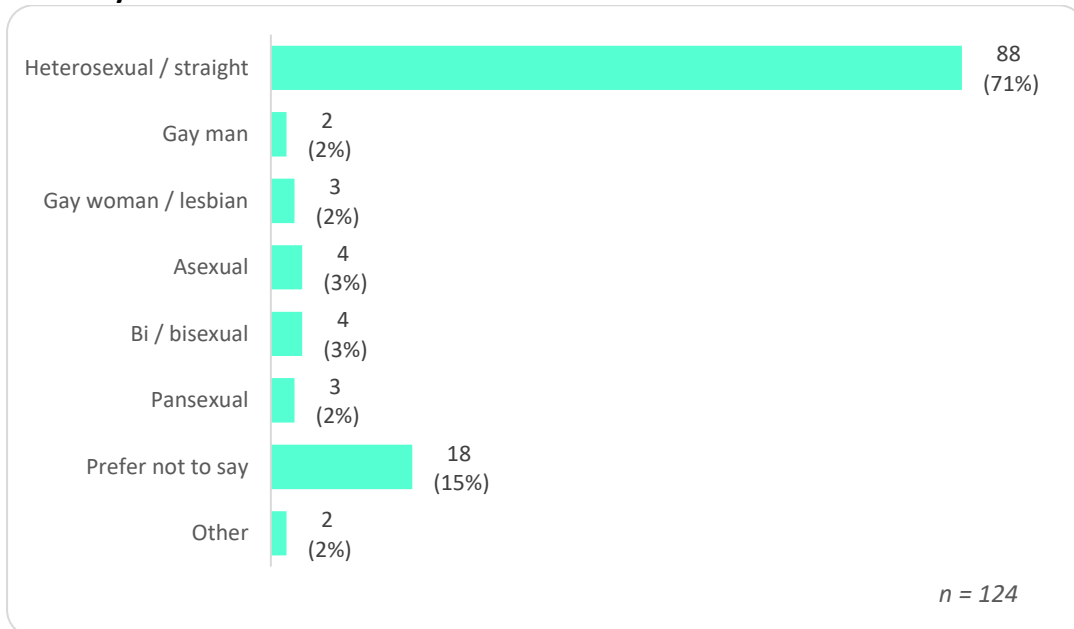
Figure 5 - Sexuality, Ask Warwickshire Survey

Disability

Yes — 41 (33%)
No — 74 (60%)
Prefer not to say — 9 (7%)

n = 124
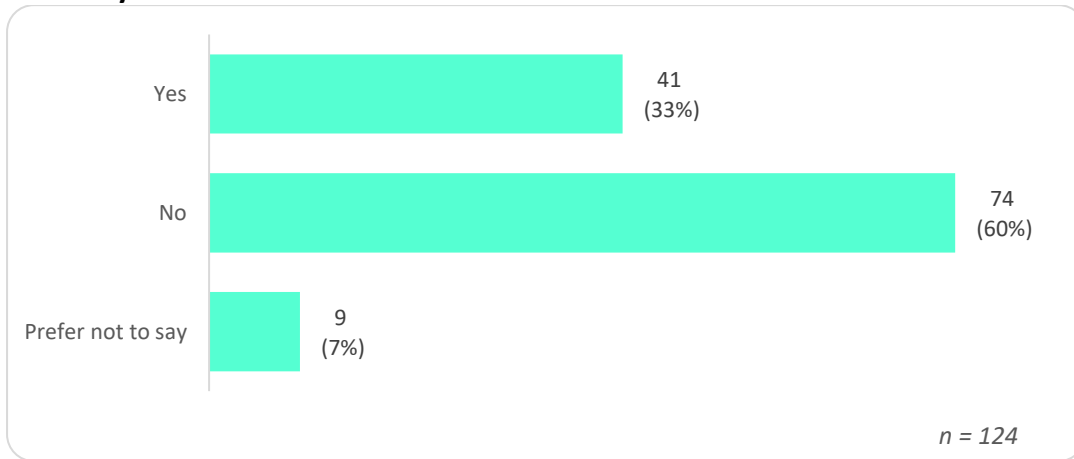
Figure 6 - Impairment, Ask Warwickshire Survey

Ethnicity

White — 102 (83%)
Black — 2 (2%)
Asian — 3 (2%)
Mixed — 2 (2%)
Gypsy, Romani or Traveller — 2 (2%)
Prefer not to say — 12 (10%)

n = 123
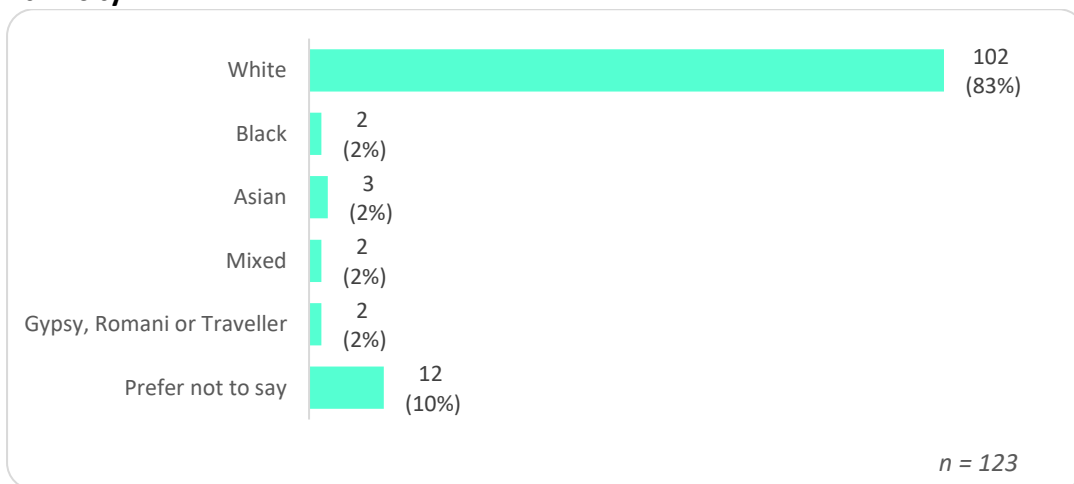
Figure 7 - Ethnicity, Ask Warwickshire Survey

Religion

No religion or belief — 54 (44%)
Christianity — 48 (39%)
Spiritualism — 3 (2%)
Judaism — 2 (2%)
Sikhism — 2 (2%)
Buddhism — 1 (1%)
Prefer not to say — 12 (10%)
Other — 2 (2%)

n = 124
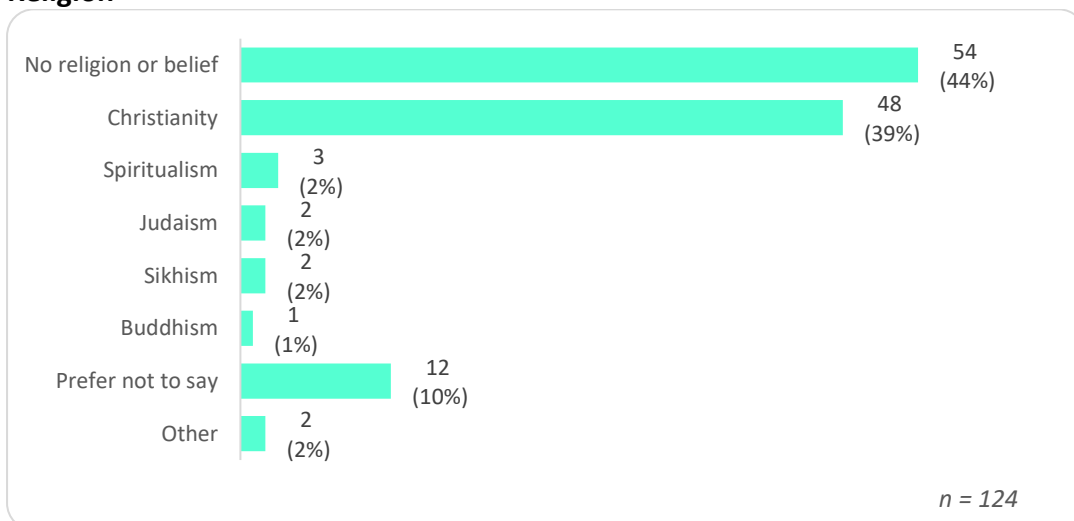
Figure 8 - Religion, Ask Warwickshire Survey

Easy-read survey

The demographics of respondents to the easy-read survey are presented below.

Age
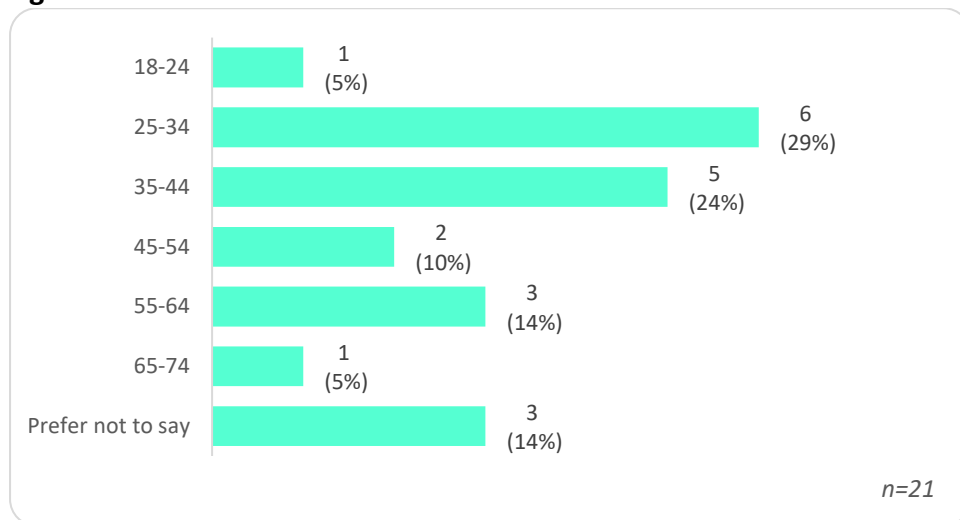
Figure 9 - Age, Easy-read surveys

Gender
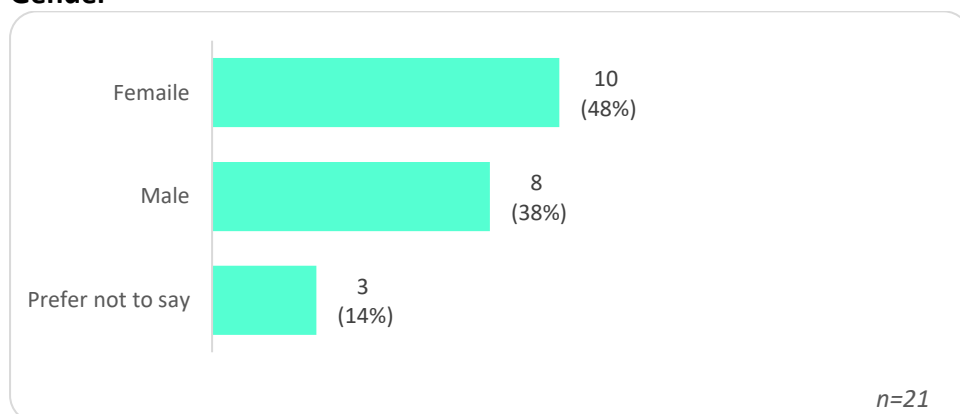
Figure 10 - Gender, Easy-read surveys

Disability
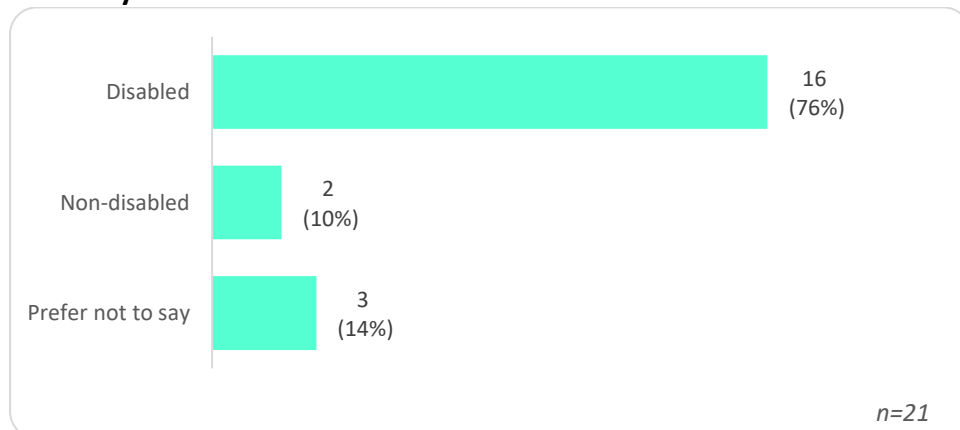
Figure 11 - Disability, Easy-read surveys

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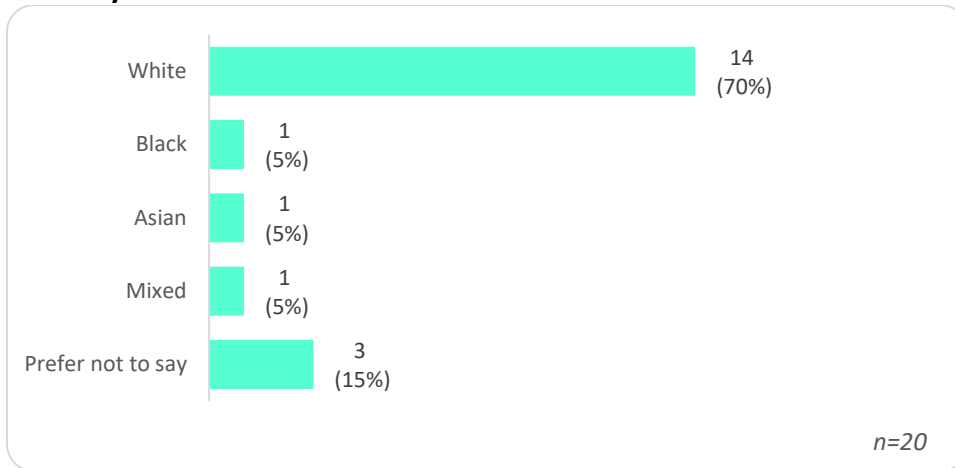
Ethnicity

Figure 12 - Ethnicity, Easy-read surveys

Sexuality
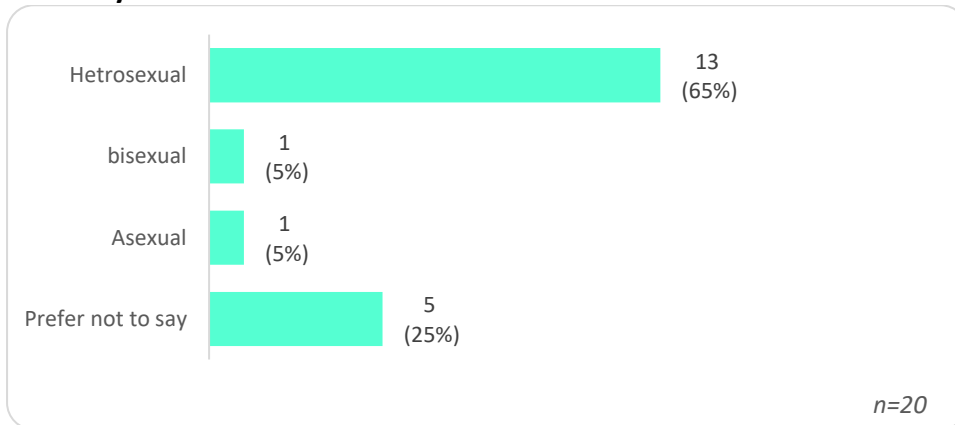
Figure 13 - Sexuality, Easy-read surveys

Religion
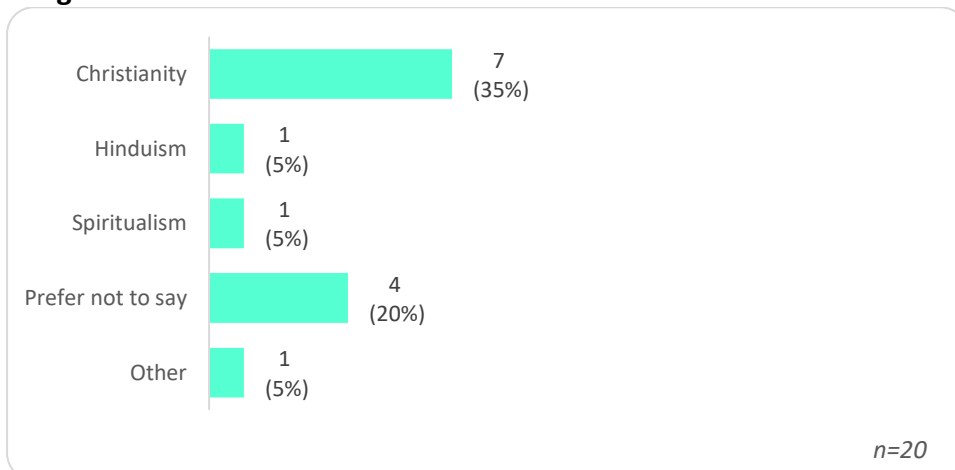
Figure 14 - Religion, Easy-read surveys

Outreach

The charts below detail the demographic characteristics of individuals we heard from during the outreach.

Age
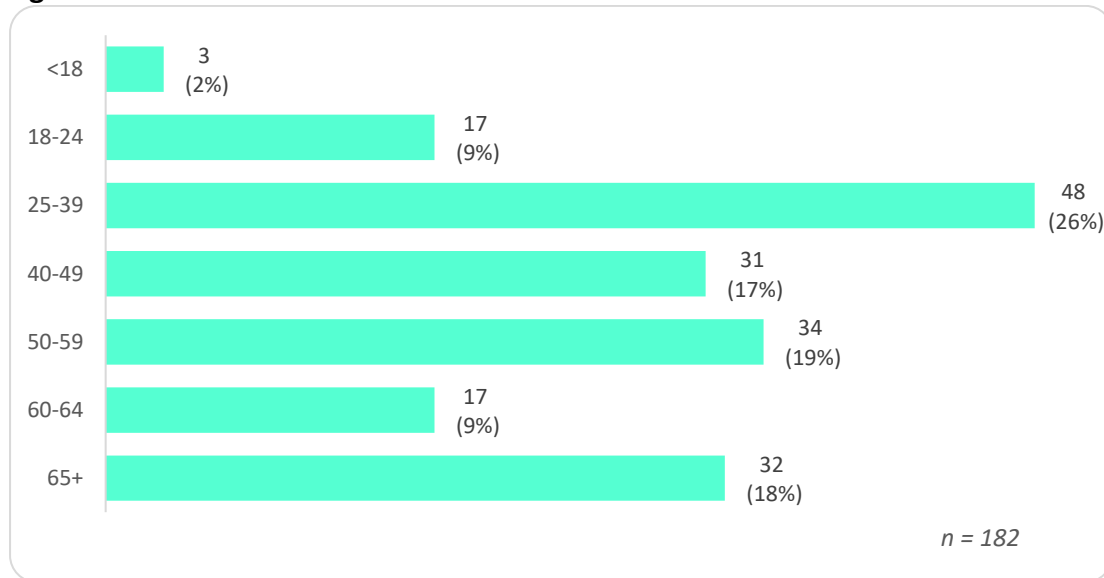
Figure 15 – Age, Outreach survey (individual interviews only)
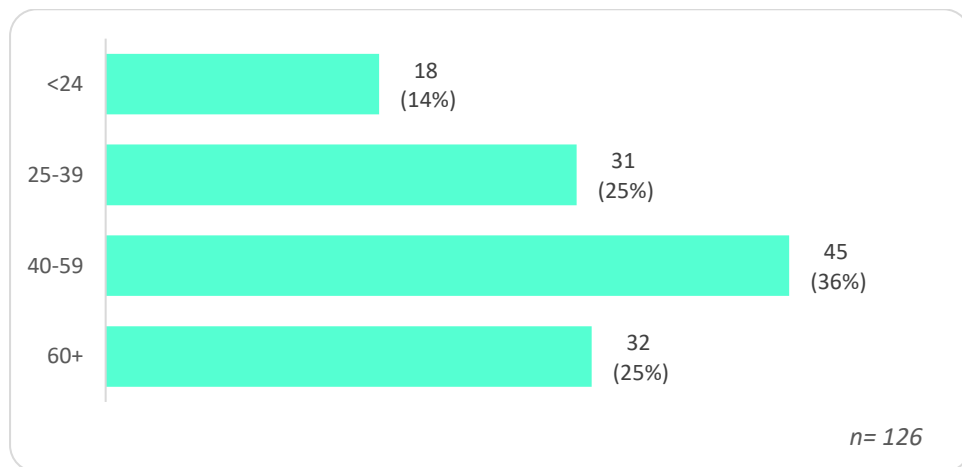
Figure 16 – Age, Outreach survey (Street Focus Groups)

Gender
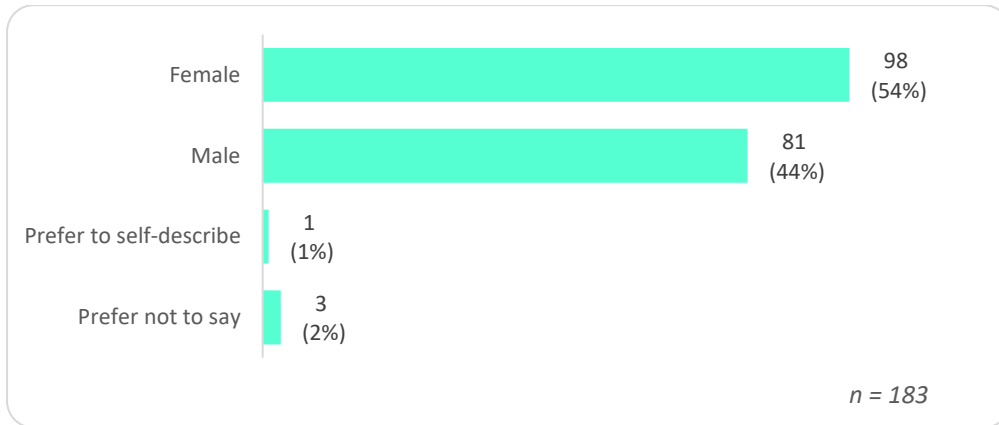
Figure 17 – Gender, Outreach survey (individual interviews only)
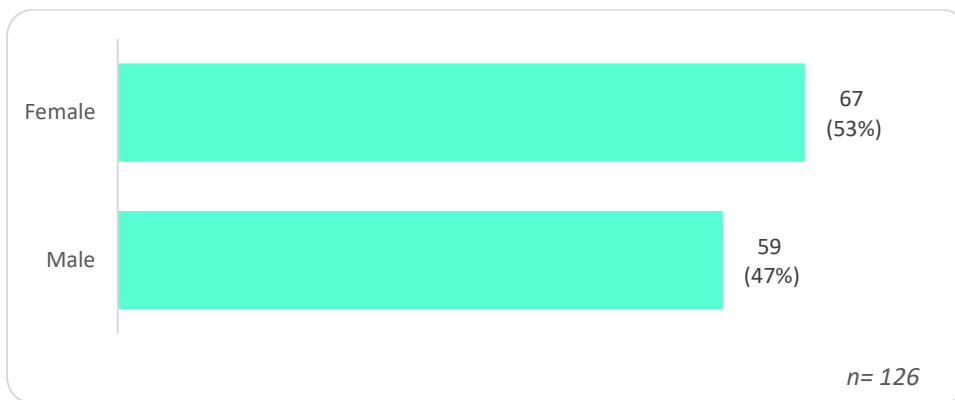
Figure 18 – Gender, Outreach survey (Street Focus Groups)

Ethnicity

Figure 19 – Ethnicity, Outreach survey (individual interviews)

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Figure 20 – Ethnicity, Outreach survey (Street Focus Groups)

Employment
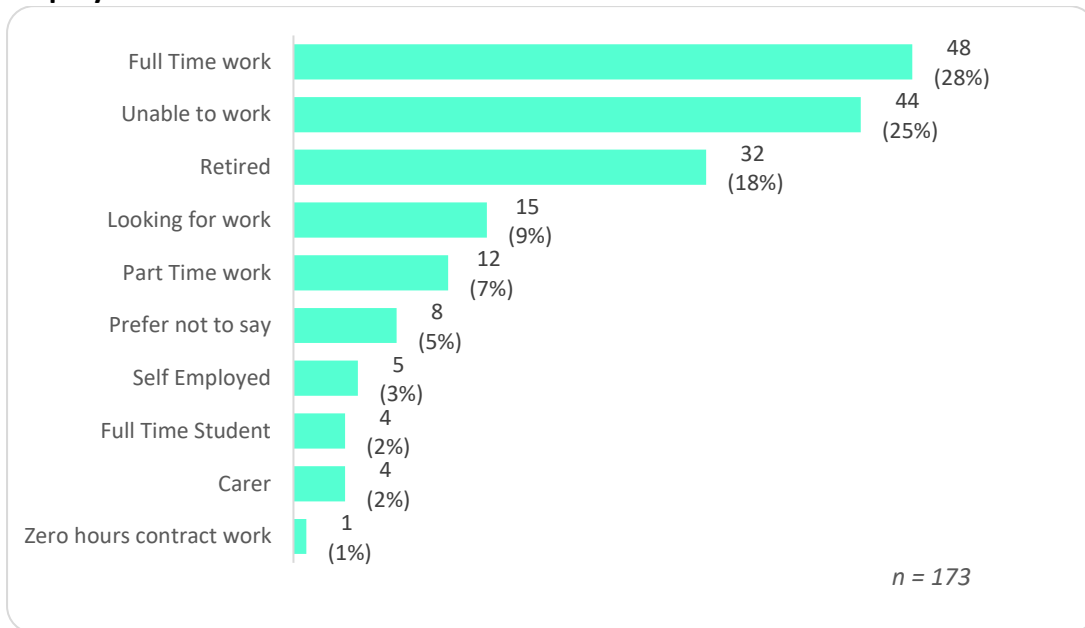
Figure 21 - Employment, Outreach survey (individual interviews)

Housing
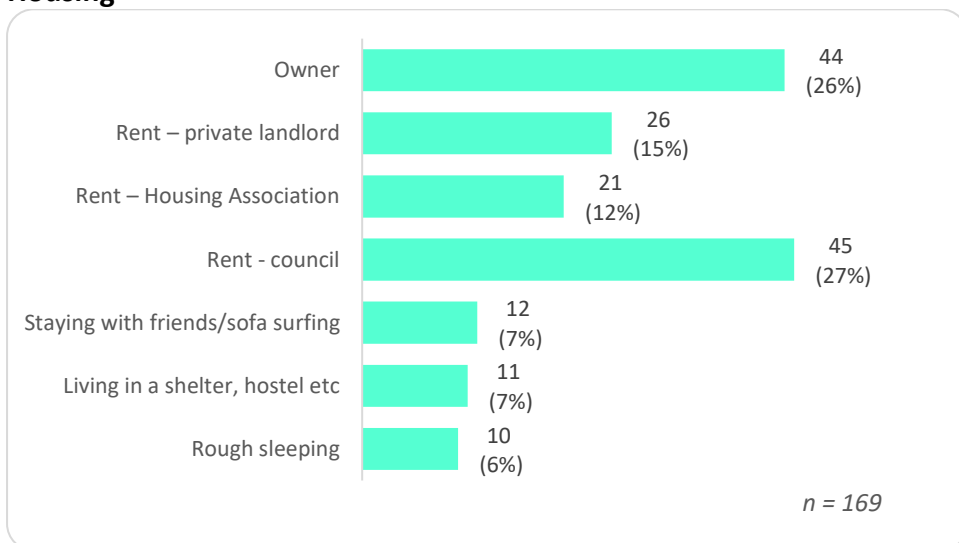
Figure 22 - Housing, Outreach survey (individual interviews)

Area

The chart below indicates the location of interviews conducted in each area through the outreach and may or may not reflect the individual's place of residence.
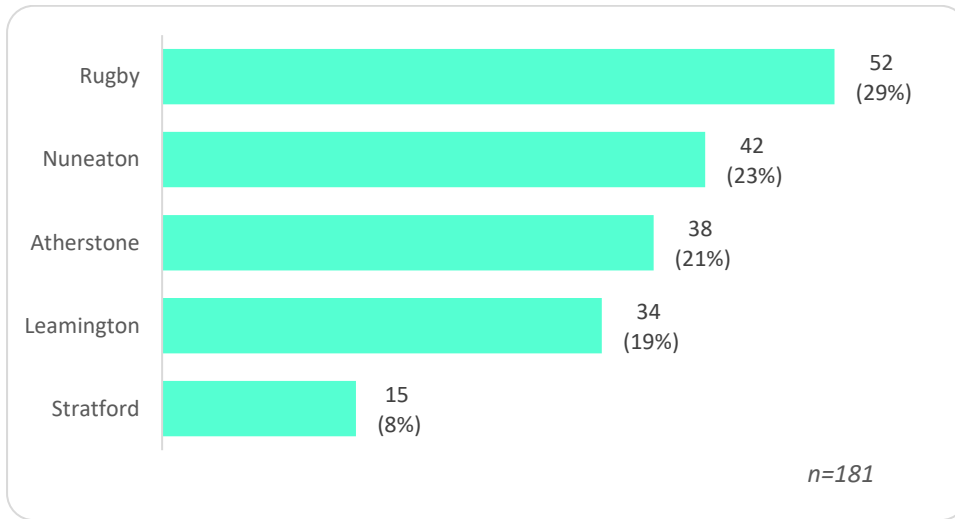
Figure 23 – Location, Outreach survey (individual interviews)
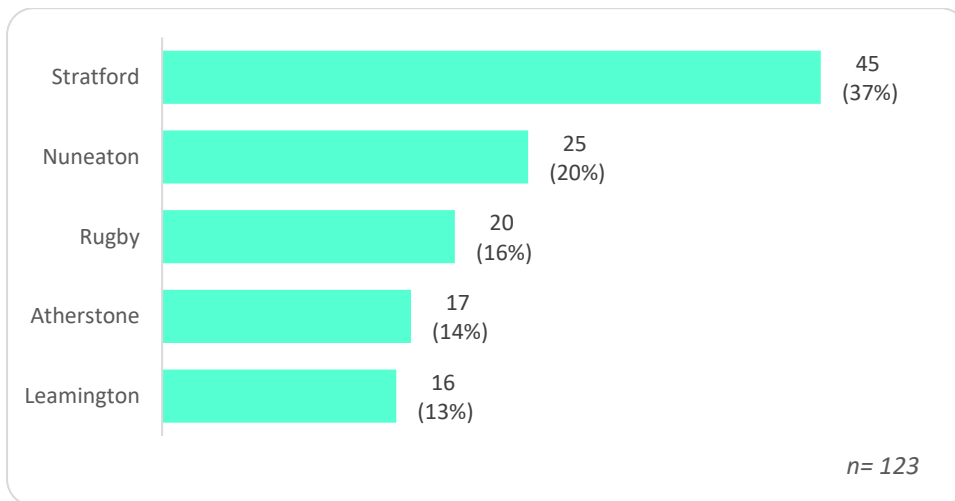
Figure 24 – Location, Outreach survey (street focus groups)

What is your connection to the area?

171 of the 183 people who answered this question (92%) said they live in Warwickshire, whilst 14% are connected to the area through work.

Percentages total more than 100% as people were able to select multiple answers.
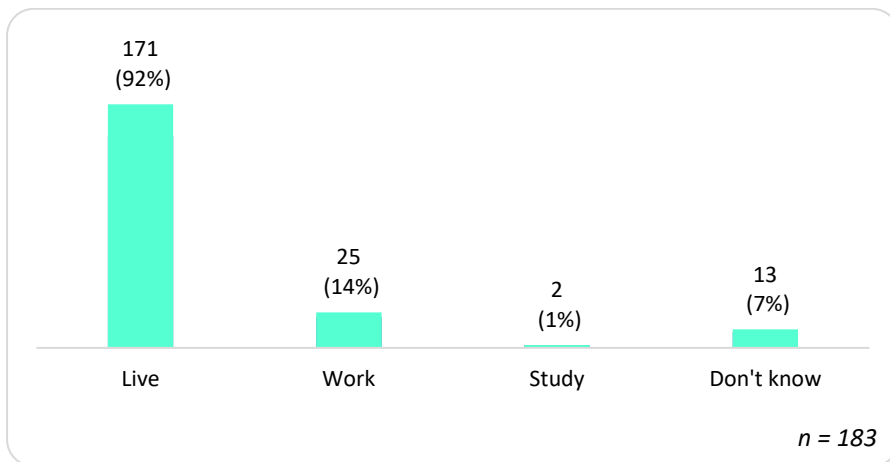
Figure 25 – Connection to area, outreach survey (individual interviews only)

How many years have you had a connection to this area?

Most people (80%) reported having a 5–10-year connection to the area, whilst 10% had a 3-5 year connection and another 10% had a connection to the area of less than 3 years.
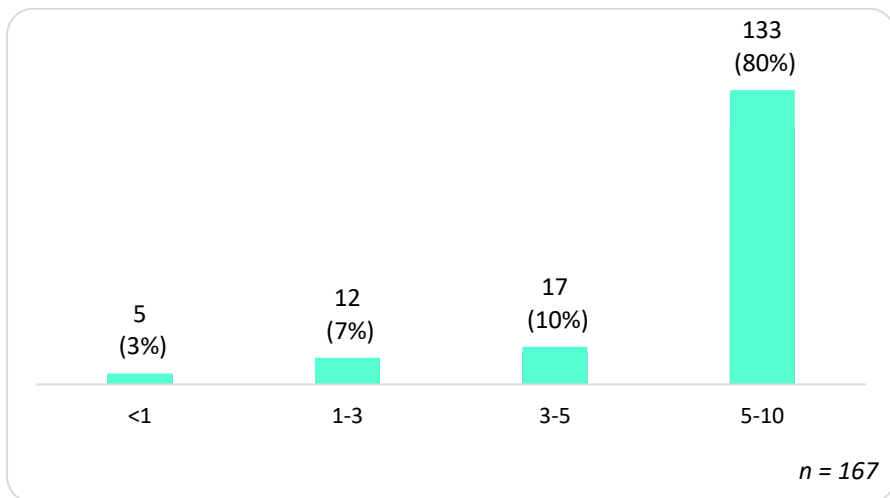
Figure 26 – Years of connection, outreach survey (individual interviews only)

Appendix C – Ask Warwickshire Consultation Survey

1. How did you find out about this consultation? Please tick all options that apply.

☐ Local media (newspaper, radio or TV) ☐ Social media (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn or Twitter) ☐ Warwickshire County Council website ☐ Warwickshire County Council newsletter ☐ Email from Warwickshire County Council ☐ Email from a local partner organisation ☐ From Warwickshire County Council staff ☐ Through working at Warwickshire County Council ☐ Word of mouth ☐ Local Councillor ☐ Local Parish / Town Council ☐ Other (please give details below):

Specify other:

[   ]

2. What is your main reason for responding to this survey? (If more than one apply, please select the one most relevant to your response today).

(Required) ○ Interested citizen ○ Current customer of Housing Related Support services ○ Past customer of Housing Related Support services ○ Friend/family/carer of current or past customer of Housing Related Support services ○ Current Housing Related Support Service provider ○ Elected member of a council or Parliament (including parish and town councils) ○ District/borough employee ○ WCC employee ○ Voluntary/community sector organisations ○ Health services (acute and community) ○ Criminal justice services ○ Other (please specify)

Please specify other

[   ]

3. Please select the Warwickshire district or borough where you live or undertake your role.

(Required) ○ North Warwickshire Borough ○ Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough ○ Rugby Borough ○ Stratford on Avon District ○ Warwick District ○ Live (or work) outside Warwickshire ○ Work countywide ○ Other (please specify below)

Specify other:

[   ]

4. Are you providing a formal response on behalf of a group or organisation?

(Required) ○ Yes ○ No I am providing my own views as an individual

Bottom of Form

Element 1 - Retain both Accommodation-based and Floating Support services for young people and adults by allocating the available budget in the same proportions as currently.

This would mean that while the money available is reduced by 1 million pounds, the proportions of the budget that we spend on each service area would be unchanged. Currently 49% of the total budget is spent on Accommodation-based Support services and 51% on Floating Support services.

Why we are proposing this change

The Council are making this proposal because it enables the Council to continue to provide the range of support services that have been offered since 2015 and does not disproportionality impact more on any one group of customers.
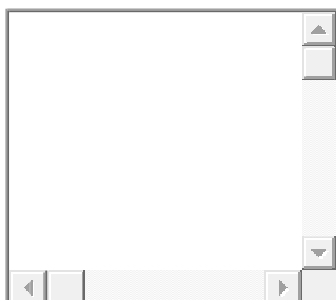
Top of Form

5. How strongly do you agree or disagree with this proposal?

○   Strongly Disagree ○   Disagree ○   Neither agree nor disagree ○   Agree ○   Strongly Agree

○   Not sure/Don't know

6. Please explain the reason for your response

Please explain the reason for your response

7. Please tell us how you think this proposal would impact on you.

Please tell us how you think this proposal would impact on you.

8. Please tell us how you think this proposal would impact on other people and/or organisations.
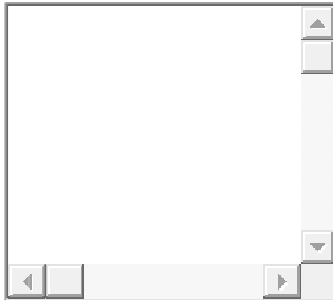
9. What could we do instead?

Service redesign proposals (Element 2) - Creating a redesigned inclusive Floating Support Service

We have developed three service re-design proposals to enable us to improve the service and deliver it within the available budget and want to understand your views on these.

This page focuses on -

Element 2 - Stop commissioning the separate Floating Support service for people with disabilities and meet those needs within redesigned inclusive Floating Support services, one for young people aged 16-25 and one for people aged 25+ years.

We currently commission three Countywide Floating Support services, one for people with disabilities aged 16 and above (Together working for Wellbeing), one for young people aged 16-25 (St Basils), and a generic service for adults aged 25 + years (P3 - People, Potential, Possibilities).

We propose to stop commissioning the separate service for people with disabilities, they will instead be able to apply for support from the two re-designed services in the same way, and the two new services will be able to meet the same range of customers' needs as the current services.

We would commission:

- A Floating Support service for people aged 16-25
- A Floating Support service for people aged 25+

The proportion of the total budget that would have been spent on the separate service for people with disabilities will be added to the money spent on the two Floating Support services. Currently, 20% of customers in the specialist disability service are 16 - 25 years and 80% are 25 years and over. We have allocated the proposed budget to the young people and adult services to reflect this. This means the overall budget proposed for inclusive Floating Support changes to 25% for young people and 75% for adults.

Why we are proposing this change

The current system can result in delays as people may be referred to the wrong service and after assessment will need to be referred on to a different provider and assessed again. This change will make it easier for people to access the right service to meet their diverse needs within an inclusive service, with teams able to meet the needs of those people with and without disabilities.

Our experiences since the start of the current arrangements in 2015 indicate that a single provider could deliver services that can be inclusive to meet the need of those with disabilities (including mental health problems) alongside support for those without disabilities. It is more costly to run two services compared to one as there are fixed costs involved in delivery and management of each contract. Reducing the number of contracts increases the proportion of our funding that is spent directly on support for people.

Top of Form

10. How strongly do you agree or disagree with this proposal?

○ Strongly Disagree ○ Disagree ○ Neither agree nor disagree ○ Agree ○ Strongly Agree
○ Not sure/Don't know

11. Please explain the reason for your response

12. Please tell us how you think this proposal would impact on you.

13. Please tell us how you think this proposal would impact on other people and/or organisations.

14. What could we do instead?

Service redesign proposals (Element 3) - Flexible range of shorter interventions

Next, we would like to know your thoughts about -

Element 3 - Adding a flexible range of shorter interventions that respond to individual needs as efficiently as possible and give earlier, focused support for customers who do not need longer-term support.

We propose to introduce a range of flexible services accessed through triage to determine level and urgency of need. It will include:

- Early information, advice, and signposting to relevant services.
- Brief interventions of 1-5 telephone and/or face-to-face support sessions.
- 12-week short-term transition/ resettlement/enablement floating services for those whose needs can be met in this time.

We propose this change for all services.

We will keep the option of both self-referral and referrals by other organisations.

Why we are proposing this change

The demand for services can be high and we need to prioritise those in most need of support services.

Currently, people referred are added to a waiting list for assessment and then allocated a named support worker if they are eligible and need support services. Not everyone needs ongoing support. Some people just need brief advice to resolve their issues and remain independent. This change will improve people's journeys in getting the right service at the right time, so customers need to tell their stories only once.

The redesigned support service will continue to offer holistic and personalised support to meet needs, promoting wellbeing, safety, resilience, independence, recovery and reablement in order to prevent, reduce and/or delay an individual's need for ongoing care and support.

15. How strongly do you agree or disagree with this proposal?

○ Strongly Disagree ○ Disagree ○ Neither agree nor disagree ○ Agree ○ Strongly Agree
○ Not sure/Don't Know

16. Please explain the reason for your response

17. Please tell us how you think this proposal would impact on you.

Please tell us how you think this proposal would impact on you.

18. Please tell us how you think this proposal would impact on other people and/or organisations.

19. What could we do instead?

Service redesign proposals (Element 4) - Reduce the maximum duration of services

This page asks about -

Element 4 - Reduce the maximum duration of services.

We are proposing to reduce the maximum duration of a service intervention for an individual.

We propose to:

- Reduce the maximum duration of Floating Support for people aged 16-25 from 24 to 12 months

- Reduce the maximum duration of Floating Support for people aged 25+ from 12 months to 9 months
- Reduce the maximum duration of Accommodation-based Support from 24 months to 18 months

In exceptional circumstances the period of support may be extended with approval from Warwickshire County Council.

Why we are proposing these changes

The demand for services can be high. To continue to support as many people as possible, we aim to increase the number of customers we can support by reducing the time a customer can receive the service. This will also ensure that our service providers deliver support that is focused on achieving outcomes as early as possible and preventing dependency on this support.

20. How strongly do you agree or disagree with this proposal?

○ Strongly Disagree ○ Disagree ○ Neither agree or disagree ○ Agree ○ Strongly Agree
○ Not sure/Don't know

21. Please explain the reason for your response

22. Please tell us how you think this proposal would impact on you.

23. Please tell us how you think this proposal would impact on other people and/or organisations.

24. What could we do instead?

Service redesign proposals (Element 5) - A new name for the services

Element 5: A new name for the services.

We are proposing to change the name of these services from 'Housing Related Support Services' to '**Supporting Independence Services**' and would like to know if you have any views on this.

25. If you have any views on this please share them here:

Service redesign proposals (Element 6) - Additional services

The final redesign proposal we want to ask about in part one is –

Element 6: Additional services.

Social Engine – HRS consultation research report   18

Additional services are those services that were not part of the specification the Council tendered.

P3 (People, Potential, Possibilities), the current provider of floating support services for people aged 25+, offered to provide Street Outreach services and 'Navigator' hubs in Nuneaton and Rugby in addition to the services required in the specification.

The Street Outreach service is countywide and offers support to rough sleepers to encourage and motivate them to engage with services including drug and alcohol treatment, healthcare, assistance with benefits, reconnection to their local area/country, and move into safe accommodation. This team also receives funding for work in Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick District Council areas, through the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities - Rough Sleeping Initiative.

The 'Navigator' hubs are shop premises in Rugby and Nuneaton town centres. People can get advice or support and be helped to access other services to improve their situation or circumstances.

We are proposing not to include the Street Outreach and 'Navigator' hubs in the services that we ask providers to deliver.

Why we are proposing this

The reason we are proposing not to include Street Outreach and the Navigation hubs in the re-designed services is because there is no available Council budget to fund this. Potential providers bidding for the new services may decide to offer similar additional services, but this is not guaranteed.

26. How strongly do you agree or disagree with this proposal?

○ Strongly Disagree ○ Disagree ○ Neither agree or disagree ○ Agree ○ Strongly Agree
○ Not sure/Don't know

27. Please explain the reason for your response

28. Please tell us how you think this proposal would impact on you.

29. Please tell us how you think this proposal would impact on other people and/or organisations.

30. What could we do instead?

PART TWO- Equality Impact Assessment Summary

An Equality Impact Assessment has been developed and is available for you to view.

This identifies that the proposals have the potential to have some negative impacts on people with protected characteristics and that careful consideration needs to be given to these.

Our assessment suggests:

For all services

With services being reduced it may increase the number of individuals at risk of homelessness, made homeless or continuing to be homeless which may then negatively impact on their health. People experiencing socio-economic disadvantage will be negatively impacted as they may not be able to access support services if they require them due to reduced provision.

Mitigation: The Council will ensure good signposting is in place to support people to access other sources of advice and support and ensure all key partners are kept up to date with ongoing service activity.

There are some differences between the percentages of people in the general population and the service users identifying as Black or Asian. These will be considered when redesigning services.

Whilst an overall reduction in service provision may impact on these specific groups of vulnerable people, the specification (the document that sets out the requirements of providers delivering the service and forms part of the contract) will clearly state that providers are to be inclusive and non-discriminatory towards customers. We will highlight that we expect services to be accessible for all.

For Floating Support

We are proposing to stop commissioning a separate disability Floating Support service.

Mitigation: We expect both the young people's 16-25 years and adults 25+ Floating Support services to offer an inclusive service and meet the needs of people with disabilities as part of their contract. All providers' staff will be expected to be adequately trained to support the diverse needs of all people requiring support services including specialisms around supporting people with disabilities to reduce the impact of this change.

The overall reduction in the service offer will have an impact on all customers as well as those with protected characteristics.

For Accommodation-based Support

There is currently a mother and baby hostel and a dedicated provision for young families. With service reduction the number of mothers and young families supported may decrease, negatively impacting the number of mothers and babies and young families accessing the service. For adult Accommodation-based Support services single males and those who have

experience of the criminal justice system tends to be a higher percentage of customers and consequently this group could be disproportionally impacted.

Mitigation: The Council will ensure that all service specifications require providers to be inclusive and non-discriminatory towards customers. We will highlight that we expect services to be accessible for all. The specification will also define training requirements to ensure providers' staff have sufficient knowledge to support the wide range of potential customers of support services. Service specifications will promote equality and diversity, with clear expectations around monitoring, training and quality of services.

Your views

We would like to know whether you think the proposals will create inequalities or other impacts we have not identified, and if so, what these might be and how you think they will affect you or other people.

We would also like you to tell us if you have any ideas on how we could overcome or reduce these impacts.

The Equality Impact Assessment will be updated after the consultation taking account of the feedback we receive.

31. Do you think this Equality Impact Assessment identifies the impacts of these proposals?

○   Yes○   No○   Not sure/Don't know

32. Do you think there is anything missing from the Equality Impact Assessment?

33. Do you have any ideas about how we can reduce the impact on people with protected characteristics that use the current Housing Related Support services or might use services in the future?

Final comments

34. Are there any other comments you wish to make?

Equalities Monitoring

How old are you? Please tick box

○   Under 18○   18 - 24○   25 - 34○   35 - 44○   45 - 54○   55 - 64○   65 - 74○   75+
○   Prefer not to say

Do you consider yourself to have a disability, long term health condition or learning difference?

Under the Equality Act 2010, a person is considered to have a disability 'if they have a physical or mental impairment, and the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'.

○ Yes ○ No ○ Prefer not to say

How do you describe your ethnic background?

○ Arab ○ Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi ○ Asian or Asian British - Indian ○ Asian or Asian British - Pakistani ○ Asian or Asian British - Chinese ○ Other Asian Background ○ Black or Black British - African ○ Black or Black British - Caribbean ○ Other Black Background ○ Mixed - Asian and White ○ Mixed - Black African and White ○ Mixed - Black Caribbean and White ○ Other Mixed Background ○ White British ○ White Irish ○ Gypsy, Romani or Traveller ○ Other White background ○ Prefer to self-describe (please state if you wish) ○ Prefer not to say

If you prefer to self-describe please do so here

How do you describe your gender?

○ Female ○ Male ○ Non-binary / agender / gender-fluid ○ Prefer to self-describe (please state) ○ Prefer not to say

If you prefer to self-describe please do so here

Do you identify as trans/transgender?

○ Yes ○ No ○ Prefer not to say

How do you describe your religion/belief?

○ Buddhism ○ Christianity ○ Hinduism ○ Islam ○ Judaism ○ Sikhism ○ Spiritualism ○ Any other religion or belief (please state if you wish) ○ No religion or belief ○ Prefer not to say

Other religion

[ ]

Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?

○ Asexual ○ Bi / bisexual ○ Gay man ○ Gay woman / lesbian ○ Heterosexual / straight
○ Pansexual ○ Other (please state if you wish) ○ Prefer not to say

If you prefer to self-describe please do so here

Appendix D – Ask Warwickshire Consultation Survey Easy-Read

Consultation on the Redesign of Housing Related Support Services

This Easy Read Format was produced by Grapevine on behalf of Warwickshire County Council.

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Introduction

This easy read explains the plans for redesigning housing related support services in Warwickshire.

It outlines:

- What support is currently offered to people

- What the Council's suggested changes are

- Why changes need to be made

- What the impact of these changes might be

These changes will make the services very different from how they are now.

The redesign will have a big impact on lots of people in the future who access support services.

The Council would like to hear everyone's views on their suggested changes, including:

- People who use these services now
- People who might use these services in the future

There are questions in this easy read for you to answer. Please take some time to fill them out.

Your opinions are important and can make a difference to the changes that will be made to housing related support services.

Types of support

There are two types of housing-related support which help people gain the skills to live independently.

These two types of support are available to anyone over the age of 16 with support needs:

16+

1. **Accommodation-based support**

2. **Floating support**

Accommodation-based support:

- People are offered a house or place to live for the short-term

- People are offered short-term support to help them to live more independently

- People can only get this support whilst they are living somewhere that is not their own home
  - E.g. Temporary housing

- People can have this type of support for up to 2 years

2 years

Floating support:

- People are offered short-term support to help them to live more independently

- People can get this support whilst they are living in either:
  - Their own home
  - Temporary housing

- People under 25 years old can have this type of support for up to 2 years

16–25 2 years

- People over 25 years old can have this type of support for 1 year

25+ 1 year

Current offer - floating support services

There are three different floating support services offered in Warwickshire.

1. Floating Support Service

Who is the floating support for?
People with disabilities who are 16 years old and above.

Which provider runs the service?
Together Working For Wellbeing

2. Floating Support Service

Who is the floating support for?
Young people who are between 16 and 25 years old.

Which provider runs the service?
St Basils

3. Generic Floating Support Service

Who is the floating support for?
Adults who are 25 years old and above.

Which provider runs the service?
People, Potential, Possibilities P3

Current offer - accommodation based support services

There are three different accommodation based services offered.

Accommodation-Based Support Service

Who is the accomodation support for?
Young people who are between 16 and 25 years old.

2 providers run accommodation-based support for young people.

1. Accommodation based

Which provider runs the service?
People, Potential, Possibilities P3

Where is this service offered?
North Warwickshire
Nuneaton and Bedworth
Rugby

2. Accommodation based

Which provider runs the service?
St Basils

Where is this service offered?
Stratford
Warwick

3. Accommodation-Based Support Service

Who is the accomodation support for?
Homeless people, including ex-offenders, who are 25 years old and over.

Which provider runs the service?
People, Potential, Possibilities P3

Where is this service offered?
In the whole of Warwickshire.

Current offer - extra services

The current provider of housing related support services for people over 25 years old are called People, Potential, Possibilities P3.

People, Potential, Possibilities P3 decided they wanted to provide some more support for people.

They chose to provide extra support, which was more than what they were asked to do by the council.

What extra support do they currently offer?

Street outreach services

This service offers support to rough sleepers.

It also encourages rough sleepers to get help from other services.

Navigator hubs (in Nuneaton and Rugby)

The hubs are shops in Rugby and Nuneaton town centre.

People can get advice, support and information about other services at these hubs.

Examples of how housing related support services help people

Housing support services help people to:

- Have a home and develop skills

- Stay safe at home and in the community

- Manage their money and pay for their bills

- Look after their health and wellbeing

- Find paid or voluntary work opportunities

- Take part in training and education

Why are changes being made to housing related support services?

In Warwickshire, the County Council have a lower budget for housing related support services from April 2025.

This means Warwickshire County Council has less money to spend on these services.

Warwickshire County Council have decided to re-design the services.

This means there are going to be changes to the way housing related services work in Warwickshire.

They want to redesign the services to:
- Work with the lower budget
- Make services more efficient
- Make services more effective

However, they have said they want to continue to focus on and help the people in the greatest need.

Who has helped to plan the suggested changes?

To help the Council plan which changes to make to housing related support services, they:

- Listened to what is important to people who need housing related support services

- Asked people, services and organisations to complete a survey

Which organisations were involved?

The different organisations and services who were involved included:

- Different charities
- Housing teams within local councils
- Warwickshire Probation Service
- Warwickshire County Council Adult Social Care
- Children and Families Service

Organisations and services then attended workshops to plan what changes could be made.

What did the Warwickshire County Council do next?

What did the Council find out from the workshops?

People and organisations wanted all housing related support services to be continued.

Currently people might not always receive support for the right amount of time.

Stopping any of the housing related support services might mean more people:
- become homeless
- need more social care support

What happened after the workshops?

The workshops helped the Council to plan 6 suggested changes to housing related support services.

6 changes

Now the Council want to know what you think of these changes.

What changes are the council suggesting?

The next 15 pages tell you more about the 6 changes:

Change 1: Accommodation-based support and floating support services will continue but both service areas will be given less money from the Council.

Change 2: The separate floating support service for people with disabilities will end.

Change 3: Flexible and short term support options will be added to all services so that people can be offered different levels of support that last for different amounts of time.

Change 4: The maximum time someone can be involved with a service will be shorter.

Change 5: The new name for this group of services will be 'Supporting Independence Services'.

Change 6: The Council will not ask providers to deliver the extra support services (the street outreach and community hub services).

Change 1

> Change 1: Accommodation-based support and floating support services will continue but both service areas will be given less money from the Council.

What happened before the change?

Money from the Council was split between the two services areas:
- Accommodation-based support
- Floating support

What will happen after the change?

Accommodation-based support and floating support will still be funded by the Council.

There will be less money given to fund these housing-related services.

The money will be split between the two service areas in the same proportion as before.

But the services may not be able to support as many people and some people may have to wait longer for support.

Why are the Council suggesting this change?

People will be able to access the same types of services as they do now.

This change will not unfairly impact one group of people more than another group of people.

Your thoughts about Change 1

Questions

> Change 1: Accommodation-based support and floating support services will continue but both service areas will be given less money from the Council.

How do you feel about this change? (Please circle one)

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

Explain why you agree or disagree in the box below.

How do you think this change might affect you?
Please write in the box below.

Your thoughts about Change 1

Questions

Change 1: Accommodation-based support and floating support services will continue but both service areas will be given less money from the Council.

How do you think this change would affect other people?
Please write in the box below.

What could the Council do differently?
Please write in the box below.

Change 2

Change 2: The separate floating support service for people with disabilities will end.

What happened before the change?

There was a separate floating service to support people with disabilities to live more independently.

People have sometimes had to wait longer for support if:
- They are referred to the wrong service
- They need to be referred to a different service and assessed again

What will happen after the change?

There will be 2 floating support services:
- A service for young people aged 16 to 25 years old
- A service for adults who are 25 years and older

16- 25 25 +

People with and without disabilities will access the same floating support services.

They will add the money that would have been spent on the separate service for people with disabilities to the 2 floating support services.

The Council has said these services will be changed so that they can meet the needs of people with and without disabilities.

Change 2

Change 2: The separate floating support service for people with disabilities will end.

Why are the Council suggesting this change?

It is more expensive to run separate services compared to one service that includes everyone.

The Council believe that one provider could deliver services that are inclusive and meet the needs of:

- People with disabilities
- People with mental health problems
- People without disabilities

People won't be referred to the wrong service as there will only be one service for each age group.

The Council can spend more money on the 2 floating support services if they take away the separate support for people with disabilities.

This means people with disabilities may get different support to the support they get now.

Your thoughts about Change 2

Questions

Change 2: The separate floating support service for people with disabilities will end.

How do you feel about this change? (Please circle one)

| Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Agree | Strongly agree |

Explain why you agree or disagree in the box below.

How do you think this change might affect you?
Please write in the box below.

Your thoughts about Change 2

Questions ?

Change 2: The separate floating support service for people with disabilities will end.

How do you think this change would affect other people?
Please write in the box below.

What could the Council do differently?
Please write in the box below.

Change 3

Change 3: Flexible and short term support options will be added to all services so that people can be offered different levels of support that last for different amounts of time.

What happened before the change?

The current services add people to a waiting list for assessment.

If their assessment suggests they need support services, they are given a support worker.

What will happen after the change?

All housing-related services will be changed so that they assess people to find out:
- What type of support they need
- How quickly they need support

Once this assessment has been done, services will be able to decide:
- Who could be helped quickly by short term support or signposting
- Who has a higher level of need and will need support for longer

Some people will get offered support that lasts for a short amount of time.

All housing-related support services will be changed to include these short term support options:
- Information, advice and signposting to other services
- Between 1 and 5 brief support sessions on the phone or face to face
- Short term support that lasts for 12 weeks

Change 3

Change 3: Flexible and short term support options will be added to all services so that people can be offered different levels of support that last for different amounts of time.

Why are the Council suggesting this change?

There can be a lot of people who need housing support services.

This can mean it is hard for housing related services to support everyone.

The services will be working with less money because there is less funding for housing related services, so it will be even harder to support everyone.

This change means that the services will prioritise people in the most need for support.

Some people might need shorter support and brief advice to help them. Other people might need longer support.

The Council have said this change will:
- Help people to access the right type of support at the right time for them
- Stop people from having to repeat their story

Your thoughts about Change 3

Questions

Change 3: Flexible and short term support options will be added to all services so that people can be offered different levels of support that last for different amounts of time.

How do you feel about this change? (Please circle one)

| Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Agree | Strongly agree |

Explain why you agree or disagree in the box below.

How do you think this change might affect you?
Please write in the box below.

Your thoughts about Change 3

Questions

Change 3: Flexible and short term support options will be added to all services so that people can be offered different levels of support that last for different amounts of time.

How do you think this change would affect other people?
Please write in the box below.

What could the Council do differently?
Please write in the box below.

Change 4

Change 4: The maximum time someone can be involved with a service will be shorter.

Floating support for young people
(aged 16 - 25 years old)

Before the change:
- Services could work with a young person for up to 24 months

After the change:
- Services will work with a young person for up to 12 months

16-25

24 months

12 months

Floating support for adults over 25

Before the change:
- Services could work with adults for up to 12 months

After the change:
- Services will work with adults for up to 9 months

25+

12 months

9 months

Accommodation-based support

Before the change:
- Services could work with people for up to 24 months

After the change:
- Services will work with people for up to 18 months

24 months

18 months

It might be possible for people in certain situations to get longer support than what is written above.

Change 4

Change 4: The maximum time someone can be involved with a service will be shorter.

Why are the Council suggesting this change?

There are lots of people who are interested in getting support from housing related support services.

This means it is hard for the service providers to help everyone.

If services work with people for less time, they will be able to support more people.

But, people won't be able to work with a service for as long as they did before.

The Council hope that this change will mean that service providers focus on:

- Helping people to achieve goals quickly

- Helping people to work towards being independent, instead of them relying on a service

Your thoughts about Change 4

Questions

Change 4: The maximum time someone can be involved with a service will be shorter.

How do you feel about this change? (Please circle one)

Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neither agree nor disagree   Agree   Strongly agree

Explain why you agree or disagree in the box below.

How do you think this change might affect you?
Please write in the box below.

Your thoughts about Change 4

Questions

Change 4: The maximum time someone can be involved with a service will be shorter.

How do you think this change would affect other people?
Please write in the box below.

What could the Council do differently?
Please write in the box below.

Change 5

Change 5: The new name for this group of services will be 'Supporting Independence Services'.

Before the change

At the moment, the group of services that help people with housing and independence are called the 'Housing-Related Support Services'.

What will happen after the change?

In April 2025, there will be new contracts for the delivery of the housing-related services.

Different providers can apply to deliver the services through a tender process.

When all of the housing-related services have gone through this tender process, they will be known as the 'Supporting Independence Services'.

Why are the Council suggesting this change?

The Council would like this group of services to have a new name to show that the services will be focusing more on helping people to be independent and preventing homelessness.

They hope that encouraging independence will mean less people need other care and support (for example social care).

Your thoughts about Change 5

Questions

Change 5: The new name for this group of services will be 'Supporting Independence Services'.

Name

Please write your views about change 5 in the space below.

Change 6

Change 6: The Council will not ask providers to deliver the extra support services (the street outreach and community hub services).

What happened before the change?

The current providers chose to offer this extra support, which was more than what they were asked to do by the Council.

These extra support services were the street outreach and community hub services.

What will happen after the change?

Providers who want to deliver housing related support services in the future will not be asked to deliver these extra support services.

They may decide to offer these extra services, but the Council will not be expecting them to.

Why are the Council suggesting this change?

The Council do not have enough money in the housing budget to pay for any extra services.

This means they will pay providers to deliver floating services and accommodation based services, but not any extra services.

Your thoughts about Change 6

Questions

Change 6: The Council will not ask providers to deliver the extra support services (the street outreach and community hub services).

How do you feel about this change? (Please circle one)

Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neither agree nor disagree   Agree   Strongly agree

Explain why you agree or disagree in the box below.

How do you think this change might affect you?
Please write in the box below.

Your thoughts about Change 6

Questions

Change 6: The Council will not ask providers to deliver the extra support services (the street outreach and community hub services).

How do you think this change would affect other people?
Please write in the box below.

What could the Council do differently?
Please write in the box below.

Equality Impact Assessment

An Equality Impact Assessment has been developed for the redesign of housing related support services.

Equality Impact Assessments are a tool used to investigate how policies or schemes might unfairly affect a particular group of people.

Equality Impact Assessments check whether there is discrimination in the way something is designed, developed and delivered.

The Equality Impact Assessment for this redesign found that the changes which are being suggested could have negative impacts on people with protected characteristics.

Having protected characteristics means that people have a right not to be treated unfairly or discriminated against because of a characteristic.

Protected characteristics include:

- Age
- Disability
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity

Impacts

What are the impacts of the suggested changes?

The proposed changes mean that all services will be reduced.

This means service providers will:
- Have less money to work with
- Not be able to support as many people
- Still be delivering floating and accommodation based support services, but in a different way

This also means there will be:
- Shorter support times for people
- No separate services for people with disabilities
- No extra services provided

The Equality Impact Assessment suggests there will be a negative impact on people with and without protected characteristics because of all services being reduced.

Impacts

What are the suggested changes?

All of the current services will be reduced and extra services may not being provided.

What are the impacts?

The Equality Impact Assessment suggests these changes will mean that:
- The number of people who are homeless and at risk of being homeless will increase
- People who are already homeless will have a higher risk of staying homeless
  - Being homeless may negatively impact on people's health
- People who are socio-economically disadvantaged may not be able to access support services

Being socio-economically disadvantaged can mean that someone has a worse housing, social and financial situation than other people in the same society.

An example of socioeconomic disadvantage is someone living in poverty.

What is the Council's response?

The council said they will:
- Make sure there is good signposting to other support
- Keep all partners up to date with information about different services, so they can signpost people well

Impacts

The Equality Impact Assessment suggests there are differences between:

- The percentages of people in the general population who identify as Black or Asian

and

- The service users who identify as Black or Asian

This could mean that not enough Black and Asian people are accessing these services.

It is important to understand why more Black and Asian people aren't accessing these services currently.

It is also important to make sure that services are redesigned in a way that encourages more Black and Asian people to access them.

What is the Council's response?

The council said they will consider this difference when they are redesigning the services.

Floating support impacts

The proposed changes mean that separate disability floating support will be stopped.

This will have an impact on disabled people.

These services will no longer offer specialist support for disabled people.

The Council have said they expect young people's and adult services to:

- Offer an inclusive service
- Meet the needs of people with disabilities

The Council have also said they expect all providers' staff to be well trained in:

- Supporting anyone who needs support
- The diverse needs of all people
- Supporting people with disabilities

The Equality Impact Assessment suggests there will be a negative impact on people with and without protected characteristics because of services being reduced.

Protected characteristics include:

- Age
- Disability
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity

Accommodation-based support impacts

The impact on mothers, babies and young families:

The proposed changes mean that a hostel for mothers and babies will not be able to offer as much support as it does now.

This means that less mothers and babies and less young families will access the service.

The Equality Impact Assessment suggests this will have a negative impact on many mothers and young families as less of them will be able to get support.

Other impacts:

The proposed changes mean that certain groups of people who use accommodation based services more will be negatively impacted.

The groups who access adult accommodation based services the most are:
- Single males
- People who have experience of the criminal justice system

The Equality Impact Assessment suggests that these groups of people may be negatively impacted more than other groups.

The Council's response to the impacts

The Council have said they will add to the specification document for providers to try to make these negative impacts for people smaller.

The specification document tells providers what they need to do when delivering the service.

The Council have said they will add these things to the specification document:

- Providers need to be inclusive

- Providers can't discriminate against customers

- The Council expects services to be accessible for everyone

The Council have said they will also outline these things in the specification document:

- What the training requirements are for providers' staff

- Clear expectations about training

- Clear expectations about how service equality is monitored

About the Consultation

The next page of questions relates to the Equality Impact Assessment.

The Consultation Questionnaire asks for your views on the impacts that the Council's changes might have on people.

The Council have said they will update the Equality Impact Assessment based on the answers to this questionnaire.

They would really like your feedback. Please take the time to answer the questions in this easy read.

You can find all the question pages by looking for this symbol in the top right hand corner of the page:

Once you have answered the questions, please:

1. Put your responses in the stamped, addressed envelope that you received with this easy read.

2. Put the envelope in a post box to send it to the Council.

Consultation Questionnaire

Questions

This Consultation Questionnaire asks for your views on the impact that the Council's 6 changes could have on people.

Do you think the Equality Impact Assessment accurately identifies the impacts of the 6 changes? (Please circle one)

Yes

No

Not sure /
I don't know

Do you think there is anything missing from the Equality Impact Assessment?
Please write in the box below.

Consultation Questionnaire

Questions

This Consultation Questionnaire asks for your views on the impact that the Council's 6 changes could have on people.

How can we make the impact smaller for people with protected characteristics that use these services?
Please write in the box below.

How can we make the impact smaller for organisations that support people with protected characteristics?
Please write in the box below.

Having protected characteristics means that people have a right not to be treated unfairly or discriminated against because of a characteristic.

Protected characteristics include:

- Age
- Disability
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex

- Sexual orientation
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity

Consultation Questionnaire

Questions

This Consultation Questionnaire asks for your views on the impact that the Council's 6 changes could have on people.

Please write any other comments you want to make about the Council's consultation in the box below.

Consultation Questionnaire

Questions

Extra space to write more if needed

Consultation Questionnaire

Questions

Extra space to write more if needed

The Council's next steps

The Council will collect all the responses from the impact questionnaire and the questionnaires from each of the suggested 6 changes.

They will use the responses to help design future support services in Warwickshire.

The Council will share their report, your responses and the new changes with the members of their cabinet.

In December 2023, the Council's cabinet will either approve or not approve the changes.

If the Council's cabinet approve the changes:

- The 6 changes will be made to housing related support services
- The council will create a 'You said - We did' report
- The housing related services will be known as the Supporting Independence Services
- The new Supporting Independence Services will go out for tender in 2025

Going out for tender means that providers can apply to deliver these services.

More about you

We want to treat everyone the same and make sure no group or community is left out. To do this we ask people a bit more about themselves.

We keep this information very private and don't use anyone's names anywhere.

You do not have to answer these questions, but it helps us make sure we are hearing from different groups of people.

Please answer these questions if you are happy to.

If you are not happy to answer, please tick 'I'd rather not say'.

We will follow the Law to keep any information about you safe and private.

How old are you?

☐	Under 18 years old
☐	18 – 24 years old
☐	25 – 34 years old
☐	35 – 44 years old
☐	45 – 54 years old
☐	55 – 64 years old
☐	65 – 74 years old
☐	75 +
☐	I'd rather not say

Do you have a disability?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ I'd rather not say

Are you?

- ☐ A girl / woman
- ☐ A boy / man
- ☐ Other
- ☐ I'd rather not say

What is your sexuality? This means who you fancy.

- ☐ Gay or Lesbian (Gay means a man who likes other men. Lesbian means a woman who likes other women.)
- ☐ Heterosexual or straight (A woman who likes men or a man who likes women.)
- ☐ Bisexual (You like both men and women.)
- ☐ Asexual (This means you don't fancy men or women.)
- ☐ Other.
- ☐ I'd rather not say.

How do you describe your ethnic background?

- ☐ Arab
- ☐ Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi
- ☐ Asian or Asian British - Indian
- ☐ Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
- ☐ Chinese
- ☐ Other Asian Background
- ☐ Black or Black British - African
- ☐ Black or Black British - Caribbean
- ☐ Other Black Background
- ☐ Mixed - Asian and White
- ☐ Mixed - Black African and White
- ☐ Mixed - Black Caribbean and White
- ☐ Other Mixed Background
- ☐ White British
- ☐ White Irish
- ☐ Gypsy or Traveller
- ☐ Other White background
- ☐ I describe myself another way (please state if you wish)
- ☐ I'd rather not say

How do you describe your religion / belief?

☐ Christianity

☐ Hinduism

☐ Islam

☐ Judaism

☐ Sikhism

☐ Spiritualism

☐ Any other religion or belief
(say if you wish)

☐ I do not have a religion or belief

☐ I'd rather not say

Privacy Notice

This Easy Read privacy notice will explain what information we will ask about you and how we will look after it.

In this survey we ask questions about your age, gender and the area you live. We do not ask for your exact address.

This information cannot identify you. You do not have to share this information if you do not want to.

Please do not write any personal information, such as your name in any of your answers.

Please tell us if there are any of your answers that you want us to keep private.

Why we have asked for your personal information?

About you

Questions about you help us understand what groups of people are responding to the survey and if there are any groups missing that we need to hear from.

Where you live

We ask this question so that we can see if we have heard from people who live in different parts of Warwickshire.

How we use the information

This information will only be used as numbers in the consultation report.

If you write any comments, we may use them in our consultation report.

If we use them, no one will know they were written by you.

How we use the information

This information will only be used as numbers in the consultation report.

If you write any comments, we may use them in our consultation report.

If we use them, no one will know they were written by you.

Storing information

All information is kept safe. Warwickshire County Council follows the laws around data protection.

Contact Us

If you want to know more about what we do with your information you can contact us.

Email
dataprotectionofficer@warwickshire.gov.uk

Telephone 01926 410410

How to give us your feedback

Thank you for your answers.

You can answer these questions and send this back to us.

If you need help to answer the questions or need the questions in an alternative format, call 01926 410410.

If you don't want to answer questions you can tell us what you think by sending an email to **peoplestrategyandcommissioning@warwickshire.gov.uk**

Or write to us at...

Housing Related Support Consultation
Shire Hall
Market Place
Warwick
CV34 4SP

The consultation ends on **Friday 11 August 2023.**

Please make sure you send this back to us before this date.

Appendix E – Outreach survey individual interviews

WCC housing related support consultation – outreach survey

1. What is your connection to the area: Live¨ Work¨ Study¨ Another connection¨

2. How many years have you had a connection to this area? <1¨ 1-3¨ 3-5¨ 5-10¨

3. Have you ever been worried that you might have significant difficulty in paying your rent or having a place to live, whether due to debts, money problems, loss of income, health problems, being harassed, addiction, abusive relationships etc?
Yes – in the past¨ Yes – currently¨ No¨

4. Have you ever tried to access, or ever received help or support, around your housing (including help to find somewhere to live, keep you in your current home or move to a more suitable place)?
[This doesn't need to be specifically about your housing, but could include broader things that help you secure or sustain your housing] Yes¨ No (skip to Q15)¨ Don't know¨

5. Did you get help finding somewhere to live (Accommodation- based support) and/or support where you already lived (Floating Support)?
Yes¨ No¨ Not yet¨_____

6. What sort of support did you get? [refer to HRS services doc]

Floating Support (Disabled adults) ¨ Floating Support (Young People) ¨ Generic floating support (adults)¨ Accommodation-based support (young people) ¨ Accommodation-based support (adults)¨ None¨

7. Can you tell me about your experience of getting support/trying to get support? *[What sorts of things did you get help or support with? What organisations, if any, did you receive support from?]*

8. How easy did you find it to access the support you wanted?
Very hard¨ Hard¨ Neither hard or easy¨ Easy¨ Very easy¨

For the next few questions, please think about your most recent experience of getting/trying to get support:

9. How long did it take for you to get the support you wanted?
Within a week**/**straight away¨ Less than a month¨ 1-3 months¨ 3-6 months¨ More than 6 months¨ I never got the support I wanted¨

10. How useful was the support you received?
Very helpful¨ Helpful¨ Somewhat helpful¨ Unhelpful¨ Not at all helpful¨ NA¨

Why do you say this?

11. What worked well about your experience of accessing support?

12. What things, if any, got in the way of you getting the support you needed? Were there things which made it hard to get the support you needed?

13. What would have made the service or support better for you?
[What would have made the experience better? Were there any additional services or support that would have been helpful but weren't available?]
14. Were there other things you did to try and get the support you needed? *[Eg: ask friends and family, local charities,contact helplines, approach the council, housing association]*

15. Is there any kind of support or help would be of use to you right now?

16. The Council are thinking about making some changes to services. Please tell us to what extent you agree or disagree with these proposals:

a) To keep providing services to support people who are homeless and need help finding somewhere to live, and services for people that need support to prevent them becoming homeless
Strongly Agree¨ Agree¨ Neither¨ Disagree¨ Strongly Disagree¨ Don't know¨

b) To have a single inclusive service for disabled people and those without disabilities, rather than separate services
[There would still be separate services for young people and adults]
Strongly Agree¨ Agree¨ Neither¨ Disagree¨ Strongly Disagree¨ Don't know¨

Can you explain why you think this?

ABOUT YOU

17. Age <18¨ 18-24¨ 25-39¨ 40-49¨ 50-59¨ 60-64¨ 65+¨ PNTS¨

18. Do you consider yourself to have a disability, long term health condition or learning difference?
Yes ¨ No¨ Prefer not to Say¨

19. How do you describe your gender?
emale¨ Male¨ Non-binary/Agender /Gender-fluid¨
Prefer to Self Describe¨ _____ Prefer not to Say¨

20. Which ethnicity do you feel best describes you? _____ I'd rather not say ¨

21. Do you have any dependents or caring responsibilities? [Tick all that apply]
Children under 18¨ Children over 18¨ Parent(s)¨ Partner¨ Other family members¨
Friends¨ No dependents or caring responsibilities¨
Other (please specify)_____

22. Which of these best describes what you're doing at present?
Full Time work¨ Part Time work¨Retired¨ Self Employed¨ Zero hours contract work¨ Full Time Student¨Carer¨ Looking for work¨ Unable to work¨ Prefer not to say¨

23. Which of these best describes the home you live in?
Own it outright/buying with a mortgage¨ Rent - council¨ Rent – Housing Association¨
Rent – private landlord¨ Shared Ownership¨ Student Accommodation¨ Staying with friends/sofa-surfing¨ Living in a shelter, hostel or other temporary accommodation¨ Rough sleeping¨

24. Is there anything else you would like to say?

25. Would you be interested in participating in further research/sharing views as part of the project? Yes¨ No¨

Appendix F – Outreach survey (Street Focus Groups)

WCC housing related support consultation – Street Focus Groups

1. Have you ever been worried that you might have significant difficulty in paying your rent or having a place to live, whether due to debts, money problems, loss of income, health problems, being harassed, addiction, abusive relationships etc?
Yes – in the past___ Yes – currently ___ No___

2. Have you ever tried to access or ever received help or support around your housing (including help to find somewhere to live, keep you in your current home or move to a more suitable place)?
[This doesn't need to be specifically about your housing, but could include broader things that help you secure or sustain your housing]
Yes___ No (skip to Q7)___ Don't know___

3. Can you tell me about your experience of getting support/trying to get support? *[What sorts of things did you get help or support with? What organisations, if any, did you receive support from?]*

4. What worked well in your experience of accessing support?

5. What things, if any, got in the way of you getting the support you needed? Were there things which made it hard to get the support you needed?

6. What would have made the service or support better for you? *[What would have made the experience better? Were there any additional services or support that would have been helpful but weren't available?]*

7. Is there any kind of support or help would be of use to you right now?

8. The Council are thinking about making some changes to services. Please tell us to what extent you agree or disagree with these proposals:

a) To keep providing services to support people who are homeless and need help finding somewhere to live, and services for people that need support to prevent them becoming homeless
Strongly Agree___ Agree___ Neither___ Disagree___ Strongly Disagree___ Don't know___

b) To have a single inclusive service for disabled people and those without disabilities, rather than separate services
[There would still be separate services for young people and adults]
Strongly Agree___ Agree___ Neither___ Disagree___ Strongly Disagree___ Don't know___

Can you explain why you think this?

9. Is there anything else you would like to say?

Appendix G – Social Engine Focus Group discussion guide

WCC Consultation Focus Group – Young People

Warm-up/Icebreaker

1. Can you describe the area where you live?
2. Can you summarise your experience accessing housing related support in 2 words?

Accessing support

1. When/how did you know you were in need of support?
2. How easy or difficult did you find it to access support? What made it easy or difficult for you?
3. How did you access information about support?
4. What do you think are barriers specific to young people in accessing support?

Meeting needs/case management

1. To what extent do you feel like your needs were understood from the start? Did you have to explain your situation just once or more than once?
2. How useful did you find the support you received? Why?
3. Were there any aspects that you felt were designed for younger people? What were they?
4. How long were you in receipt of support? Did you know how long from the outset? Could it have been delivered in a shorter time frame? What would have needed to change? How might that have fitted with your needs?
5. Do you think your support needs as a young person are different from someone older? In what way?
6. What sorts of things mean that the services are not as good as they could be?
7. What housing related support do you need that is not currently being provided? What would help you in your lives now?
8. Is there anything you wanted to raise that we haven't covered?

Appendix H – List of formal responses to Ask Warwickshire survey on behalf of organisations

- Citizens Advice South Warwickshire (with a remit to represent Citizens Advice across the county)
- Coventry Cyrenians
- CWPT NHS Trust - Community Mental Health and Homeless Team
- Doorway
- IAR Ltd
- St Basils
- South Warwickshire University NHS Foundation Trust
- Together for Mental Wellbeing
- Warwickshire County Council Public Health

A formal response was also received jointly from the District and Borough Heads of Housing by email.

Appendix I – List of participating organisations in Engagement Workshop

- Barnardo's
- Citizens Advice South Warwickshire
- Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust
- Doorway
- Helping Hands Charity
- Hope 4
- Keyring
- Ministry of Justice
- Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council
- P3
- Refuge
- Rugby Borough Council
- South Warwickshire University NHS Foundation Trust
- St Basils
- Stratford District Council
- Together for Mental Wellbeing
- Turning Point
- Warwick District Council
- Warwickshire County Council

Appendix J – Location of outreach

The outreach team visited locations across each District to engage local residents and conduct interviews.

They spent time on the streets within each locality as well as visiting a number of services which support homeless and vulnerably housed people and those experiencing poverty and hardship more broadly.

District	Location
Leamington	Helping Hands
	Food bank
	Leamington Spa Wellbeing Hub
	St Basil's Youth Hostel
Stratford	Fred Winter Centre
	Food bank
	Wellbeing Hub
Rugby	P3 Hub
	Hope4
	Benn Partnership Centre
Nuneaton	P3 Hub
	Wellbeing Hub
	CHESS Centre
Atherstone	P3 Young People's Hostel
	Atherstone Veterans Hubs
	North Warwickshire Community Wellbeing Hub

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Appendix 4 Summary of Equality Impact Assessment for the Housing Related Support Services Redesign following the Public Consultation

An Equality Impact Assessment Version 1 was developed prior to public consultation for the Housing Related Support (HRS) Services Redesign . A key part of the consultation was to better understand the impact the changes might have, consider how to minimise the negative impact on these groups and ensure equalities considerations were at the forefront of their decision-making in redesigning the new services. WCC sought feedback on their Equality Impact Assessment Version 1 and thoughts and ideas on how the negative impact on specific groups could be mitigated, both directly and the impact on groups which support people with protected characteristics. This has been reviewed after the public consultation and we have subsequently developed Equality Impact Assessment Version 2. (Appendix 1).

EIA version 1 identified that the proposals have the potential to have some negative impacts on people with protected characteristics and that careful consideration needs to be given to these with ideas on how to mitigate these impacts where possible. This was reinforced within the consultation with some additional impacts identified. As a result, following the public consultation, we have reviewed the redesign proposals and changed some to reduce the impact.

We shall be presenting the redesign model to Cabinet in January 2024 for approval to move forward and tender. As we amend the specifications and contract for the redesigned model we shall be building on our learning and feedback. When contracts are awarded, we shall be planning a robust mobilisation process to ensure any transfer of services do not impact on customers and there is clarity on future referral pathways and the offer for HRS services. Performance and quality contract monitoring requirements will be outlined in the tender process and will remain in place throughout the lifetime of the contract.

Table 1 Summary of Equality Impact Assessment Feedback and Consideration for Service Model and Specification

Equality Impact Assessment			
Consultation Feedback	*Impact & Suggestions for redesign (Examples of comments provided)*	*We will*	*Further considerations for service model and specification*
From Ask Warwickshire Stopping the dedicated Disabled people floating HRS - Concerns about exclusion of	Concern and lack of specificity for vulnerable groups were outlined from some respondents, this included: refugees, asylum seekers and those from countries at war; those with disabilities, including	We have updated the EIA Version 2.	Requirements for providers to align to WCC policy regarding equality will be clearly

certain individuals and its impact on waiting lists, accessibility should remain a priority. 42% believe EIA accurately reflects impact, 30% were unsure and 28% felt it did not. Those who use HRS services were most likely to say they did not know whether the EIA identified the impact of these proposals, a finding that was consistent with Easy Read responses Outreach findings: Women found it easier and quicker to access support, but men found the support more helpful Disabled respondents (36%) found it easier to access the required support compared to non-disabled (24%) Young people (18-24) were less likely to seek out support but were quicker at accessing it when they did	mental health and autism; male offenders; illiterate individuals; young parents and their babies; Gypsy, Roma, Travellers, and young people. Impact of decommissioning some services, service delivery and effectiveness, lack of involvement. *"No mention of the impact on Gypsy, Roma or Traveller communities - only generic 'other ethnic groups'"* *"The issue of ex-prisoners not being allowed onto the council housing register."* *"I think it forgets about illiterate people, who cannot navigate the housing system"* How to reduce the impact focussed on staff training; service availability and accessibility with face to face alongside virtually/telephone; communication strategy so everyone is aware of changes and supported through the transition of mobilisation; consideration of specialist team within the redesign services to meet specific needs in particular people living with disabilities; robust monitoring and data collection. *"Warwickshire Public Health is pleased to see the level of detail that has been collated in this EIA"* *"I think the EIA is quite clear on impact"*	We will continue to monitor equality data (access and outcomes) throughout the life of the contract.	stated in the service specifications and tested in the tendering process. Staff training, accessibility and the requirement for personalised approach will be outlined in the specification to meet the diverse needs of vulnerable groups, including those with protected characteristics Ensure the mobilisation of services is smooth and clarity of redesigned HRS services, referral pathways is communicated to the public and key stakeholders that refer people.

Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)

Public Authorities must have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. Please evidence how your proposed activity meets our obligations under the PSED. When we commission providers to deliver services on behalf of WCC we expect them to carry out the PSED duty on our behalf and this is evidenced in our specification and contracts; evaluated as part of the tender process and monitored throughout the lifetime of our contracts.

Table 2: Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)

	Evidence of Due Regard
Eliminate unlawful discrimination (Harassment, victimisation and other prohibited conduct):	During the tender process it will be made clear to providers the expectations from our commissioned providers including discrimination policies for customers and staffing of services.
Advance equality of opportunity: This involves • removing or minimizing disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics. • taking steps to meet the needs of people with certain protected characteristics where these are different from the needs of other people, for example, taking steps to take account of people with disabilities; • encouraging people with certain protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.	During the tender process it will be clear from the specification that providers are to respond to and deliver ongoing support to customers through an inclusive and non-discriminatory approach. We will expect our providers to make reasonable adjustments to ensure everyone can access the support they require. The services will cover the support of customers with disabilities with their housing needs. This will support them to participate in public life and other activities. The service also supports offenders and care leavers to find suitable housing arrangements and with their housing and financial needs. The consultation targeted those groups who are seldom heard including vulnerable adults and young people to participate in the public consultation. This has ensured that their voice and opinions are heard and listened to and as a result we have changed some of the proposals and the final recommendation for the redesign of Housing Related Support services.
Foster good relations: This means tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people from different groups and communities.	Within the service specifications we require service providers to evidence their commitment to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations including aiming to employ diverse staff who reflect the communities we serve so that everyone can be understood and respected. Training and support being available for staff about working with customers and communities from diverse backgrounds and identities so that everyone in Warwickshire can feel safe, valued, supported and respected.

Table 3 Protected Characteristic Impacts identified and changes made following consultation

	Impact type (+) (=) (-) or (+&-)	Nature of impact	What we have done following consultation to reduce the impact identified
Age	**(+&-)**	There will be fewer customers supported through the young people accommodation services. There will be fewer customers supported through the adults' accommodation service. These customers may still require accommodation support services which may increase pressure in other areas, some of which may not be available to some age groups due to the nature of the service. Having two separate services (young people 16 – 25 and adults 25 +) will ensure the needs of people in transition is met adequately so we don't anticipate a negative impact on transitions. Whilst concern was expressed for young people generally having access to HRS services in relation to the budget allocation this was felt to be fair and reasonable given the savings required. For young people's HRS services, we recommend not reducing the time limits for young people. This reflects feedback given on the consultation feeling young people in particular would benefit from maintaining their current length of support. For adults' HRS services we recommend the reductions in duration are taken forward.	Changed proposal 4 (shorten the maximum duration of HRS services) to recommend young people's duration of support is not changed and remains the same as current HRS services. All HRS services will offer holistic and personalised support to meet need, promote wellbeing, safety, resilience, independence to prevent, reduce and/or delay an individual's need for ongoing care and support. Clarity will be given within the specification with allowance for exceptions where necessary to support clients whose outcomes have not been met within the expected timescale.

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Disability Consider: • Physical disabilities • Sensory impairments • Neurodiverse conditions (e.g. dyslexia) • Mental health conditions (e.g. depression) • Medical conditions (e.g. diabetes)	**(+&-)**	The disabilities contract for floating support is currently separate. In the new contract we propose that the needs of people with disabilities will be met by two inclusive services – 16 - 25 years old floating support and 25+ floating support. We expect these services will offer a personalised service that meets individual needs of customers, inclusive of those with disabilities. From an inclusivity perspective, respondents thought that one service for all could avoid segregation and increase equality and streamline services. However, respondents caveated that it is essential that quality remains high and specialised support for disabled people is still available. Some respondents had great concerns regarding the potential loss of specialised support for disabled people. Respondents emphasised that a generalised service may not be able to address the unique needs of disabled people and may fail to provide the tailored support they require.	We recommend implementing the proposal and create two inclusive services (young people 16 – 25 years and adults 25+) while being mindful of concerns in relation to specialist skills, training and knowledge and ensure these are incorporated within the specification and future monitoring requirements. To support consistency in service and quality, within the specification we shall strengthen the staff training requirements around trauma informed care, psychologically informed environments, autism, learning disability, visual impairment awareness training. Providers will be expected to evidence that staff members are adequately trained and experienced for supporting disabled customers. This may result in providers choosing to have specialist staff with dedicated caseloads or adopting alternative ways to address this. We will also build in monitoring of accessibility and outcomes to ensure we understand how inclusive our services are for people living with disabilities.

Gender Reassignment	(=)	This service redesign won't directly impact. No further equality impacts were identified from the consultation.	The specification will outline training requirements to ensure providers have sufficient training to support the wide range of potential customers.
Marriage and Civil Partnership	(=)	This service redesign won't directly impact. No further equality impacts were identified from the consultation.	The specification will outline training requirements to ensure providers have sufficient training to support the wide range of potential customers.
Pregnancy and Maternity	(+&-)	The current mother and baby and family accommodation services for young people offer under the HRS Young People's services for 16-25 years will not have a reduction in duration of service as proposed and will remain the same as is currently available.	Changed the recommendation so as not to reduce the duration of support for young people.
Race: Including: • Colour • Nationality • Citizenship • Ethnic or national origins	(=)	Data on ethnicity needs to be improved before clear conclusions can be drawn. However, there are suggestions in available data that there are differences in the proportions of people identifying as Asian or Black in the general population compared with the current HRS service users. No further equality impacts were identified from the consultation.	We will monitor equality data (access and outcomes) throughout the life of the contract.
Religion or Belief	(=)	The number of people using the services at present are representative of the religious make up of Warwickshire, however data collection across current services is not consistent. Further work is required in this area to better	We will monitor equality data (access and outcomes) throughout the life of the contract.

		understand if there are barriers for customers in accessing services based on religion or belief. No further equality impacts were identified from the consultation.	
Sex	**(+&-)**	Looking at the current disabilities service we have a slightly higher percentage of males using the service at 58% compared to 42% females. For young people 16-25 years floating services - 35% of customers are male compared to 65% female and for generic adult 25+ floating services 45% are males and 55% are females. By combining the floating support services, we would not envisage a direct impact on any specific sex and the overall service is expected to reflect the Warwickshire profile. No further equality impacts were identified from the consultation.	From the outreach findings it was identified that women and men may experience accessing support differently. Whilst the consultation report was clear to state this isn't statistically valid it is interesting to note and consider when developing the offer around early information, advice and signposting, brief intervention and how to address in a personalised way. More women (39%) reported finding it easy or very easy to access support compared to men (15%). More men (60%) found the support they received to be helpful compared to women (51%).
Sexual Orientation	**(=)**	Further work is required in this area to better understand if there are barriers for customers in accessing support services based on sexual orientation. No further equality impacts were identified from the consultation.	WCC will work with services under the new contract/s to develop good quality data collection tools which will support this going forward.

| **Vulnerable People:**

• Individuals who suffer socio-economic disadvantage
• Armed Forces (WCC signed the <u>Armed Forces Covenant</u> in June 2012)
• Carers
• Homeless
• People leaving Prison
• People leaving Care | **(=)** | The identified vulnerabilities of people within the current disability services are similar to that of other customers. The specification will outline training requirements to ensure providers have sufficient training to support the wide range of potential customers. Providers will be required to work with customers though their support offer/arrangements in a way which supports customers to continue to access/attend other key services/appointments.

Concerns were expressed that no further equality impacts were identified from the consultation. | Recommendation 3 – offer flexible, shorter interventions. We recommend proceeding with an enhanced triage process that offers early information, advice and signposting, brief intervention which supports resolving issues at the earliest stage and only offering short-term HRS support for those that require on-going support. This will improve the customer's journey to get the right service at the right time, telling their story only once to HRS services.

Triage was considered an effective way to identify those in greatest need. Whilst a 12-week service was suggested within this proposal and shorter duration support in proposal 4 - there was overwhelming support to ensure the services remained personalised to each person receiving support.

With this in mind, stating a precise 12-week service timescale may not be needed. Focus will remain on assessing individuals' needs and whether advice and information, brief intervention and/or a short-term HRS service is required. All support offered will be based on mutually agreed support plans and outcomes monitored to support progression. |

			Ensure the mobilisation of services is smooth and clarity of redesigned HRS services, referral pathways is communicated to the public and key stakeholders that refer people. Devise monitoring of services that looks at outcomes and captures customers' feedback.
Health Inequalities (HI) Many issues can have an impact on health: is it an area of deprivation, does every population group have equal access, unemployment, work conditions, education, skills, our living situation, rural, urban, rates of crime etc	**(-)**	Overall decrease in service may result in some customers who require support not accessing this which can increase stress and anxiety around their housing situation. The knock-on impact of a reduction of service therefore may risk increasing negative impacts in other areas of customers lives. We will work with customers, providers and district and borough councils to support with access to alternative services and other support services related to the specific area of need/inequality. Providers will be required to work with customers through their support offer/arrangements in a way which supports customers continuing to access/attend other key services/appointments. It was felt that the service redesign could lead to increased mental health issues and concern was raised regarding social and rural isolation and digital exclusion.	As above

| Other Groups

If there are any other groups | | Generally concerns were raised for the following groups who are not specifically identified and may be impacted

    • Gypsy, Roma, Travellers
    • Illiterate individuals
    • Refugees, asylum seekers and those from countries at war

Except for people with no recourse to public funds HRS services may be accessed by people from these groups. | Ensuring the communication plan is effective and we have a clear offer and a trauma informed and personalised approach which will support these groups' access.

This will include a clarity of offer, with an enhanced triage system and sign posting to the right service, referral pathways (self referral and referrals by organisations) and is communicated to the public and key stakeholders that refer people. |

Section Two: Sign Off

N.B To be completed after the EIA is completed but before the area of work commences.

Name of person/s completing EIA	Victoria Church, Victoria Jones and Jackie Soulier
Name and signature of Assistant Director	Becky Hale
Date	22nd February 2023
Date of next review and name of person/s responsible	September 2023 - Victoria Jones

Name of person/s completing EIA Version 2 Updated	Ranbir Johal and Victoria Jones
Name and signature of Assistant Director	Becky Hale
Date	October 2023

Name of person/s completing EIA Summary following Consultation	Victoria Jones
Name and signature of Assistant Director	Becky Hale
Date	17.10.23
Date of next review and name of person/s responsible	April 2025 - Victoria Jones

Once signed off, please ensure the EIA is uploaded using the following form. Please name it "EIA [project] [service area] [year]": Upload Completed Equality Impact Assessments

These will be stored on a Sharepoint library which WCC colleagues can access.

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Appendix 5: Warwickshire County Council (WCC) Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) for HRS Redesign Version 2 Updated

The purpose of an EIA is to ensure WCC is as inclusive as possible, both as a service deliverer and as an employer. It also demonstrates our compliance with Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). Please note this is version 2 and all updates have been made in purple pen, so they are easily identified.

1. **Background to your proposed activity and the reasons for it.**

Warwickshire County Council commissions housing related support from external providers. The services are for people aged 16+ and who require support and training to develop skills and competencies that will enable them to gain or maintain a tenancy and avoid homelessness. There is no statutory duty on WCC to provide these services.

The current services are organised under the following contracts:
1 - Floating Support for those in their own or temporary accommodation. There are three floating support services: generic services for young people aged 16- 25 years; generic services for adults 25+; and a specialist service for people with disabilities (including those with severe and enduring mental illness/conditions)
2 - Accommodation-based support. There are two services: one for Young People 16 – 25 years; and one for Adults aged 25+
- Housing and support are delivered together. It should be noted that WCC contracts pay for the cost of support only, not property/rental costs. All rental costs, including housing management, are paid via housing benefit claims payable by the relevant LHAs and/or customer contributions where applicable.
- The support is aimed at those without accommodation and at risk of significant harm or serious exploitation
- The support for these customers includes extended cover out of office hours and at weekends. All young people 16 -17 accommodation-based support includes 24/7 staffing.
- Accommodation types include hostel like provision; houses of multiple occupancy; shared houses; and self-contained flats.

The current Medium Term Financial Strategy requires the budget to be reduced by £1m per annum from 2024.
A proposed service redesign will seek to make the services more efficient and reduce the cost per intervention, but there will still be an impact on the total number of people that the services can support with reduced contract fees.

1

2. Proposed activity including a summary of the main actions.

The proposed plan is to reduce the budget by equal proportions across all services in order to achieve the required level of savings. To partially mitigate the impact, service efficiency improvements are planned:

➢ fewer contracts, leading to reductions in contract overheads and re-referrals;
➢ adding a flexible range of shorter housing-related support and interventions that respond to individual needs as efficiently as possible and give earlier, focused support for customers who do not need longer term support; and
➢ reducing the maximum duration of support.

These efficiencies are not expected to fully mitigate the budget reduction, so there will be a likely reduction in the total number of people receiving the services. The proposal to reduce the number of floating support contracts from 3 to 2 includes ending the floating support service specifically for people with disabilities. Support services for people with disabilities will still be commissioned through the 2 new proposed floating support services.

In developing these proposals, we have worked closely with our key strategic partners including housing teams in the five District and Borough Councils; Warwickshire Probation Service, Warwickshire County Council Adult Social Care and Support and Children and Families Service. Together we looked at how we could deliver a more efficient and cost-effective service through re-design and ensure people who need services get the right service at the right time. The views of customers and other information from a service Needs Assessment have also been considered.

The commissioners will carry out a full Public Consultation exercise in May/June 2023. The findings will inform the final service design to be proposed to WCC Cabinet and, if approved, tendered for contracts to start in January 2025.

We will consult on four Commissioning Proposals and this EIA

Part One

Proposal 1: Reducing the spend by equal proportions and allocating the available budget at same proportions for young people and adult services as current contract arrangements

We propose to reduce the amount we spend on accommodation and floating services by equal proportions. The total budget spend will reduce by £1m, but the proportions of our budget that we spend on each service area would be unchanged – we will continue to spend approximately 50% on accommodation-based services and 50% on floating support services.

Proposal 2 - Stop commissioning the separate floating support service for people with disabilities and meet those needs within two redesigned and inclusive floating support services, one for young people aged 16-25 and one for people aged 25+ years

We propose to stop commissioning the separate service for people with disabilities, but people with disabilities will be able to apply for support from the two new services in the same way. The proportion of the total budget that would have been spent on the separate service for people with disabilities will all be added to the money spent on the two new floating support services. Each of the two new services will be able to meet the same range of customers' needs as the current three services combined.

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Proposal 3 - Introduce a flexible range of shorter support options and interventions that respond to individual needs as efficiently as possible and give earlier, focused support for customers who do not need longer term support

We propose to keep the option of both self-referral and referral by organisations on behalf of an individual.

We propose this change for all floating support services, young people 16-25 years and adults 25+.

We propose to introduce:

A. Early signposting where people can be supported to find help from other services which may be able to support them.

B. A new Brief Intervention of between 1 and 5 telephone and/or face to face support sessions. This is targeted to help resolve people's situations and support their self-help, so they are enabled to remain independent. Self-help (telephone and online support) could include district and borough housing services and support services such as Citizen's Advice, Drug and Alcohol Services, Local Community Organisations and Social Care.

C. A new 12-week short term transition/ resettlement/enablement floating support service for those whose needs can be met in this time.

Proposal 4 - Reduce the maximum duration of services

In order to maximise the resource, we will have and continue to support as many customers as possible, we aim to increase the throughput of customers.

We are proposing to reduce the maximum duration of a service intervention for an individual.

We propose to:

- o Reduce the maximum duration of floating support for people aged 16-25 from 24 to 12 months
- o Reduce the maximum duration of floating support for people aged 25+ from 12 months to 9 months
- o Reduce the maximum duration of Accommodation-based support from 24 months to 18 months

Part Two

Consultation on the Equalities Impact Assessment.

3.   Who is this going to impact and how?

The plan will impact on those citizens who seek support services, as they may not be offered a service if the commissioned provider has no available capacity at the time. The impact could be a delayed service start, or, if this is not appropriate, the citizen may be advised of other agencies which could offer support. This would mean that the citizen would need to engage with other support themselves.

Our service user data and needs assessment shows that the people who seek support are:

1. Care Leavers
2. Mothers and babies

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3. People with Disabilities including Physical, Learning and Sensory Disabilities
4. People with Mental Health Needs
5. People with drug and alcohol issues
6. People with experience of the criminal justice system
7. People who are Homeless
8. People with experience of institutional living such as prison or long stay hospital or children's residential care service who are, or may be, unable to take care of themselves or protect themselves from significant harm or serious exploitation; or represent a threat of harm to their community
9. Young People 16 +

Section Two: Evidence
Please include any evidence or relevant information that has influenced the decisions contained in this EIA. This could include demographic profiles; audits; research; health needs assessments; national guidance or legislative requirements and how this relates to the protected characteristic groups and additional groups outlined in Section Four.

A – Quantitative Evidence
This is evidence which is numerical and should include the number people who use the service and the number of people from the protected characteristic groups who might be affected by changes to the service.

Protected Characteristics across services
  Age
Table 1: Age Distribution in Warwickshire population and Service Users

	16-18	18-25	26-35	36-40	41-50	51-60	61+
Floating Support	0%	3%	40%	16%	19%	14%	7%
YP Accommodation	16%	82%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Adult Accommodation	0%	2%	33%	18%	32%	14%	0%
Warks Population ONS 2021	4%	9%	16%	8%	16%	18%	30%

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Gender

Table 2: Gender Distribution in Warwickshire population and Service Users

	Male	Transgender	Female
Floating Support	40%	0%	60%
YP Accommodation	51%	2%	47%
Adult Accommodation	88%	0%	12%
Warks Population ONS 2021	51%	0.35%	49%

Table 3: Customer Vulnerabilities by Gender

Vulnerability	Male	Female
Alcohol	13%	8%
Drugs	18%	9%
Mental health	26%	28%
Learning disability	7%	6%
Domestic abuse	4%	13%
Physical health	14%	12%
Physical/sensory disability	3%	3%
Risk of harm from others	6%	13%
Poses risk of harm to others	6%	3%
Other vulnerability	3%	5%

Pregnancy

The accommodation-based services can accept pregnant women but there is insufficient data available to understand if there are any issues around access.

Ethnicity

The data is incomplete for service users – no information for 20% of that population. Further data collection is required in order to fully evaluate. (Table 4 on next page).

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Table 4: Ethnicity Distribution in Warwickshire population, Service Users and main applicants owed a prevention or relief duty (Oct-Dec 2021)

Ethnicity	% of Warwickshire Total Population	% of Service Users	% of main applicants owed a prevention or relief duty (Oct-Dec 2021)
White	89%	90%	79%
Black / African / Caribbean / Black British	0.8%	5%	3%
Asian / Asian British	4.6%	3%	2%
Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups	1.5%	0.5%	3%
Other ethnic groups	0.40%	1.5%	1%
Not known[8]	3.7	N/A	12%

See https://data.warwickshire.gov.uk

Ethnicity data is from the 2011 Census.

There are some differences between the percentages of people in the general population and the service users identifying as Black or Asian. These will be considered when redesigning services.

Religion & Beliefs:
Further work is required in this area to better understand if there are barriers for customers in accessing services based on religion or belief. WCC will work with services under the new contract/s to develop good quality data collection tools which will support this going forward.

Sexual Orientation:
Further work is required in this area to better understand if there are barriers for customers in accessing services based on sexual orientation. WCC will work with services under the new contract/s to develop good quality data collection tools which will support this going forward.

Care Leavers:
 4% of Warwickshire population (ONS 2021) were 16-18yrs. As of 31.12.22 there were 249 16/17yr olds 'in care' and eligible to receive a service from Leaving Care (240 children) or who had left care and were already receiving leaving care support (9 children). This is a rate of 189 per 10,000 of the 16-17 Warwickshire population. However, 38% of these children are unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) and less likely to access services.

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Care leavers make up a small proportion of the services' customers: on average 7% of customers across all services during a 1yr reporting period are care leavers. Between April 21 – April 22, 31% of St Basils young people customers and 14% of P3 young people customers were care leavers. A reduction in local services may result in more young people being accommodated in services that are a greater distance from their support networks/connections, education centres and/or employment.

Current customers who are offenders:

42% of Accommodation-based service users are Ex-offender Single Males aged 26-54; 6% are Ex-offender Single Females aged 26-54

B – Qualitative Evidence

This is data which describes the effect or impact of a change on a group of people, e.g., some information provided as part of performance reporting.

Over June and July 2022, engagement sessions with customers from P3 generic and intensive floating support, P3 additional street outreach service, P3 accommodation services and Together (disability floating support) were conducted. These engagement sessions were carried out in person for P3 customers and over the phone for Together customers as this was agreed to be more accessible. Young people were less willing to engage, not all young people that expressed an interest to engage did engage.

The engagement sessions were used as a follow up from the engagement work that Homeless Link were commissioned to carry out in 2018. Homeless Link were commissioned to carry out a needs assessment and undertake engagement work to support the retendering of services. New contracts were originally scheduled to be let from August 2021 but due to the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic contracts were extended and will now end in July 2024. Due to this extension and the changes made to services due to the Covid 19 pandemic it was agreed that it was necessary to gather current customers' feedback. The engagement sessions were guided by questions which used data and information from 2018 engagement work. This is to explore if the views and feedback still reflect the feedback gathered in 2018 or if opinions had changed over the pandemic.

During the engagement sessions, 54 customers across the commissioned services were involved in discussions. This report brings together the major findings from the 2022 engagement and comparisons with the 2018 engagement. The report will inform the re-commissioning processes and decision making to ensure what is being commissioned is reflective of customers' feedback and needs.

The engagement told us:

1. Services were felt to be easy to access.
2. The mixed model (face to face and via phone) approach to communication was most valued.

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3. 68% of customers who engaged in sessions reported that they were referred through other organisations and professionals.
4. Afternoon weekday provision best met customers' needs.
5. Accommodation services are valued by the customers.
6. Having a starting from strengths approach through strong working relationships between support worker and customer is key to reaching positive outcomes for individuals.
7. Recruiting the right staff (value-based recruitment) and ensuring adequate training and support to have local knowledge and trauma informed approach was key. There needs to be a focus on providers' understanding of mental health and domestic abuse and building those relationships appropriate organisations in the community.
8. High level of support needs around mental health and wellbeing and awareness of staff to meet these needs was crucial for customers' engagement within support services and other services they worked with.
9. The current service offer is meeting the needs of the community with some minor additions which are outlined in appendix 2.
10. Signposting and maintaining relationships with other key agencies remain a strong important element of the support.
11. Young people who responded to the 2022 survey were very positive about the support received and their support workers, especially those receiving floating support.
12. Feeling safe, supported and respected was important to young people.
13. Young people like to receive information by text and email and from their support worker.
14. Young people thought standard and cleanliness of accommodation was important.
15. Young people thought it was important that support workers understood mental health issues.
16. Young people thought waiting times to access accommodation could be improved.

Before this, in Autumn 2021 an on-line survey was undertaken with key stakeholders to understand the support needs of young people and adults and to consider what other support is available to people locally.

1. Twenty-six people completed the survey which represented twenty-two different organisations/teams across Warwickshire. Responses were received from: the five Local Housing Authorities; criminal justice organisations, voluntary and community sector organisations including national and local housing-focused charities; Registered Providers, WCC Mental Health and Wellbeing commissioner, WCC Family Information Service (FIS).
2. Only three of the twenty-six respondents felt that the needs of vulnerable people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness are being met.
3. While there was evidence of each organisation referring on or signposting individual cases to other agencies, indicating an awareness of the other services, there was also a sense that multi-agency client-centred working and 'wrap-around' support could be improved.

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4. Organisations told us they refer people to their local housing authority when homeless or at risk of losing their home whether they have a legal duty to refer or not.
5. Having a holistic trauma informed approach and starting from strengths was seen as important to maximise engagement of vulnerable people.
6. The majority of respondents felt support services should offer 'high level support' defined as - 'operating as link workers to facilitate multi-agency involvement and engage with services' aimed at those with multiple needs.
7. When considering the likely impact of a reduction in service, respondents felt the largest impact on their organisations would be seen as a result of a reduction in young people's support services.
8. There were a number of suggestions about community assets that could be available to support people, but these were not generally viewed as having sufficient resource or expertise to meet the needs of people with complex needs.

WCC decisions about the design of future support services from August 2024 should be informed by further meaningful engagement with key stakeholders.

Section Three: Engagement

| Has the proposed activity been subject to engagement or consultation with those it's going to impact, taking into account their protected characteristics and socio-economic status? | **Phase one: Engagement with our current customers and stakeholders**
Homeless Link: engagement work undertaken prior to the pandemic in preparation for re-tendering, which was then paused (Homeless Link Report 2019-2020) and feedback from people using services through the quality and performance monitoring, including quarterly returns, annual reports, case studies, compliments and complaints in the last financial year 2021-2022.

Stakeholder Event – January 2020: 37 stakeholders, including current providers and partner agencies attended an event to consider the effectiveness of current services, what works well, what could be better and any gaps in service.
Engagement with Districts and Boroughs – January 2020: Commissioners met individually with representatives of District and Borough Housing Departments to review current service offer and potential partnership working for future services.

Engagement 2022: As detailed above during June and July 2022 engagement sessions were completed. |

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Stakeholder Task and Finish: In Autumn 2021 an on-line survey was undertaken with key stakeholders to understand the support needs of young people and adults and to consider what other support is available to people locally.

26 people completed the survey which represented 22 different organisations/teams across Warwickshire. Responses were received from: the five Local Housing Authorities; criminal justice organisations, voluntary and community sector organisations including national and local housing-focused charities; Registered Providers, WCC Mental Health and Wellbeing commissioner, WCC Family Information Service (FIS).
The questions asked about the type of activity provided by the organisations, how they support people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness; how they view the contribution of the services and what they feel would be the impact of a reduction in the support service offer.

Phase 2: Public Consultation
Public consultation will be conducted May-July 2023 to seek views on the proposed options for the support service.
Public consultation was conducted 22nd May to 11th August 2023 on the proposed HRS options for HRS service.

Phase one: Engagement with our current customers and stakeholders Summary
Homeless Link: engagement work undertaken prior to the pandemic in preparation for re-tendering, which was then paused (Homeless Link Report 2019-2020) and feedback from people using services through the quality and performance monitoring, including quarterly returns, annual reports, case studies, compliments and complaints in the last financial year 2021-2022.

Stakeholder Event – January 2020: 37 stakeholders, including current providers and partner agencies attended an event to consider the effectiveness of current HRS services, what works well, what could be better and any gaps in service.

Engagement with Districts and Boroughs – January 2020: Commissioners met individually with representatives of District and Borough Housing Departments to review current service offer and potential partnership working for future services.

Engagement 2022: Over June and July 2022, engagement sessions with customers from P3 generic and intensive floating support, P3 additional street outreach service, P3 accommodation services and Together (disability floating support) were conducted. These engagement sessions were carried out in person for P3 customers and over the phone for Together customers as this was agreed to be more accessible. In addition, eight young people from St Basils floating

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support and four from accommodation-based support completed a survey. Three from P3 young families' accommodation-based provision attended a focus group.

The engagement sessions were used as a follow up from the engagement work that Homeless Link were commissioned to carry out in 2018. Homeless Link were commissioned to carry out a needs assessment and undertake engagement work to support the retendering of HRS services. New contracts were originally scheduled to be let from August 2021 but due to the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic contracts were extended and will now end in July 2024. Due to this extension and the changes made to services due to the Covid 19 pandemic it was agreed that it was necessary to gather current customers' feedback. The engagement sessions were guided by questions which used data and information from 2018 engagement work. This is to explore if the views and feedback still reflect the feedback gathered in 2018 or if opinions had changed over the pandemic.

 During the engagement sessions, 42 customers across the commissioned services were involved in discussions.

Stakeholder Task and Finish: In Autumn 2021 an on-line survey was undertaken with key stakeholders to understand the HRS needs of young people and adults and to consider what other support is available to people locally.
Twenty-six people completed the survey which represented twenty-two different organisations/teams across Warwickshire. Responses were received from: the five Local Housing Authorities; criminal justice organisations, voluntary and community sector organisations including national and local housing-focused charities; Registered Providers, WCC Mental Health and Wellbeing commissioner, WCC Family Information Service (FIS).

The questions asked about the type of activity provided by the organisations, how they support people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness; how they view the contribution of HRS and what they feel would be the impact of a reduction in the HRS service offer.

Phase 2: Public Consultation

Public consultation will be conducted May-July 2023 to consult on the proposed HRS options for HRS service.
This ensures we have sufficiently consulted the public for their view on how to make best use of the current resource.

Public consultation was conducted 22nd May to 11th August 2023 on the proposed HRS options for HRS service.
Summary of Public Consultation Undertaken

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Warwickshire County Council (WCC) commissioned Social Engine to help support a consultation on the redesign of their Housing Related Support (HRS) services. A series of engagement activities were designed. These were designed to give people the opportunity to share their views on the proposed changes and to contribute ideas and experiences in order to inform the decision-making for the HRS service redesign. These included:

- Ask Warwickshire - online consultation hosted on WCC's consultation and engagement hub. 129 responses were received, 9 of these were formal responses received on behalf of organisations.

- Email – people could respond to the consultation via email. 5 responses to the consultation were received by email. Three of these were from individuals with experience of using HRS services, one was a formal response on behalf of Warwickshire District and Borough Heads of Housing and one was an addendum to the response from the Heads of Housing, which was submitted by Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council.

- Easy-read survey – designed and promoted to enable those with access requirements to respond. 25 responses to the easy-read survey were received from individuals with experience of using HRS services.

- Outreach – individual interview and small group discussions conducted with previous, current or potential HRS service users at locations across Warwickshire. A total of 311 people participated in the outreach, including 185 individual interviews, 126 people participating in 43 street focus groups and 3 written responses.

- Consultation Workshop – held with 30 key stakeholders and partners, including District and Borough Housing, health services, the voluntary sector and current HRS providers.

- Stakeholder Focus Groups – held with 22 support workers from the WCC Learning Disability Team and the Physical Disability & Sensory Service Team.

- Service User Focus Groups – held with service users from St Basil's, Doorway, the House Project and Warwickshire Vision Support. 19 young people participated in a mix of 3 online and in-person sessions and 44 participants in two in-person focus groups with sight-impaired service users.

The consultation ran from 22nd May to 11th August 2023. A total of 583 contributions to the consultation were received.

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If YES, please state who with.	YES, engagement with current customers and public consultation. Consultation: Ask Warwickshire online survey was available on WCC's consultation and engagement hub and was promoted widely to the public, professionals, and those involved in support for homeless and vulnerably housed people. The easy -read format of survey aimed to support those with access requirements opportunities to engage, we also offered an opportunity to request the survey in other format to enable their engagement. The outreach in communities and service user focus groups aimed to target those people who have used or may use services in the future and/or have faced hardship and may be seldom heard by traditional consultation methods. The stakeholder workshop and focus groups aimed to reach those people/organisation that refer people to HRS services and/or offer support to HRS customers and those facing hardship.	
If NO engagement has been conducted, please state why.		
How was the engagement carried out?	**Yes / No**	**What were the results from the engagement?**
Focus Groups	Yes	See Section B – Qualitative Evidence above – what the engagement told us.
Surveys	Yes	
User Panels		
Public Event	Yes	The consultation surveys, outreach, workshop with organisations working in the field and focus groups gave significant feedback to review our redesign and adjust them. Range of activity outlines above. See Section 4: Assessing the Impact for details on how the proposals changed following feedback on the consultation.
Displays / Exhibitions		
Other (please specify)	1:1 face to face discussions and phone conversations with customers Redesign workshops with Key Stakeholder redesign workshops, with key stakeholders (Housing teams in the five District and Borough Councils, Warwickshire Probation Service, Warwickshire County Council Adult Social Care and Support and Children and Families Service and the Family information Service).	

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Has the proposed activity changed as a result of the engagement?	Yes	Engagement 2022 informed re-design. The proposals have changes following the consultation to reflect the feedback given generally and specific to equality impacts. Please see Section 4: Assessing the Impact for details on how the proposals changed following feedback on the consultation and Section 6: Action Planning Mitigating Actions for specific details.
Have the results of the engagement been fed back to the consultees?	Yes	Verbal feedback to providers to pass onto customers and thanks. Reports to housing board of stakeholder engagement and customer engagement.
Is further engagement or consultation recommended or planned?	Yes	Public consultation May – July 2023 The consultation was carried out from 22nd May to 11th August 2023. A total of 583 contributions to the consultation were received. This assessment has been updated to reflect the consultation feedback. No further engagement or consultation is planned.
What process have you got in place to review and evaluate?	We are working with business intelligence to support the analysis of the public consultation. We have built in 5 weeks' time to support this. Following the consultation, we have reviewed the redesign proposals and updated them. We shall be presenting the redesign model to Cabinet in January 2024 for approval to move forward and tender based on the redesign model. As we redesign the specifications and contract for the redesigned model we shall be building on our learning and feedback. When contracts are awarded, we shall be planning a robust mobilisation process to ensure any transfer of services doesn't not impact on customers and there is clarity on future referral pathways and the offer for HRS services. Performance and quality contract monitoring requirements will be outlined in the tender process and will remain in place through the lifetime of the contract.	

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Section Four: Assessing the Impact

Protected Characteristics and other groups that experience greater inequalities

A key part of the consultation was to better understand the impact the changes might have, consider how to minimise the negative impact on these groups and ensure equalities considerations were at the forefront of their decision-making in redesigning the new services. WCC sought feedback on their Equality Impact Assessment Version 1 and thoughts and ideas on how the negative impact on specific groups could be mitigated, both directly and the impact on groups which support people with protected characteristics.

Whilst a substantial minority (40%) believed the EIA accurately reflected the impact of the proposed changes, many respondents said they either did not know or felt that the EIA did not capture the likely impact. We observed a significant variance in responses from HRS service providers and service users – service providers were twice as likely as service users to say the EIA did not identify the proposals' impact. HRS providers respondents in Ask Warwickshire survey held a markedly different view on this to other groups, suggesting further engagement and discussion with them over equalities concerns may be prudent to further develop the EIA. This will be explored with providers prior to retending.

Wider findings from the outreach suggest that disabled people may be more likely to experience housing difficulty and to need support, but that they typically found it easier to access support than other people. Young people, and women too, also reported more positive experiences of accessing support. This may be due to the increased likelihood of these groups falling within 'priority need' local definitions, within Local Authority allocation policies, and therefore being able to access broader housing support which would otherwise be available, however the provision of dedicated services for disabled people and young people (and in some instances for women too) may also be contributing to more positive experiences.

Question of equality impact were embedded throughout the survey and specific to each proposal. The key themes of these are outlined below.

Do you think there is anything missing from the Equality Impact Assessment?

Concern for specific vulnerable groups
- Refugees, asylum seekers and those from countries at war
- Those with disabilities, including mental health and autism

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- Male offenders
- Illiterate individuals
- Young parents and their babies
- Gypsy, Roma, Travellers
- Young people
- Ex-prisoners

Clarity and specificity
- Vague mitigation strategies like 'signposting'
- Need for clearer information about who/what organisations are signposted
- Need for detailed numerical breakdowns in the EIA
- The proposal's impact on homelessness
- The lack of specific data about certain areas like the south of Stratford on Avon

Service delivery and effectiveness
- The potential impact of de-commissioning specialist services, especially for those with disabilities
- Training and expertise requirements for effective support
- Pressure on already strained services like housing, mental health, etc
- Cost implications of changes
- Lack of involvement and representation
- Concerns about not involving certain stakeholders or experts
- Need for a wider understanding of service users
- Lack of consultation with or consideration of the thoughts of those directly impacted by the services

Focussing on the Outreach - Understanding the experience of people with protected characteristics (covariate analysis)

Social Engine carried out covariate analysis of outreach responses to explore differences between the experiences and views of respondents belonging to different demographic groups.

We considered the following key variables:

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- **Ease of access to support:** This categorical variable represented participants' ratings of how easy or hard it was for them to access their desired support. We collapsed the categories into 'Easy' and 'Hard' for simplification.
- **Time to receive support:** The time it took for participants to receive the support they desired. We categorised this variable into 'Prompt' (Less than a month, Within a week/straight away), 'Moderate' (More than 6 months, 3-6 months), and 'No Support' (I never got the support I wanted) for analysis.
- **Usefulness of support:** This categorical variable reflected participants' assessments of how helpful the support they received was. We collapsed the categories into 'Helpful' and 'Unhelpful.'
- **Agreement levels to proposals:** We examined this variable to understand participants' levels of agreement with the proposals.
- **Gender:** A binary categorical variable describing the gender of the participants.
- **Disability:** A binary categorical variable indicating whether participants reported having a disability.
- **Age:** A categorical variable representing the age of respondents.

Statistical test - Chi-Square Analysis

To explore potential associations and differences, we employed the Chi-square test of independence. The Chi-square test is a non-parametric statistical test suitable for examining the relationships between categorical variables.

Results

Among the demographic variables analysed, only gender demonstrated a statistically significant association. In particular, a higher proportion of women (45%, n=29) reported finding it easy to access their desired support compared to men (20%, n = 8). Conversely, a higher proportion of men (80%, n=32), compared to women (55%, n=35) found it hard to access their desired support.

This result is statistically significant, as evidenced by a p-value of 0.016 obtained from the Chi-Square Test of Independence, yielding a Chi2 statistic of 5.82 and 1 degree of freedom.

Whilst the following differences were observed, they did not all pass standard tests for statistical significance. Whilst this does not mean they are not reliable findings; it does mean that they *may* be the result of chance and as such should be interpreted with a degree of caution.

Gender

- More women (45%) reported finding it 'easy' or 'very easy' to access support compared to men (20%)
- Women (32%) accessed the support they needed more quickly than men (22%)

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- More men (60%) found the support they received to be helpful, compared to women (51%)

Disability

- Disabled respondents were twice as likely as non-disabled respondents to have encountered housing-related difficulties.
- A greater proportion of disabled respondents (88%) attempted to access housing support than non-disabled people
- Disabled respondents (36%) found it significantly easier to access the required support compared to non-disabled respondents (24%)

Age

- Younger people (18-24) were less likely than average to have sought out support.
- People aged 25-39 were less likely than average to have accessed accommodation-based or floating support.
- It was more difficult for people within the 25-39 age bracket to access their desired support.
- Notably, young people (18-24) were quicker at accessing support.

These findings are shared within the Consultation Report and this Equality Impact Assessment Version 2 will be attached as an Appendix to WCC Cabinet Report requesting approval to tender HRS Services. The below tables relating to the identified impacts on each proposal has been updated following the consultation with the recommendation being made to WCC Cabinet following the consultation.

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Proposal 1: Reducing the spend by equal proportions and allocating the available budget at same proportions for young people and adult services as current contract arrangements

Service reductions will have a negative impact on current customers and the service offer, and this will include young people, customers with disabilities, and mental health needs and customers who are Black / African / Caribbean / Black British (because this latter group is more heavily represented in the cohort receiving support than in the Warwickshire population at large).

The specification will clearly outline that providers are to respond to and provide ongoing support to customers through an inclusive and non-discriminatory approach.

The following recommendations are proposed following consultation.

Recommendation – keep both accommodation and floating housing related support, allocating budget in similar proportions as current commissioned services. Both professionals and service users (and potential service users) welcomed the retention of both accommodation–based and floating HRS services. There was a widespread perception that demand for support was already higher than HRS can meet. However, if reductions to the HRS budget need to be made, then the general perception was that this way is both fair and reasonable.

	Impact type (+) (=) (-) or (+&-)	Nature of impact
Age	(-/+)	There will be fewer customers supported through the young people accommodation services. There will be fewer customers supported through the adults' accommodation service. These customers may still require accommodation support services which may increase pressure in other areas, some of which may not be available to some age groups due to the nature of the service. Having two separate services will ensure the needs of people in transition is met adequately so we don't anticipate a negative impact on transitions. No further equality impacts were identified from the consultation. Whilst concern was expressed for young people generally having access to HRS services in relation to the budget allocation this was felt to be fair and reasonable given the savings required.

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Disability: Consider: • Physical disabilities • Sensory impairments • Neurodiverse conditions (e.g., dyslexia) • Mental health conditions (e.g., depression) • Medical conditions (e.g., diabetes)	(+&-)	The disabilities contract for floating support is currently separate. In the new contract all adults floating support will be provided by one provider and young people floating support will be provided by another provider. We expect an inclusive service to be provided and for providers to be adequality trained to support these customers, which will be clearly outlined in the service specification. Depending on the outcome of the tender, customers may need to move providers and will need to be supported through this process. No further equality impacts were identified from the consultation. Whilst concern was expressed for disabled people generally having access to HRS services in relation to the budget allocation this was felt to be fair and reasonable given the savings required.
Gender Reassignment	(=)	This won't directly impact. The specification will also outline training requirements to ensure providers have sufficient training to support the wide range of potential customers. Providers will be required to work with customers though their support offer/arrangements in a way which supports customers continuing access/attendance at other key services/appointments. No further equality impacts were identified from the consultation.
Marriage and Civil Partnership	(=)	This won't directly impact. The specification will also outline training requirements to ensure providers have sufficient training to support the wide range of potential customers. Providers will be required to work with customers though their support offer/arrangements in a way which supports customers continuing access/attendance at other key services/appointments. No further equality impacts were identified from the consultation.
Pregnancy and Maternity	(-)	Adult accommodation services are aimed at single residents. This may have negative impacts on pregnant women or adults with children who require accommodation services. Young people accommodation currently has a mother and baby's hostel. With service reduction the number of mothers supported may decrease, negatively impacting the number of mothers and babies accessing the service. Providers will be required to work with customers though their support offer/arrangements in a way which supports customers continuing access/attendance at other key services/appointments. No further equality impacts were identified from the consultation.

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Race: Including: • Colour • Nationality • Citizenship • Ethnic or national origins	(=)	The ethnicity of customers of the services reflects the ethnicity of main applicants owed a prevention or relief duty as homeless, however this is disproportionate to the population of Warwickshire. The specification will also outline training requirements to ensure providers have sufficient knowledge to support the wide range of potential customers. No further equality impacts were identified from the consultation.
Religion or Belief	(=)	The number of people using the services at present are representative of the religious make up of Warwickshire. This won't directly impact. The specification will also outline training requirements to ensure providers have sufficient training to support the wide range of potential customers. No further equality impacts were identified from the consultation.
Sex	(-)	Single men are large users of the adult's accommodation service. It is likely these customers will therefore see a greater impact under this proposal; however, impact is likely to be experienced by all genders. These customers may still require accommodation support services which may increase pressure in other areas, some of which may only provide gender specific services. No further equality impacts were identified from the consultation.
Sexual Orientation	(=)	The number of people using the services at present are representative of the diverse sexual orientation of England. There will be no direct impact from this proposal in regard to sexual orientation. The specification will also outline training requirements to ensure providers have sufficient training to support the wide range of potential customers. No further equality impacts were identified from the consultation.
Vulnerable People: • Individuals who suffer socio-economic disadvantage • Armed Forces (WCC signed the Armed Forces Covenant in June 2012) • Carers • Homeless • People leaving Prison • People leaving Care	(=&-)	With services being reduced it may increase the number of individuals being at risk of homelessness, made homeless or continue to be homeless. Ex-offenders are a large percentage of the cohort using accommodation service. The reduction in these services may result in them being homeless or not being able to access accommodation or services. People experiencing socio-economic disadvantage will be negatively impacted as they may not be able to access the services if they require them due to smaller provision. Reduced services for young people. 16-25 may need to access alternative accommodation services or struggle to access support services. This could negatively impact care leavers, meaning they will have to find alternative accommodation for this cohort of young people.

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		Providers will be required to work with customers though their support offer/arrangements in a way which supports customers continuing access/attendance at other key services/appointments. No further equality impacts were identified from the consultation.
Health Inequalities (HI) Many issues can have an impact on health: is it an area of deprivation, does every population group have equal access, unemployment, work conditions, education, skills, our living situation, rural, urban, rates of crime etc	(-)	Increase in homelessness which can negatively impact individuals' health. Decrease in service may result in some customers who require support not accessing this which can increase stress and anxiety around housing situation. An impact assessment will need to be completed to highlight the mitigations for this group of customers and to consider alternative routes and accommodation with other key stakeholders. This work will be completed with the children's social care teams. Providers will be required to work with customers though their support offer/arrangements in a way which supports customers continuing access/attendance at other key services/appointments. No further health inequality impacts were identified from the consultation.
Other Groups If there are any other groups		None Generally concerns were raised for the following group who are not specifically identified and may be impacted • Gypsy, Roma, Travellers • Illiterate individuals • Refugees, asylum seekers and those from countries at war With the exception of people with no recourse to public funds HRS services may be accessed by the above groups.

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Proposal 2: Stop commissioning the separate floating support service for people with disabilities and meet those needs under the two inclusive floating support services, one for people aged 16-25 and one for people aged 25+

We propose to stop commissioning the separate service for people with disabilities, but those people will be able to apply for support from the two new services in the same way, and the two new services will each be able to meet the same range of customers' needs as the current services.

The proportion of the total budget that would have been spent on the separate service for people with disabilities will all be added to the money spent on the two floating support services.

The specification will clearly outline that providers are to respond to and provide ongoing support to customers through an inclusive and non-discriminatory approach.

The following recommendations are proposed following consultation. These recommendations will be presented to WCC Cabinet in January 2024 for consideration, alongside this updated equality impact assessment Version 2.

Recommendation 2 – integrate disabled people's service into inclusive HRS floating support services for young people 16-25 years and adults 25+ years. To support consistency in service and quality, within the specification we shall strengthen the staff training requirements around trauma informed care, psychologically informed environments, autism, learning disability, visual impairment awareness training. Providers will be expected to evidence that staff members are adequately trained and experienced for supporting disabled customers. This may result in providers choosing to have specialist staff with dedicated caseloads or adopting alternative ways to address this. We will also build in monitoring of accessibility and outcomes to ensure we understand how inclusive our services are for people living with disabilities.

	Impact type (+) (=) (-) or (+&-)	Nature of impact
Age	(+&-)	Currently the Disability support service is open for all ages from 16+. The breakdown of 16 - 25 years old with a disability using the service is 19%, with the remaining 81% of customers with a disability being over 25 years. The proposal to offer inclusive services will ensure services remain available to support people from 16yr+ with disabilities. No further equality impacts were identified from the consultation.

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Disability Consider: • Physical disabilities • Sensory impairments • Neurodiverse conditions (e.g. dyslexia) • Mental health conditions (e.g. depression) • Medical conditions (e.g. diabetes)	(+&-)	The disabilities contract for floating support is currently separate. In the new contract we propose that the needs of people with disabilities will be met by two inclusive services – 16 -25 years old floating support and 25 + floating support. We expect these services will offer a personalised service that meets individual needs of customers, inclusive of those with disabilities. The specification will also state that staff teams will be adequality trained to support the range of customers who may require support. Providers will be required to work with customers though their support offer/arrangements in a way which supports customers continuing access/attendance at other key services/appointments. From an inclusivity perspective, respondents thought that one service for all could avoid segregation and increase equality and streamline services. However, respondents caveated that it is essential that quality remains high and specialised support for disabled people is still available. Some respondents had great concerns regarding the potential loss of specialised support for disabled people. Respondents emphasise that a generalised service may not be able to address the unique needs of disabled people and may fail to provide the tailored support they required.
Gender Reassignment	(=)	This service redesign won't directly impact. The specification will also outline training requirements to ensure providers have sufficient training to support the wide range of potential customers. Providers will be required to work with customers though their support offer/arrangements in a way which supports customers continuing access/attendance at other key services/appointments. No further equality impacts were identified from the consultation.
Marriage and Civil Partnership	(=)	This service redesign won't directly impact. The specification will also outline training requirements to ensure providers have sufficient training to support the wide range of potential customers. Providers will be required to work with customers though their support offer/arrangements in a way which supports customers continuing access/attendance at other key services/appointments. No further equality impacts were identified from the consultation.
Pregnancy and Maternity	(+&-)	This service redesign won't directly impact. Providers will be required to work with customers though their support offer/arrangements in a way which supports customers continuing access/attendance at other key services/appointments. No further equality impacts were identified from the consultation.

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Race: Including: • Colour • Nationality • Citizenship • Ethnic or national origins	**(=)**	Data on ethnicity needs to be improved before clear conclusions can be drawn. However there are suggestions in available data that there are difference in the proportions of people identifying as Asian or Black in the general population compared with the current HRS service users. No further equality impacts were identified from the consultation.
Religion or Belief	**(=)**	The number of people using the services at present are representative of the religious make up of Warwickshire, however data collection across current services is not consistent. Further work is required in this area to better understand if there are barriers for customers in accessing services based on religion or belief. The specification will also outline training requirements to ensure providers have sufficient training to support the wide range of potential customers. Providers will be required to work with customers though their support offer/arrangements in a way which supports customers continuing access/attendance at other key services/appointments. No further equality impacts were identified from the consultation.
Sex	**(+&-)**	Looking at the current disabilities service we have a slightly higher percentage of males using the service at 58% compared to 42% females. For young people 16-25 years floating services - 35% of customers are male compared to 65% female and for generic adult 25+ floating services 45% are males and 55% are females. By combining the floating support services, we would not envisage a direct impact on any specific sex and the overall service is expected to reflect the Warwickshire profile. No further equality impacts were identified from the consultation.
Sexual Orientation	**(=)**	Further work is required in this area to better understand if there are barriers for customers in accessing support services based on sexual orientation. WCC will work with services under the new contract/s to develop good quality data collection tools which will support this going forward. The specification will also outline training requirements to ensure providers have sufficient training to support the wide range of potential customers. No further equality impacts were identified from the consultation.
Vulnerable People: • Individuals who suffer socio-economic disadvantage	**(=)**	The identified vulnerabilities of people within the current disability services are similar to that of other customers. The specification will outline training requirements to ensure providers have sufficient training to support the wide range of potential customers. Providers will be required to work with customers though their support offer/arrangements in a way which supports customers continuing access/attendance at other key services/appointments.

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• Armed Forces (WCC signed the Armed Forces Covenant in June 2012) • Carers • Homeless • People leaving Prison • People leaving Care		No further equality impacts were identified from the consultation.
Health Inequalities (HI) Many issues can have an impact on health: is it an area of deprivation, does every population group have equal access, unemployment, work conditions, education, skills, our living situation, rural, urban, rates of crime etc	(-)	Overall decrease in service may result in some customers who require support not accessing this which can increase in stress and anxiety around their housing situation. The knock-on impact of a reduction of service therefore may risk increasing negative impacts in other areas of customers lives. We will work with customers, providers and district and borough councils to support with access to alternative services and other support services related to the specific are of need/inequality. Providers will be required to work with customers though their support offer/arrangements in a way which supports customers continuing access/attendance at other key services/appointments. It felt that the service redesign could lead to increased mental health issues and concern was raised regarding social and rural isolation and digital exclusion.
Other Groups If there are any other groups		None

Proposal 3: Introducing a flexible range of shorter support and interventions that respond to individual needs as efficiently as possible and give earlier, focused support for customers who do not need longer term support

We propose to keep the option of both self-referral and referral by organisations on behalf of an individual.

We propose this change for all floating support services, young people 16-25 years and adults 25+.

We propose to introduce:

➢ Early signposting where people can be supported to find help from other services which may be able to support them.

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> A new Brief Intervention of between 1 and 5 telephone and/or face to face support sessions. This is targeted to help resolve people's situations and support their self-help, so they are enabled to remain independent. Self-help (telephone and online support) could include District and Borough housing services and support services such as Citizen's Advice, Drug and Alcohol Services, Local Community Organisations and Social Care.
> A new 12-week short term transition/ resettlement/enablement floating support for those whose needs can be met in this time.

By offering the additional early signposting, brief interventions and 12-week service, short term floating support customers will receive a holistic and personalised service and be supported to access the right service at the right time.

Although services reductions will have a negative impact on current customers and the support service offer. This service redesign will not have a direct negative impact due to peoples protected characteristics. The specification will clearly outline that providers are to respond to and provide ongoing support to customers through an inclusive and non-discriminatory approach.

The following recommendations are proposed following consultation.

Recommendation 3 – offer flexible, shorter interventions. We recommend proceeding with an enhanced triage process that offers early information, advice and signposting, brief intervention which supports resolving issues at the earliest stage and only offering short-term HRS support for those that require on-going support. This will improve the customer's journey to get the right service at the right time, telling their story only once to HRS services.

	Impact type (+) (=) (-) or (+&-)	Nature of impact
Age	(+&-)	We are keeping the age range for services at 16- 25 years and 25+ , however the number of customers receiving a service across these age groups may be impacted. The specification will also outline training requirements to ensure providers have sufficient knowledge to support the wide range of potential customers. No further equality impacts were identified from the consultation.
Disability: Consider: • Physical disabilities • Sensory impairments • Neurodiverse conditions (e.g. dyslexia)	(+&-)	This service redesign won't directly impact. All services should be inclusive and meet the needs of people with disabilities. The specification will also outline training requirements to ensure providers have sufficient training to support the wide range of potential customers. Providers will be required to work with

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• Mental health conditions (e.g. depression) • Medical conditions (e.g. diabetes)		customers though their support offer/arrangements in a way which supports customers continuing access/attendance at other key services/appointments. Providers will be required to check everyone's communication preferences and access requirements and make arrangements accordingly. This may include for example providing interpreters, information in other languages, large fonts and ensuring support locations have wheelchair access (list is not exhaustive). No further equality impacts were identified from the consultation.
Gender Reassignment	(=)	The specification will also outline training requirements to ensure providers have sufficient knowledge to support the wide range of potential customers. Providers will be required to work with customers though their support offer/arrangements in a way which supports customers continuing access/attendance at other key services/appointments. No further equality impacts were identified from the consultation
Marriage and Civil Partnership	(=)	This service redesign won't directly impact. The specification will also outline training requirements to ensure providers have sufficient knowledge to support the wide range of potential customers. Providers will be required to work with customers though their support offer/arrangements in a way which supports customers continuing access/attendance at other key services/appointments. No further equality impacts were identified from the consultation
Pregnancy and Maternity	(+&-)	Expectant and new mothers will be able to access support and will be signposted to support specifically relating to pregnancy/maternity. No further equality impacts were identified from the consultation
Race: Including: • Colour • Nationality • Citizenship • Ethnic or national origins	(=)	The ethnicity of customers of service reflects the ethnicity of main applicants owed a prevention or relief duty as homeless, however this is disproportionate to the population of Warwickshire. The specification will also outline training requirements to ensure providers have sufficient knowledge to support the wide range of potential customers. Translators will be provided if required and information will be available in different languages. No further equality impacts were identified from the consultation
Religion or Belief	(=)	The number of people using the services at present are representative of the religious makeup of the UK. This service redesign won't directly impact. Providers will be required to work with customers though their support offer/arrangements in a way which supports customers continuing access/attendance at other key services/appointments.

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		The specification will also outline training requirements to ensure providers have sufficient knowledge to support the wide range of potential customers. No further equality impacts were identified from the consultation.
Sex	(=)	This service redesign won't directly impact. People will be able to request to speak to/be supported by people of a specified gender by phone, virtually and in person. The specification will also outline training requirements to ensure providers have sufficient training to support the wide range of potential customers. From the outreach finding it identified that women and men may experience accessing support differently. Whilst this consultation report was clear to state this isn't statistically valid it is interesting to note and consider when developing the offer around early information, advice and signposting, brief intervention and how to address in a personalised way. • More women (39%) reported finding it easy or very easy to access support compared to men (15%). • More men (60%) found the support they received to be helpful compared to women (51%).
Sexual Orientation	(=)	The number of people using the services at present are representative of the sexual orientation makeup of the UK . This service redesign won't directly impact. The specification will also outline training requirements to ensure providers have sufficient knowledge to support the wide range of potential customers. No further equality impacts were identified from the consultation.
Vulnerable People: • Individuals who suffer socio-economic disadvantage • Armed Forces (WCC signed the Armed Forces Covenant in June 2012) • Carers • Homeless • People leaving Prison	(+&-)	People receiving support services may have some and/or all of the stated vulnerabilities. The service redesign aims to enable customers to access enhance signposting and brief intervention to enable them to resolve situations and support their self-help and get the right service at the right time. Appointment times and locations will be flexible to take into account people's diverse needs and commitments, for example, carers and those travelling by public transport. Providers will be required to work with customers though their support offer/arrangements in a way which supports customers continuing access/attendance at other key services/appointments.

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• People leaving Care		The specification will also outline training requirements to ensure providers have sufficient training to support the wide range of potential customers. No further equality impacts were identified from the consultation.
Health Inequalities (HI) Many issues can have an impact on health: is it an area of deprivation, does every population group have equal access, unemployment, work conditions, education, skills, our living situation, rural, urban, rates of crime etc.	(+&-)	This service redesign should not directly impact individuals' health. The proposal should support customers receiving focussed floating support in more efficient and timely manner, enabling swifter signposting to alternative or additional services. Providers will be required to work with customers though their support offer/arrangements in a way which supports customers continuing access/attendance at other key services/appointments. A concern for the impact of digital exclusion was expressed.
Other Groups If there are any other groups		None

Proposal 4: Reduce the maximum duration of services

We are proposing to reduce the maximum duration of a service intervention for an individual.

We propose to:
- Reduce the maximum duration of floating support for people aged 16-25 from 24 to 12 months
- Reduce the maximum duration of floating support for people aged 25+ from 12 months to 6 months
- Reduce the maximum duration of ACC from 24 months to 18 months

In order to maximise the resource we will have and continue to support as many customers as possible, we aim to increase the throughput of customers.

This service redesign is not a direct negative impact due to people's protected characteristics. The specification will clearly outline that providers are to respond to and provide ongoing support to customers through an inclusive and non-discriminatory approach. The specification will also outline training requirements to ensure providers have sufficient knowledge to support the wide range of potential customers.

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The following recommendations are proposed following consultation.

Recommendation 4 – shorten the maximum duration of HRS services. For young people's HRS services, we recommend not reducing the time limits for young people. For adults' HRS services we recommend the reductions are taken forward. All HRS services will offer holistic and personalised support to meet need, promoting wellbeing, safety, resilience, independence to prevent, reduce and/or delay an individual's need for ongoing care and support. Clarity will be given within the specification with allowance for exceptions where necessary to support clients whose outcomes have not been met within the expected timescale. This may be particularly challenging for accommodation-based services due to the lack of affordable move-one accommodation across Warwickshire. We will also work with District and Borough Housing to review their move-on protocol for HRS services.

	Impact type (+) (=) (-) or (+&-)	Nature of impact
Age	(+&-)	This service redesign should not directly impact people based on age, services will continue to be available for the same age groups, however the duration of this support will be shorter enabling us to support greater throughput of customers with a more focussed approach. Different services have historically had different maximum duration of support. We have looked at actual support durations and considered where we can make efficiencies at the same time as supporting people to achieve their support plan outcomes. Young people may need longer duration of support as they are less likely to have lived by themselves before and need support to develop their basic independent living skills (cooking, washing, cleaning) alongside being tenancy ready. By exception and with commissioners' approval individual people may be supported for longer periods. The impact on young people was highlighted by many respondents. The recommendation has been changed to ensure young people duration of support is not changed and remains the same as current HRS services.

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Disability	(+&-)	This service redesign should not directly impact people based on disability.
Consider: • Physical disabilities • Sensory impairments • Neurodiverse conditions (e.g. dyslexia) • Mental health conditions (e.g. depression) • Medical conditions (e.g. diabetes)		The support plan identifies the specific outcomes people need to enable them to live independently, move into more secure/appropriate housing and reduce the risk of homelessness. The plan also identifies milestones and timescales for achieving incremental goals, including a period of reducing support in preparation for independence and transitional support. Providers will be required to work with customers though their support offer/arrangements in a way which supports customers continuing access/attendance at other key services/appointments. Concerned was expressed that reducing the duration support for disabled people may be an impact where their needs resulted in more time in building relationships and trust were shared and the importance of always taking a personalise approach. For disabled people aged 16- 25 years the duration of support will not be reduced following the consultation. For disabled adults 25+ years they will be a change of duration of support.
Gender Reassignment		No impacts are foreseen on the basis of gender reassignment. This will be reviewed continuously and if negative impacts arise, mitigating actions will be put in place. Providers will be required to work with customers though their support offer/arrangements in a way which supports customers continuing access/attendance at other key services/appointments. No further equality impacts were identified from the consultation.
Marriage and Civil Partnership		No impacts are foreseen on the basis of marriage and civil partnership. This will be reviewed continuously and if negative impacts arise, mitigating actions will be put in place. Providers will be required to work with customers though their support offer/arrangements in a way which supports customers continuing access/attendance at other key services/appointments. No further equality impacts were identified from the consultation.
Pregnancy and Maternity		This service redesign should not directly impact people based on pregnancy and maternity. Length of support will take into account the stage of the pregnancy and estimated due date, support may be extended if support needs have not been fully met and/or further post-natal support is required to access specialist support networks. Providers will be required to work with customers though their support offer/arrangements in a way which supports customers continuing access/attendance at other key services/appointments. The current mother and baby and family accommodation services for young people offer under the HRS Young People's services for 16-25 years will not have a reduction in duration of service as proposed and will remain the same as is currently available.

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Race Including: • Colour • Nationality • Citizenship • Ethnic or national origins		No impacts are foreseen on the basis of race. This will be reviewed continuously and if negative impacts arise, mitigating actions will be put in place. No further equality impacts were identified from the consultation.
Religion or Belief		No impacts are foreseen on the basis of religion or belief. This will be reviewed continuously and if negative impacts arise, mitigating actions will be put in place. Providers will be required to work with customers though their support offer/arrangements in a way which supports customers continuing access/attendance at other key services/appointments. No further equality impacts were identified from the consultation.
Sex		No impacts are foreseen on the basis of sex. This will be reviewed continuously and if negative impacts arise, mitigating actions will be put in place. No further equality impacts were identified from the consultation.
Sexual Orientation		No impacts are foreseen on the basis of sexual orientation. This will be reviewed continuously and if negative impacts arise, mitigating actions will be put in place. No further equality impacts were identified from the consultation.
Vulnerable People: • Individuals who suffer socio-economic disadvantage • Armed Forces (WCC signed the Armed Forces Covenant in June 2012) • Carers • Homeless • People leaving Prison • People leaving Care		People receiving services may have some and/or all of the stated vulnerabilities. With less money we want to try and support more people by increasing the throughput of customers. Appointment times and locations will be flexible to take into account people's diverse needs and commitments, for example, carers and those travelling by public transport. Providers will be required to work with customers though their support offer/arrangements in a way which supports customers continuing access/attendance at other key services/appointments. No further equality impacts were identified from the consultation.
Health Inequalities (HI) Many issues can have an impact on health: is it an area of deprivation,		This service redesign should not directly impact individuals' health. The proposal reduces the duration of the support received which may negatively impact other inequalities for customers.

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does every population group have equal access, unemployment, work conditions, education, skills, our living situation, rural, urban, rates of crime etc		Providers will be required to work with customers though their support offer/arrangements in a way which supports customers continuing access/attendance at other key services/appointments. By exception and with commissioners' approval individual people may be supported for longer periods. No further health inequality impacts were identified from the consultation.
Other Groups If there are any other groups		

Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)

Public Authorities must have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. Please evidence how your proposed activity meets our obligations under the PSED.

When we commission providers to deliver services on behalf of WCC we expect them to carry out the PSED duty on our behalf and this is evidenced in our specification and contracts; evaluated as part of the tender process and monitored throughout the lifetime of our contracts.

	Evidence of Due Regard
Eliminate unlawful discrimination (Harassment, victimisation and other prohibited conduct):	During the tender process it will be made clear to providers the expectations we uphold from our commissioned providers including discrimination policies for customers and staffing of services.
Advance equality of opportunity: This involves - removing or minimizing disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics. - taking steps to meet the needs of people with certain protected characteristics where these are different from the needs of other people, for example, taking steps to take account of people with disabilities; - encouraging people with certain protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.	During the tender process it will be clear from the specification that providers are to respond to and deliver ongoing support to customers through an inclusive and non-discriminatory approach. We will expect our providers to make reasonable adjustments to ensure everyone can access the support they require. The services will cover the support of customers with disabilities with their housing needs. This will support them to participate in public life and other activities. The service also supports offenders and care leavers to find suitable housing arrangements and with their housing and financial needs. During the public consultation, a provider will be commissioned to support vulnerable adults and young people to partake in the public consultation.

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		This will ensure that their voice and opinion are heard and listened to in regard to the service re-design.
Foster good relations: This means tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people from different groups and communities.		Within the service specifications we require service providers to evident their commitment to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. Including aiming to employ diverse staff who reflect the communities we serve so that everyone can be understood and respected. Training and support being available for staff on working with customers and communities from diverse backgrounds and identities so that everyone in Warwickshire can feel safe, valued, supported and respected.

Section Five: Partners / Stakeholders

Which sectors are likely to have an interest in or be affected by the proposed activity?	Yes / No	Describe the interest / affect
Businesses	No	
Councils	Yes	District and Borough (D &B) councils will be impacted by the decision made through re-tendering process and the savings to be made by reducing services (Proposal One) The redesign proposals aim to reduce the impact and support a personalised and inclusive offer, so people get the right service at the right time and increase the throughput. D & B are clear that the current services support them in preventing homelessness and supporting vulnerable people to remain in their homes. Any reduction in service they feel will impact on increasing the number of people experiencing homelessness. All proposals will have impact on housing services offered by D&B councils

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Education Sector	Yes	Interested – may need to refer people to an alternative service given what proposed model and whoever is successful in the tender process.
Fire and Rescue	Yes	Interested – may need to refer people to an alternative service given what proposed model and whoever is successful in the tender process.
Governance Structures	Yes	
NHS	Yes	Interested – may need to refer people to an alternative service given what proposed model and whoever is successful in the tender process.
Police	Yes	Interested – may need to refer people to an alternative service given what proposed model and whoever is successful in the tender process.
Voluntary and Community Sector	Yes	Impacted – other services in the voluntary and community sector may have an increase in customers. This will be those who are no longer able to access support through our commissioned offer.
Other(s): please list and describe the nature of the relationship / impact		Customers & their families – Impact, decrease in service provision will mean there is less current support on offer. May need to look at alternative options. Current providers – Impacted. Depending on impact of re-tendering but could be de-commissioned, TUPE, redundancy. WCC procurement – Impacted. Work closely through re-tendering process. WCC insight team – Impacted supporting with consultation analysis. WCC Finance - Impacted. Work closely through re-tendering process. WCC Legal - Impacted. Work closely through re-tendering process. WCC Health and Wellbeing Board – Interested. Need to be kept informed of changes and impact of these. WCC Equalities WCC information governance WCC Youth Services – Interested. Need to be kept informed of changes and impact of these. WCC Vulnerable Adults – Interested. Need to be kept informed of changes and impact of these. WCC Safeguarding – Interested. Need to be kept informed of changes and impact of these. WCC public health – Interested. Need to be kept informed of changes and impact of these. WCC Youth offending team - – Interested. Need to be kept informed of changes and impact of these. WCC SHAD/Extra Care - – Interested. Need to be kept informed of changes and impact of these. WCC FIS - Interested. Need to be kept informed of changes and impact of these. Housing Associations – Interested. Need to be kept informed of changes and impact of these.

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Section Six: Action Planning
If you have identified impacts on protected characteristic groups in Section Four, please summarise these in the table below detailing the actions you are taking to mitigate or support this impact. If you are not taking any action to support or mitigate the impact, you should complete the No Mitigating Actions section below instead.

Mitigating Actions

All the proposed models and reasoning behind them will be shared with the public through a public consultation. The aim of this consultation is to inform the public about the proposals and the reasons for them. What the people of Warwickshire tell us during this consultation will help us consider how we redesign services and what services we keep, reduce and/or stop delivering. We will wish to offer and deliver as many of the right services to the right people at the right time as possible and your views about how we should do this are important.

Proposal 1: Reducing the money we spend on accommodation and floating services by an equal proportion

We propose to implement this proposal. Additionally, within the specifications the importance of partnership working across all sectors is paramount in these services and will be clear. HRS services often act as the conduit to support people with multi-disadvantages to access a wide range of specialist support services to enable them to meet their housing related support goals.

Identified Impact	Action(s)	Timescale incl. evaluation and review date	Name of person responsible
1. There will be fewer customers supported through the young people accommodation services. 2. There will be fewer customers supported through the adult accommodation service. 3. Customers with disability will not have access to a service described as a disability specialist service. 4. Reduced services for mothers and children.	Working with Children & Families team to look at specific impact on care leavers and children in care to identify the impact and alternative provision/mitigation. (Impacts 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10) There will be a public consultation which may influence how the services are re-designed. (All impacts) Redesign proposals 2-4 create efficiencies and aim to increase throughput of customers, early intervention and ensure people get the right	Before May 2023 Consultation taking place May 2023 The consultation was carried out from 22nd May to 11th August 2023.	Commissioner with support from operational teams Commissioning Support Officers

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5. Reduced services for person with prior criminal justice system involvement 6. Reduced service offer for single men 7. Increase of homelessness in the County. 8. Higher number of people with prior criminal justice system involvement needing an accommodation service from other providers/agencies 9. Negative impact on health due to homelessness or stress/anxieties around housing situation 10. Less accommodation or support for care leavers. Resulting in alternative service pressures. 11. The ethnicity of customers reflects the ethnicity of main applicants owed a prevention or relief duty as homeless, however this is disproportionate to the population of Warwickshire.	service at the right time. Try and reduce the impact on service reductions. (All impacts) We expect both the young people's 16-25 years and adults 25+ floating support will offer an inclusive service and meet the needs of people with disabilities as part of their contract and for all providers to be adequality trained to support these customers. (Impact 3) Signposting to D&B local housing authorities (Impacts 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10) Ensure WCC website clearly outlines what to do when you are experiencing homelessness and what services are and how to refer. (All impacts) Ensure WCC Communication Plan and new providers Marketing Plan is delivered to ensure all stakeholders across public sector and voluntary sector are aware of the redesign services and what is available and how to refer to maximise engagement of potential customers (All Impacts) Ensure probation are aware of what is available (Impact 8) Signposting to citizen's advice and CGL and compass (Impacts 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9. 10)	During re-tender During re-tender Throughout contract Throughout contract Prior to mobilisation of new providers and throughout contract During re-tender Throughout contract Throughout contract	District and Boroughs Commissioners and awarded provider CGL and CAB, Probation etc.

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	Make sure support services are more accessible and representative of Warwickshire's population (All impacts) Ensure future service specification promote equality and diversity, with clear expectations around monitoring, training and quality of services. We will look to work with providers to explore how accessible services are to Asian communities who are currently underrepresented. (Impacts 11)	During re-tendering and on-going performance management	

Proposal 2: Stop commissioning the separate floating support service for people with disabilities and meet those needs under the two inclusive floating support services, one for people aged 16-25 and one for people aged 25+

We propose implementing the proposal while being mindful of concerns in relation to specialist skills, training and knowledge and ensure incorporated within the specification and future monitoring requirements.

Identified Impact	Action(s)	Timescale incl. evaluation and review date	Name of person responsible
1. Change in the way people with disabilities will access the floating service 2. Potential changes in the way people with disabilities will continue to be given support if they are receiving services at the point of any change of service provider	There will be a public consultation which may influence how the services are re-designed. (Impact 1 and 2) Deliver the actions within the Communication Plan including:	Consultation taking place May – July 2023 Initially marketing April 2023 – September 2024	Commissioner Commissioning Support Officers WCC Communication Teams Awarded provider and commissioners

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3. Customers with disability will not have access to a service described as a disability specialist service.	➢ Ensure WCC website clearly outlines what to do when you need support and/or you are homeless ➢ Make sure support services (WCC internal and external), District and Borough Housing teams are clear about where to signpost future customers who have disabilities and referral processes (Impact 1 and 2) Ensure redesign specifications are clear about offering inclusive services and expectation of the workforce to be able to support a diverse range of customers As part of mobilisation ensure both customers are aware of changes and key stakeholders and supported through the process based on customer choice (Impact 1 and 2) We expect both the young people's 16-25 years and adults 25+ floating services will offer an inclusive service and meet the needs of people with disabilities as part of their contract and for all providers to be adequality trained to support these customers. (Impact 3) We will: • Strengthen the staff training and knowledge requirements to include trauma informed care; physiologically information	and Updated as needed throughout contract September 2023 During mobilization of tender	

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	environments; specialist training in autism, learning disability and, visual impairment awareness training for workforce. • Providers will be expected to evidence that staff members are adequately trained and experienced for supporting disabled customers. This may result in providers choosing to have specialist staff with dedicated caseloads or adopting alternative ways to address this. • Build in monitoring of accessibility and outcomes to ensure we understand how inclusive our services are for people living with disabilities.		

The following reflects the key themes and ideas identified from the consultation in how to reduce the impact on people with protected characteristics that use the current Housing Related Support services or might use services in the future. These will be considered alongside those in the table above, in the development of the redesign services and aspects will be incorporated within the service specification, contract and during the mobilisation, where appropriate.

Staff training
- Respondents are concerned about the attitude of certain staff, finding them to be rude and not informative.
- They recommend better training for staff to understand specific needs of various groups, including individuals with disabilities
- Service availability and accessibility

The availability of staff to speak to is a recurring concern
- Services need to be easily accessible through multiple means, including face-to-face and paper format
- Some respondents emphasised the importance of having specialised services, especially for groups like young parents and individuals with disabilities

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Inclusion and equality
- Several responses criticise the system for prioritising certain groups over others (like ex-forces over refugees)
- Concerns are also raised about understanding and respecting the language, culture and dietary needs of different groups

Monitoring and accountability
- More robust forms of monitoring and data collection to understand the impact on various people
- Suggestions include close monitoring of statistics, steering groups and the use of Health Equity Assessment Tools

Communication and information
- Respondents feel that better signposting to services and improved communication channels are crucial
- There is a recommendation for professionals to be properly informed so they can adequately refer and signpost those in need

Efficiency
- Suggestions are made to have fewer points of contact to increase efficiency
- Some respondents also advocate for a more specific and specialised service rather than a "one-size-fits-all" approach

Policy and governance
- Respondents are sceptical about decisions affecting the services, including budget cuts

Specialised support
- Retaining specialised support services, especially for individuals with disabilities
- A specialised team member to oversee cases involving those with learning disabilities

Open feedback channels
- The need for open forums, regular consultations and user committees is highlighted, indicating a desire for ongoing dialogue between service providers and users

Summary of Equality Impact Assessment Feedback and Consideration for Service Model and Specification

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Equality Impact Assessment			
Consultation Feedback	**Impact & Suggestions for redesign (Examples of comments provided)**	**We will**	**Further considerations for service model and specification**
From Ask Warwickshire Stopping the dedicated Disabled people floating HRS - Concerns about exclusion of certain individuals and its impact on waiting lists, accessibility should remain a priority. 42% believe EIA accurately reflects impact, 30% were unsure and 28% felt it did not. Those who use HRS services were most likely to say they did not know whether the EIA identified the impact of these proposals, a finding that was consistent with Easy Read responses did not Outreach findings: Women found it easier and quicker to access support, but men found the support more helpful Disabled respondents (36%) found it easier to access the required support compared to non-disabled (24%) Young people (18-24) were less likely to seek out support but were quicker at accessing it when they did	Concern and lack of specificity for vulnerable groups were outlined from some respondents, this included: refugees, asylum seekers and those from countries at war; those with disabilities, including mental health and autism; male offenders; illiterate individuals; young parents and their babies; Gypsy, Roma, Travellers, and young people. Impact of decommissioning some services, service delivery and effectiveness, lack of involvement. *"No mention of the impact on Gypsy, Roma or Traveller communities - only generic 'other ethnic groups'"* *"The issue of ex-prisoners not being allowed onto the council housing register."* *"I think it forgets about illiterate people, who cannot navigate the housing system"* How to reduce the impact focussed on staff training; service availability and accessibility with face to face alongside virtually/telephone; communication strategy so everyone is aware of changes and support through the transition of mobilisation; consideration of specialist team within the redesign services to meet specific needs in particular people living with disabilities; robust monitoring and data collection. *"Warwickshire Public Health is pleased to see the level of detail that has been collated in this EIA"*	We have updated the EIA. We will continue to monitor equality data (access and outcomes) throughout the life of the contract.	Requirements for providers to align to WCC policy regarding equality will be clearly stated in the service specifications and tested in the tendering process. Staff training, accessibility and the requirement for personalised approach with be outlined in the specification to meet the diverse needs of vulnerable groups, including those with protected characteristics Ensure the mobilisation of services is smooth and clarity of redesigned HRS services, referral pathways is communicated to the public and key stakeholders that refer people.

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		"I think the EIA is quite clear on impact"		

No Mitigating Actions (Version 1) / Further Migrations on Proposal 3 and 4 identified during consultation Version 2

Please explain why you do not need to take any action to mitigate or support the impact of your proposed activity.
Proposal 3 and Proposal 4 focus on increased throughput for customers and getting to the right service at the right time, with enhance signposting and brief intervention support to enable independence and customers resolving issues for themselves with short-term support. These redesign proposals have no direct impact based on people's protected characteristics, so no action plan is required for these areas. **Update following Consultation and changes to recommendations.** **Proposal 3- Flexible range of shorter interventions** We propose to implement the proposal for an enhanced triage with information and advice and brief intervention as part of the HRS Service offer Whilst this proposal may not have a direct impact based on people's protected characteristics the changes incorporated should improve the customer journey for all people using HRS services in the future. A 12-week service was suggested within this proposal and shorter duration support in proposal 4 - there was overwhelming support to ensure the services remained personalised to each person receiving support. With this in mind, stating a precise 12-week service timescale may not be needed. Focus will remain on assessing individuals needs and whether advice and information, brief intervention and/or a short-term HRS service is required. All support offered will be based on mutually agreed support plans and outcomes monitored to support progression. Devise monitoring of services that looks at outcomes, captures customers returning for support. **Proposal 4: Reducing the maximum duration of services** This was felt to have a direct impact on young people and those young people accessing the mother and baby and family HRS services. We therefore have recommend not reducing the duration of support for young people.

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For adults' HRS services we recommend the reductions are taken forward for floating support.

For adult accommodation-based services we recommend this is reviewed annually during the lifetime of the contract.

All HRS services will offer holistic and personalised support to meet need, promoting wellbeing, safety, resilience, independence to prevent, reduce and/or delay an individual's need for ongoing care and support.

Clarity will be given within the specification with allowance for exceptions where necessary to support clients whose outcomes have not been met within the expected timescale.

Reducing the duration of adult accommodation-based HRS may be particularly challenging due to the lack of affordable move-on accommodation across Warwickshire. WCC will work with District and Borough Housing to review their move-on protocol for HRS services

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Section Seven: Assessment Outcome

Only one of following statements best matches your assessment of this proposed activity. Please select one and provide your reasons.		
No major change required		
The proposal has to be adjusted to reduce impact on protected characteristic groups and/or health inequalities		
Continue with the proposal but it is not possible to remove all the risk to protected characteristic groups and/or health inequalities	X	This has the potential to impact on Warwickshire customers. However, we plan to work with local communities and partner organisations to put mitigating actions in place to ensure everyone can still access the support they need.
Stop the proposal as it is potentially in breach of equality legislation		

Section Eight: Sign Off
N.B To be completed after the EIA is completed but before the area of work commences.

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Name of person/s completing EIA	Victoria Church, Victoria Jones and Jackie Soulier
Name and signature of Assistant Director	Becky Hale
Date	22nd February 2023
Date of next review and name of person/s responsible	September 2023 - Victoria Jones

Name of person/s completing EIA Version 2 Updated	Ranbir Johal and Victoria Jones
Date	October 2023
Name and signature of Assistant Director	Becky Hale
Date	
Date of next review and name of person/s responsible	October 2025 - Victoria Jones

Once signed off, please ensure the EIA is uploaded using the following form. Please name it "EIA [project] [service area] [year]": Upload Completed Equality Impact Assessments

These will be stored on a Sharepoint library which WCC colleagues can access.

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Consultation on the Redesign of Housing Related Support Services

This Easy Read Format was produced by Grapevine on behalf of Warwickshire County Council.

grapeVine
GROWING LIVES AND COMMUNITIES

Warwickshire
County Council

1

Contents Page

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Introduction

This easy read explains the plans for redesigning housing related support services in Warwickshire.

It outlines:

- What support is currently offered to people

- What the Council's suggested changes are

- Why changes need to be made

- What the impact of these changes might be

These changes will make the services very different from how they are now.

The redesign will have a big impact on lots of people in the future who access support services.

The Council would like to hear everyone's views on their suggested changes, including:

- People who use these services now
- People who might use these services in the future

There are questions in this easy read for you to answer. Please take some time to fill them out.

Your opinions are important and can make a difference to the changes that will be made to housing related support services.

3

Types of support

There are two types of housing-related support which help people gain the skills to live independently.

These two types of support are available to anyone over the age of 16 with support needs:

16+

1. **Accommodation-based support**

2. **Floating support**

Accommodation-based support:

- People are offered a house or place to live for the short-term

- People are offered short-term support to help them to live more independently

- People can only get this support whilst they are living somewhere that is not their own home
  - E.g. Temporary housing

- People can have this type of support for up to 2 years **2 years**

Floating support:

- People are offered short-term support to help them to live more independently

- People can get this support whilst they are living in either:
  - Their own home
  - Temporary housing

- People under 25 years old can have this type of support for up to 2 years **16– 25 2 years**

- People over 25 years old can have this type of support for 1 year **25 + 1 year**

4

Current offer - floating support services

There are three different floating support services offered in Warwickshire.

1. Floating Support Service

Who is the floating support for?
People with disabilities who are 16 years old and above.

Which provider runs the service?
Together Working For Wellbeing

2. Floating Support Service

Who is the floating support for?
Young people who are between 16 and 25 years old.

Which provider runs the service?
St Basils

3. Generic Floating Support Service

Who is the floating support for?
Adults who are 25 years old and above.

Which provider runs the service?
People, Potential, Possibilities P3

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Current offer - accommodation based support services

There are three different accommodation based services offered.

Accommodation-Based Support Service

Who is the accomodation support for?
Young people who are between 16 and 25 years old.

2 providers run accommodation-based support for young people.

1. Accommodation based

Which provider runs the service?
People, Potential, Possibilities P3

Where is this service offered?
North Warwickshire
Nuneaton and Bedworth
Rugby

2. Accommodation based

Which provider runs the service?
St Basils

Where is this service offered?
Stratford
Warwick

3. Accommodation-Based Support Service

Who is the accommodation support for?
Homeless people, including ex-offenders, who are 25 years old and over.

Which provider runs the service?
People, Potential, Possibilities P3

Where is this service offered?
In the whole of Warwickshire.

6

Current offer - extra services

The current provider of housing related support services for people over 25 years old are called People, Potential, Possibilities P3.

People, Potential, Possibilities P3 decided they wanted to provide some more support for people.

They chose to provide extra support, which was more than what they were asked to do by the council.

What extra support do they currently offer?

Street outreach services

This service offers support to rough sleepers.

It also encourages rough sleepers to get help from other services.

Navigator hubs (in Nuneaton and Rugby)

The hubs are shops in Rugby and Nuneaton town centre.

People can get advice, support and information about other services at these hubs.

7

Examples of how housing related support services help people

Housing support services help people to:

- Have a home and develop skills

- Stay safe at home and in the community

- Manage their money and pay for their bills

- Look after their health and wellbeing

- Find paid or voluntary work opportunities

- Take part in training and education

8

Why are changes being made to housing related support services?

In Warwickshire, the County Council have a lower budget for housing related support services from April 2025.

This means Warwickshire County Council has less money to spend on these services.

Warwickshire County Council have decided to re-design the services.

This means there are going to be changes to the way housing related services work in Warwickshire.

They want to redesign the services to:
- Work with the lower budget
- Make services more efficient
- Make services more effective

However, they have said they want to continue to focus on and help the people in the greatest need.

9

Who has helped to plan the suggested changes?

To help the Council plan which changes to make to housing related support services, they:

- Listened to what is important to people who need housing related support services

- Asked people, services and organisations to complete a survey

Which organisations were involved?

The different organisations and services who were involved included:

- Different charities
- Housing teams within local councils
- Warwickshire Probation Service
- Warwickshire County Council Adult Social Care
- Children and Families Service

Organisations and services then attended workshops to plan what changes could be made.

10

What did the Warwickshire County Council do next?

What did the Council find out from the workshops?

People and organisations wanted all housing related support services to be continued. ✔

Currently people might not always receive support for the right amount of time. ✘

Stopping any of the housing related support services might mean more people:
- become homeless
- need more social care support

What happened after the workshops?

The workshops helped the Council to plan 6 suggested changes to housing related support services.

6 changes

Now the Council want to know what you think of these changes.

11

What changes are the council suggesting?

The next 15 pages tell you more about the 6 changes:

Change 1: Accommodation-based support and floating support services will continue but both service areas will be given less money from the Council.

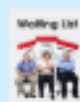Change 2: The separate floating support service for people with disabilities will end.

Change 3: Flexible and short term support options will be added to all services so that people can be offered different levels of support that last for different amounts of time.

Change 4: The maximum time someone can be involved with a service will be shorter.

Change 5: The new name for this group of services will be 'Supporting Independence Services'.

Change 6: The Council will not ask providers to deliver the extra support services (the street outreach and community hub services).

12

Change 1

> Change 1: Accommodation-based support and floating support services will continue but both service areas will be given less money from the Council.

What happened before the change?

Money from the Council was split between the two services areas:
- Accommodation-based support
- Floating support

What will happen after the change?

Accommodation-based support and floating support will still be funded by the Council.

There will be less money given to fund these housing-related services.

The money will be split between the two service areas in the same proportion as before.

But the services may not be able to support as many people and some people may have to wait longer for support.

Why are the Council suggesting this change?

People will be able to access the same types of services as they do now.

This change will not unfairly impact one group of people more than another group of people.

13

Your thoughts about Change 1

Questions

Change 1: Accommodation-based support and floating support services will continue but both service areas will be given less money from the Council.

How do you feel about this change? (Please circle one)

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Agree

Strongly agree

Explain why you agree or disagree in the box below.

How do you think this change might affect you?
Please write in the box below.

14

Your thoughts about Change 1

Questions

Change 1: Accommodation-based support and floating support services will continue but both service areas will be given less money from the Council.

How do you think this change would affect other people?
Please write in the box below.

What could the Council do differently?
Please write in the box below.

15

Change 2

Change 2: The separate floating support service for people with disabilities will end.

What happened before the change?

There was a separate floating service to support people with disabilities to live more independently.

People have sometimes had to wait longer for support if:
- They are referred to the wrong service
- They need to be referred to a different service and assessed again

What will happen after the change?

There will be 2 floating support services:
- A service for young people aged 16 to 25 years old
- A service for adults who are 25 years and older

People with and without disabilities will access the same floating support services.

They will add the money that would have been spent on the separate service for people with disabilities to the 2 floating support services.

The Council has said these services will be changed so that they can meet the needs of people with and without disabilities.

16

Change 2

Change 2: The separate floating support service for people with disabilities will end.

Why are the Council suggesting this change?

It is more expensive to run separate services compared to one service that includes everyone.

The Council believe that one provider could deliver services that are inclusive and meet the needs of:

- People with disabilities
- People with mental health problems
- People without disabilities

People won't be referred to the wrong service as there will only be one service for each age group.

The Council can spend more money on the 2 floating support services if they take away the separate support for people with disabilities.

This means people with disabilities may get different support to the support they get now.

17

Your thoughts about Change 2

Questions

> **Change 2:** The separate floating support service for people with disabilities will end.

How do you feel about this change? (Please circle one)

Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Agree | Strongly agree

Explain why you agree or disagree in the box below.

How do you think this change might affect you?
Please write in the box below.

18

Your thoughts about Change 2

Questions

Change 2: The separate floating support service for people with disabilities will end.

How do you think this change would affect other people?
Please write in the box below.

What could the Council do differently?
Please write in the box below.

19

Change 3

Change 3: Flexible and short term support options will be added to all services so that people can be offered different levels of support that last for different amounts of time.

What happened before the change?

The current services add people to a waiting list for assessment.

If their assessment suggests they need support services, they are given a support worker.

What will happen after the change?

All housing-related services will be changed so that they assess people to find out:
- What type of support they need
- How quickly they need support

Once this assessment has been done, services will be able to decide:
- Who could be helped quickly by short term support or signposting
- Who has a higher level of need and will need support for longer

Some people will get offered support that lasts for a short amount of time.

All housing-related support services will be changed to include these short term support options:
- Information, advice and signposting to other services
- Between 1 and 5 brief support sessions on the phone or face to face
- Short term support that lasts for 12 weeks

20

Change 3

Change 3: Flexible and short term support options will be added to all services so that people can be offered different levels of support that last for different amounts of time.

Why are the Council suggesting this change?

There can be a lot of people who need housing support services.

This can mean it is hard for housing related services to support everyone.

The services will be working with less money because there is less funding for housing related services, so it will be even harder to support everyone.

This change means that the services will prioritise people in the most need for support.

Some people might need shorter support and brief advice to help them. Other people might need longer support.

The Council have said this change will:
- Help people to access the right type of support at the right time for them
- Stop people from having to repeat their story

21

Your thoughts about Change 3

Questions

Change 3: Flexible and short term support options will be added to all services so that people can be offered different levels of support that last for different amounts of time.

How do you feel about this change? (Please circle one)

| Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Agree | Strongly agree |

Explain why you agree or disagree in the box below.

How do you think this change might affect you?
Please write in the box below.

22

Your thoughts about Change 3

Questions

> Change 3: Flexible and short term support options will be added to all services so that people can be offered different levels of support that last for different amounts of time.

How do you think this change would affect other people?
Please write in the box below.

What could the Council do differently?
Please write in the box below.

23

Change 4

Change 4: The maximum time someone can be involved with a service will be shorter.

Floating support for young people (aged 16 - 25 years old)

Before the change:
- Services could work with a young person for up to 24 months

16–25

24 months

After the change:
- Services will work with a young person for up to 12 months

12 months

Floating support for adults over 25

Before the change:
- Services could work with adults for up to 12 months

25 +

12 months

After the change:
- Services will work with adults for up to 9 months

9 months

Accommodation-based support

Before the change:
- Services could work with people for up to 24 months

24 months

After the change:
- Services will work with people for up to 18 months

18 months

It might be possible for people in certain situations to get longer support than what is written above.

24

Change 4

Change 4: The maximum time someone can be involved with a service will be shorter.

Why are the Council suggesting this change?

There are lots of people who are interested in getting support from housing related support services.

This means it is hard for the service providers to help everyone.

If services work with people for less time, they will be able to support more people.

But, people won't be able to work with a service for as long as they did before.

The Council hope that this change will mean that service providers focus on:

- Helping people to achieve goals quickly

- Helping people to work towards being independent, instead of them relying on a service

25

Your thoughts about Change 4

Questions

Change 4: The maximum time someone can be involved with a service will be shorter.

How do you feel about this change? (Please circle one)

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

Explain why you agree or disagree in the box below.

How do you think this change might affect you?
Please write in the box below.

26

Your thoughts about Change 4

Questions ?

Change 4: The maximum time someone can be involved with a service will be shorter.

How do you think this change would affect other people?
Please write in the box below.

What could the Council do differently?
Please write in the box below.

27

Change 5

Change 5: The new name for this group of services will be 'Supporting Independence Services'.

Before the change

At the moment, the group of services that help people with housing and independence are called the 'Housing-Related Support Services'.

What will happen after the change?

In April 2025, there will be new contracts for the delivery of the housing-related services.

Different providers can apply to deliver the services through a tender process.

When all of the housing-related services have gone through this tender process, they will be known as the 'Supporting Independence Services'.

Why are the Council suggesting this change?

The Council would like this group of services to have a new name to show that the services will be focusing more on helping people to be independent and preventing homelessness.

They hope that encouraging independence will mean less people need other care and support (for example social care).

28

Your thoughts about Change 5

Questions

Change 5: The new name for this group of services will be 'Supporting Independence Services'.

Please write your views about change 5 in the space below.

29

Change 6

Change 6: The Council will not ask providers to deliver the extra support services (the street outreach and community hub services).

What happened before the change?

The current providers chose to offer this extra support, which was more than what they were asked to do by the Council.

These extra support services were the street outreach and community hub services.

What will happen after the change?

Providers who want to deliver housing related support services in the future will not be asked to deliver these extra support services.

They may decide to offer these extra services, but the Council will not be expecting them to.

Why are the Council suggesting this change?

The Council do not have enough money in the housing budget to pay for any extra services.

This means they will pay providers to deliver floating services and accommodation based services, but not any extra services.

30

Your thoughts about Change 6

Questions ?

Change 6: The Council will not ask providers to deliver the extra support services (the street outreach and community hub services).

How do you feel about this change? (Please circle one)

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Agree

Strongly agree

Explain why you agree or disagree in the box below.

How do you think this change might affect you?
Please write in the box below.

31

Your thoughts about Change 6

Questions

Change 6: The Council will not ask providers to deliver the extra support services (the street outreach and community hub services).

How do you think this change would affect other people?
Please write in the box below.

What could the Council do differently?
Please write in the box below.

32

Equality Impact Assessment

An Equality Impact Assessment has been developed for the redesign of housing related support services.

Equality Impact Assessments are a tool used to investigate how policies or schemes might unfairly affect a particular group of people.

Equality Impact Assessments check whether there is discrimination in the way something is designed, developed and delivered.

The Equality Impact Assessment for this redesign found that the changes which are being suggested could have negative impacts on people with protected characteristics.

Having protected characteristics means that people have a right not to be treated unfairly or discriminated against because of a characteristic.

Protected characteristics include:

- Age
- Disability
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity

33

Impacts

What are the impacts of the suggested changes?

The proposed changes mean that all services will be reduced.

This means service providers will:
- Have less money to work with
- Not be able to support as many people
- Still be delivering floating and accommodation based support services, but in a different way

This also means there will be:
- Shorter support times for people
- No separate services for people with disabilities
- No extra services provided

The Equality Impact Assessment suggests there will be a negative impact on people with and without protected characteristics because of all services being reduced.

34

Impacts

What are the suggested changes?

All of the current services will be reduced and extra services may not being provided.

What are the impacts?

The Equality Impact Assessment suggests these changes will mean that:
- The number of people who are homeless and at risk of being homeless will increase
- People who are already homeless will have a higher risk of staying homeless
  - Being homeless may negatively impact on people's health
- People who are socio-economically disadvantaged may not be able to access support services

Being socio-economically disadvantaged can mean that someone has a worse housing, social and financial situation than other people in the same society.

An example of socioeconomic disadvantage is someone living in poverty.

What is the Council's response?

The council said they will:
- Make sure there is good signposting to other support
- Keep all partners up to date with information about different services, so they can signpost people well

35

Impacts

The Equality Impact Assessment suggests there are differences between:

- The percentages of people in the general population who identify as Black or Asian

and

- The service users who identify as Black or Asian

This could mean that not enough Black and Asian people are accessing these services.

It is important to understand why more Black and Asian people aren't accessing these services currently.

It is also important to make sure that services are redesigned in a way that encourages more Black and Asian people to access them.

What is the Council's response?

The council said they will consider this difference when they are redesigning the services.

36

Floating support impacts

The proposed changes mean that separate disability floating support will be stopped.

This will have an impact on disabled people.

These services will no longer offer specialist support for disabled people.

The Council have said they expect young people's and adult services to:

- Offer an inclusive service
- Meet the needs of people with disabilities

The Council have also said they expect all providers' staff to be well trained in:

- Supporting anyone who needs support
- The diverse needs of all people
- Supporting people with disabilities

The Equality Impact Assessment suggests there will be a negative impact on people with and without protected characteristics because of services being reduced.

Protected characteristics include:

- Age
- Disability
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity

37

Accommodation-based support impacts

The impact on mothers, babies and young families:

The proposed changes mean that a hostel for mothers and babies will not be able to offer as much support as it does now.

This means that less mothers and babies and less young families will access the service.

The Equality Impact Assessment suggests this will have a negative impact on many mothers and young families as less of them will be able to get support.

Other impacts:

The proposed changes mean that certain groups of people who use accommodation based services more will be negatively impacted.

The groups who access adult accommodation based services the most are:
- Single males
- People who have experience of the criminal justice system

The Equality Impact Assessment suggests that these groups of people may be negatively impacted more than other groups.

38

The Council's response to the impacts

The Council have said they will add to the specification document for providers to try to make these negative impacts for people smaller.

The specification document tells providers what they need to do when delivering the service.

The Council have said they will add these things to the specification document:

- Providers need to be inclusive

- Providers can't discriminate against customers

- The Council expects services to be accessible for everyone

The Council have said they will also outline these things in the specification document:

- What the training requirements are for providers' staff

- Clear expectations about training

- Clear expectations about how service equality is monitored

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About the Consultation

The next page of questions relates to the Equality Impact Assessment.

The Consultation Questionnaire asks for your views on the impacts that the Council's changes might have on people.

The Council have said they will update the Equality Impact Assessment based on the answers to this questionnaire.

They would really like your feedback. Please take the time to answer the questions in this easy read.

You can find all the question pages by looking for this symbol in the top right hand corner of the page:

Once you have answered the questions, please:

1. Put your responses in the stamped, addressed envelope that you received with this easy read.

2. Put the envelope in a post box to send it to the Council.

40

Consultation Questionnaire

Questions

This Consultation Questionnaire asks for your views on the impact that the Council's 6 changes could have on people.

Do you think the Equality Impact Assessment accurately identifies the impacts of the 6 changes? (Please circle one)

Yes   No   Not sure /
                                             I don't know

Do you think there is anything missing from the Equality Impact Assessment?
Please write in the box below.

41

Consultation Questionnaire

Questions

This Consultation Questionnaire asks for your views on the impact that the Council's 6 changes could have on people.

How can we make the impact smaller for people with protected characteristics that use these services?
Please write in the box below.

How can we make the impact smaller for organisations that support people with protected characteristics?
Please write in the box below.

Having protected characteristics means that people have a right not to be treated unfairly or discriminated against because of a characteristic.

Protected characteristics include:

- Age
- Disability
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex

- Sexual orientation
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity

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Consultation Questionnaire

Questions
?
?

This Consultation Questionnaire asks for your views on the impact that the Council's 6 changes could have on people.

Please write any other comments you want to make about the Council's consultation in the box below.

43

Consultation Questionnaire

Questions
?
?

| Extra space to write more if needed |

44

Consultation Questionnaire

Questions

Extra space to write more if needed

45

The Council's next steps

The Council will collect all the responses from the impact questionnaire and the questionnaires from each of the suggested 6 changes.

They will use the responses to help design future support services in Warwickshire.

The Council will share their report, your responses and the new changes with the members of their cabinet.

In December 2023, the Council's cabinet will either approve or not approve the changes.

If the Council's cabinet approve the changes:

- The 6 changes will be made to housing related support services
- The council will create a 'You said - We did' report
- The housing related services will be known as the Supporting Independence Services
- The new Supporting Independence Services will go out for tender in 2025

Going out for tender means that providers can apply to deliver these services.

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More about you

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We want to treat everyone the same and make sure no group or community is left out. To do this we ask people a bit more about themselves.

We keep this information very private and don't use anyone's names anywhere.

You do not have to answer these questions, but it helps us make sure we are hearing from different groups of people.

Please answer these questions if you are happy to.

If you are not happy to answer, please tick 'I'd rather not say'.

We will follow the Law to keep any information about you safe and private.

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How old are you?

- ☐ Under 18 years old
- ☐ 18 – 24 years old
- ☐ 25 – 34 years old
- ☐ 35 – 44 years old
- ☐ 45 – 54 years old
- ☐ 55 – 64 years old
- ☐ 65 – 74 years old
- ☐ 75 +
- ☐ I'd rather not say

Do you have a disability?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I'd rather not say

48

49

Are you?

☐ A girl / woman

☐ A boy / man

☐ Other

☐ I'd rather not say

What is your sexuality? This means who you fancy.

☐ Gay or Lesbian (Gay means a man who likes other men. Lesbian means a woman who likes other women.)

☐ Heterosexual or straight (A woman who likes men or a man who likes women.)

☐ Bisexual (You like both men and women.)

☐ Asexual (This means you don't fancy men or women.)

☐ Other.

☐ I'd rather not say.

49

How do you describe your ethnic background?

- ☐ Arab

- ☐ Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi

- ☐ Asian or Asian British - Indian

- ☐ Asian or Asian British - Pakistani

- ☐ Chinese

- ☐ Other Asian Background

- ☐ Black or Black British - African

- ☐ Black or Black British - Caribbean

- ☐ Other Black Background

- ☐ Mixed - Asian and White

- ☐ Mixed - Black African and White

- ☐ Mixed - Black Caribbean and White

- ☐ Other Mixed Background

- ☐ White British

- ☐ White Irish

- ☐ Gypsy or Traveller

- ☐ Other White background

- ☐ I describe myself another way (please state if you wish)

- ☐ I'd rather not say

50

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How do you describe your religion / belief?

☐ Christianity

☐ Hinduism

☐ Islam

☐ Judaism

☐ Sikhism

☐ Spiritualism

☐ Any other religion or belief
(say if you wish)

☐ I do not have a religion or belief

☐ I'd rather not say

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Privacy Notice

This Easy Read privacy notice will explain what information we will ask about you and how we will look after it.

In this survey we ask questions about your age, gender and the area you live. We do not ask for your exact address.

This information cannot identify you. You do not have to share this information if you do not want to.

Please do not write any personal information, such as your name in any of your answers.

Please tell us if there are any of your answers that you want us to keep private.

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Why we have asked for your personal information?

About you
Questions about you help us understand what groups of people are responding to the survey and if there are any groups missing that we need to hear from.

Where you live
We ask this question so that we can see if we have heard from people who live in different parts of Warwickshire.

How we use the information
This information will only be used as numbers in the consultation report.

If you write any comments, we may use them in our consultation report.

If we use them, no one will know they were written by you.

53

How we use the information

This information will only be used as numbers in the consultation report.

If you write any comments, we may use them in our consultation report.

If we use them, no one will know they were written by you.

Storing information

All information is kept safe. Warwickshire County Council follows the laws around data protection.

Contact Us

If you want to know more about what we do with your information you can contact us.

Email
dataprotectionofficer@warwickshire.gov.uk

Telephone 01926 410410

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How to give us your feedback

Thank you for your answers.

You can answer these questions and send this back to us.

If you need help to answer the questions or need the questions in an alternative format, call 01926 410410.

If you don't want to answer questions you can tell us what you think by sending an email to **peoplestrategyandcommissioning @warwickshire.gov.uk**

Or write to us at...

Housing Related Support Consultation
Shire Hall
Market Place
Warwick
CV34 4SP

The consultation ends on **Friday 11 August 2023**.

Please make sure you send this back to us before this date.

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Appendix 7: Summary of Communication Log

Log of communications activities to support the consultation of Housing Related Support Redesign 2023.

Channel	Details
Ask Warwickshire	Dedicated consultation webpage Live 22.5.23 – 11.8.23 [Redesign of Housing Related Support Services - Warwickshire County Council - Citizen Space](#)
Email (outbound) Sent press release and told them now live 22.5.23 / 23.5.23 Follow up 6/7/23 and some direct mailing	Prepared distribution list of key stakeholders - those organisation/people who directly refer people to HRS services and offer support services to customers Criminal Justice: • NACRO Warwickshire National Probation Service • YSS • Youth Justice Health: • SWFT Physical Health Homeless Teams • CWPT Homeless Teams • Family Nurse Partnership and Health Visiting Housing • Heads of Housing & key contacts within Housing teams • Registered housing Providers HRS Providers Voluntary and Community Sector organisations that: • work with people affected by homeless/at risk of homelessness • support those facing financial hardship and food poverty • deliver specialist support to individuals around drug and alcohol dependency, disability and mental health wellbeing WCC internal direct emails to: • People Group Director and AD • Adult Social Care Service Manager • Adult social Care Operation Managers • Children Services Service Managers including Participation Team • Strategy & Commissioning Teams • Public Health Team • Communities Team

consultation-engagement @warwickshire.gov.uk

	In People Group Director Briefing meetings and tweets/blogs – 14.6.23/ 16.6.23 6.6.23 - Sent slide to commissioning teams and public health requesting they use at any events/forums to promote engagement in the consultation Email was sent to all comms teams in District and Borough Councils in Warwickshire
Email (inbound)	Published email address available for people to respond via email.
Social Media	**<u>WCC channels</u>** Warwickshire County Council Facebook Warwickshire County Council Twitter Retweets from other WCC accounts Other related WCC service accounts – Family Information Service (FIS) Child friendly Warwickshire Reposted in several Facebook groups – community groups and private groups e.g.: Southam ward Facebook group Also, all messages were included in our Social media pack for all our members and partners. Social media packs 23 June 2023 & 4 August 2023 The first post scheduled to go out at 13:30 on 22.5.23, and then posted daily on our WCC social media channels for the next two weeks. Posts on Facebook and Twitter: May: 3 posts, June: 6 posts, July: 7 posts, August: 3 posts – All posts received: 7k Impressions and 8.1 K Reach Next door posts: 6.7.23: 3,665 Impressions 3.8.23: 5,887 Impressions
Newsletters	WCC newsletters - Working for Warwickshire 26.5.23 Heads Up – 26.5.23 Family Information Service newsletter - • 23 May 2023 & • 6 July 2023 Warwickshire Weekly News 26.5.23 Warwickshire Weekly News 3.8.23

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	Warwickshire Matters – May & July 2023 Communities and Partnership newsletter 19.6.23 EQUIP Newsletter 23.5.23 Warwickshire CAVA put in e-grapevine and tweeted In CAVA E-grapevine 3.5.23/ 25.6.23/ 11.7.23
Media relations	Presence on WCC news page & Main Landing page News release sent out https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/news/article/4207/have-your-say-take-part-in-consultation-on-housing-related-support-services-in-warwickshire Published: • Rugby Observer online, • Leamington Observer Online/print • Kenilworth Web • 2 Leamington series newspaper – print
Verbal briefings & Promotion	Stratford Housing Forum 24.5.23 Nuneaton Housing forum 15.6.23 Targeted Youth Support Team Meeting 3.6.23 Housing Board 20.6.23 Autism Partnership Board –14.6.23 Update meeting held with new Housing Needs Manager WDC (Warwick District Council) 3.7.23
Stakeholder Consultation Workshop	5.7.23 HRS Consultation Workshop held with 30 key stakeholders and partners, including District and Borough Housing, health services, the voluntary sector and current HRS providers. The event outlined gaps in respondents to date. Types of organisations: Criminal Justice, District and Borough Councils, Providers and based on equalities and protected characteristics. We identified the following characteristics as being under-represented at this stage in the consultation: Asian, Black; Hindus, Muslims; Males and under 34. We asked for organisations support to promote and help us reach these groups across Warwickshire.

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	Invites and follow ups for the workshop sent out 31.5.23; 7.6.23 and 13.6.23
Outreach Support	Email *Working together to support the redesign of housing related support services consultation* with information relating to the outreach work for the consultation delivered by Kaizen and Social Engine sent to organisations requesting support and giving organisations/key stakeholders the days that Kaizen would be in their local area. Also communicated out via the Community Teams and suggestion of where to visit. 7.6.23/ 8.6.23/ 9.6.23
Other – identified as gaps during the live consultation period	Targeting support to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Communities – asked for support from WCC GRT team and Warwickshire Police Gypsy and Traveller Liaison/Advisor and EQUIP to cascade information 23.6.23/ 6.7.23 Targeting support for people within the criminal justice arena and community safety Sent additional details to Warwickshire Probation Service, YSS, NACRO, Offenders Accommodation Task and Finish Group; Safe Accommodation Working Group (SAWG), Community Safety Partnerships 6.7.23 and /or 24.7.23 Young people's Focus groups outlined below were based on gap in young people involvement.
Focus Group	2 x Warwickshire Vision Groups Rugby 5.7.23 and Nuneaton 20.7.23 House Project, Nuneaton 26.7.23 Doorway Project, Nuneaton 27.7.23 Learning Disability Team, Social Care and Support 27.7.23 Physical Disability & Sensory Service Team, Social Care and Support 9.8.23
Request for support	Paper surveys - People could request them via email/phone. Set up sending though WCC post room – non requested. Email request for support completing the form – one person requested support and agreed a suitable time and the person was supported to answer the Ask Warwickshire survey via telephone support.

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Appendix 8: Summary of Findings

Proposal 1: Budget allocation – retain both accommodation based and floating HRS Services and allocate the available budget in the same proportions			
Consultation Feedback	**Impact & Suggestions for Redesign (examples of comments provided)**	**We will**	**Further considerations for service model and specification**
54% of respondents on Ask Warwickshire agreed with 24% disagreeing. Those who agreed felt HRS services are critical providing support to vulnerable people. And this was considered a balanced approach. Those who disagreed expressed concerns that despite retaining both services, the budget reductions will inevitably lead to a decline in quality, effectiveness and scope of services. *"Our services, across the county, are already seeing more and more households threatened with homelessness or actually homeless."* In Outreach – people were asked whether to keep providing services to support homeless and prevent homelessness - i.e., accommodation-based and floating support - 94 % agreed Not answered within the Easy Read - people focussed on service design elements Proposals 2,3,4) Focus group highlighted the importance of both types of services. The stakeholder forum felt whilst both services were essential, allocating more to floating support may be beneficial as many people they worked with were housed.	Many respondents mentioned how the proposal would affect them and their families with concerns about their individual circumstances. *"All the services currently provided are needed by Warwickshire"* *"A fair method of keeping all services going".* Impacts also related to service reductions due to savings: *"Due to the budget cut it is likely to lead to some delays and reduced numbers of people on probation who will receive support."* Floating support Further measures that were suggested by respondents to increase efficiencies included improved resource management, streamlining referrals, focusing on early intervention/prevention and forming more effective partnerships with local voluntary and community sectors. This included innovative community-based solutions, like setting up communal kitchens.	Implement the proposal	The work around streamlining referrals and focusing early interventions are proposals covered in the consultation at a later stage and aim to achieve this. In addition, within the specifications the importance of partnership working across all sectors is paramount in these services and will be clear. HRS services often act as the conduit to support people with multi-disadvantages to access a wide range of specialist support services to enable them to meet their housing related support goals.

Proposal 2: Creating a redesigned inclusive floating support – stop commissioning a separate floating HRS service for people living with disabilities			
Consultation Feedback	**Impact & Suggestions for redesign (examples of comments provided)**	**We will**	**Further considerations for service model and specification**
In Ask Warwickshire: 62% agreed – people felt it simplified access and streamlining, reduced waiting times, was cost-efficient and focussed on inclusivity. "As a referral and signposting service, it would streamline the service." 25% disagreed - with specialist support concerns, impact on disabled people, impact on service providers due to restructuring and retendering of services, referral confusion. A major concern for respondents was whether the redesigned services could adequately support disabled individuals. *"I have family members and close friends with disabilities and a future without services that acknowledge their disabilities makes me lose faith..."* In outreach 36% agreed and 54% disagreed with concern expressed that disabled people wouldn't be given the specialist support required. Easy Read responses (n25 - all current disability service provider customers) Vast majority (92%) disagreed. They expressed concern about the lack of specialist support, diminished quality, and highlighted positive outcomes of dedicated service that currently exits. Focus groups supported moving to two inclusive services for one young people 16-24 and adults 25 + years. Participants in the stakeholder workshop mostly agreed that turning separate services into an inclusive service supporting disabled residents could be beneficial.	*"More streamlined service would save money and make it more simple"* *"I think it would mean I would get floating support easier without having to think which service suited me best."* *"I think by not having a separate disability service runs the risk of their vulnerabilities not been seen and not be given the priority that they should receive"* *"This sounds like a good idea in principle, as long as staff... had the specialist training and knowledge"* *"Agree as long as services and quality of service for people with disabilities is not impacted"* *"I am really concerned about the impact of these proposals on disabled people"* Concern was expressed about the impact on organisations and staff affected by changes. To use the available funding more efficiently, respondents suggested implementing preventative services for young people, employing support workers directly rather than via contracts, and partnering with community organisations for more holistic support.	Implement the proposal while being mindful of concerns in relation to specialist skills, training and knowledge and ensure incorporated within the specification and future monitoring requirements	Strengthen the staff training and knowledge requirements to include trauma informed care; physiologically information environments; specialist training in autism, learning disability and, visual impairment awareness training for workforce. Providers will be expected to evidence that staff members are adequately trained and experienced for supporting disabled customers. This may result in providers choosing to have specialist staff with dedicated caseloads or adopting alternative ways to address this. We will also build in monitoring of accessibility and outcomes to ensure we understand how inclusive our services are for people living with disabilities.

Proposal 3- Flexible range of shorter interventions			
Consultation Feedback	**Impact & Suggestions for redesign (Examples of comments provided)**	**We will**	**Further considerations for service model and specification**
In Ask Warwickshire 72% agreed - focussing on its flexible approach and its early intervention benefits and thereby freeing up resources for others who may require more intensive support. Several people expressed clear support for the proposal, viewing it as aligning with existing strategies or as a positive move. "Warwickshire County Council Public Health support this approach..." "Brilliant idea." "Your reasons make sense and focused short-term intervention makes sense if it works." 18% disagree - citing deviation from core principles and reduced personal interaction. Concern was expressed about the quality of relationships and time it takes to establish trust and rapport and the importance of in-person sessions: "Everybody is different, not all people are able to seek the support they require in the first instance of speaking with organisations." Respondents who were against the proposal were concerned about whether short-term interventions can meet the diverse and complex needs of clients, such as young people: *"Young people are vulnerable for a reason...these needs don't disappear after one short episode of support"* Easy Read survey 72% disagreed with this proposal with 24% agreeing Impact on equalities: concerns about the possibility of certain individuals *"falling through the net"*, and the need to be adaptive to diverse needs	*"A triage system seems an efficient way to identify those most in need..."* *"I do agree with short term interventions provided they are not at the expense of those who need more intensive floating support."* *"Personalising the level of support should enable better use of resources"* Bring in ways of measuring success for those receiving advice and information/brief intervention: People also emphasised the importance of how any changes are implemented and monitored: *"As with other elements of these proposals, they make sense as a matter of high-level principle, but what is critical is that they are implemented quickly and well..."* Additional ideas offered included combining short-term and long-term service options in a personalised support plan with options for pausing support, incorporating user perspectives in service design, alongside streamlined paperwork to increase efficiency and foster good communication and collaboration across agencies.	Implement the proposal for an enhanced triage with information and advice and brief intervention as part of the HRS Service offer	Whilst a 12-week service was suggested within this proposal and shorter duration support in proposal 4 - there was overwhelming support to ensure the services remained personalised to each person receiving support. With this in mind, stating a precise 12-week service timescale may not be needed. Focus will remain on assessing individuals needs and whether advice and information, brief intervention and/or a short-term HRS service is required. All support offered will be based on mutually agreed support plans and outcomes monitored to support progression. Devise monitoring of services that looks at outcomes, captures customers returning for support.

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Proposal 4: Reducing the maximum duration of services

Consultation Feedback	Impact & Suggestions for redesign (Examples of comments provided)	We will	Further considerations for service model and specification
There was a general disagreement with this proposal especially for young people due to their age, 16-17 not reaching adulthood before support finishing and their ability to sign a tenancy agreement for their housing prior to being 18 years old. *"To only provide 12 months of support to a 16-year-old leaves them without support before they are even legally an adult"* Ask Warwickshire 40% disagreed – favour tailored support without time restrictions, worried over premature termination of support, especially for young people. 39% agreed – expands service reach and promotes independence. "A focus on results and independence is good" Easy Read Survey 83% disagreed with the proposal - a lot of service users face complex challenges that demand time, patience and consistent support to address effectively. Outreach respondents were not asked about this. Focus groups all fed back that young people needed longer for support and a personalised approach was key to supporting people to be independent. The stakeholder workshop saw practical difficulties in delivering bespoke personalised support	Respondents suggested adopting a more individualised approach to service provision, focusing on clearly defined and flexible support plans co-created with customers. *"If this is a holistic, person-centred approach then it seems strange to have a one-size-fits all approach"* Concern was voiced about ending support too soon. Shortening support duration might create a *"revolving door"* instead of empowering service users to be fully independent. *"If support is withdrawn too soon it may lead to further escalation of problems"* *"It's not sustainable in the long term if the same people have to reapply for continued service."* Impact on equalities: reduction in duration might have a negative impact on individuals with complex needs *"It can take a long time for people to engage and feel comfortable enough with staff to move forward"* Many highlighted the critical role of efficient case management, including regular reviews to facilitate goal achievement and potentially shortening the service duration but only where it is appropriate to do so. They emphasised the need for a collaborative relationship with local community groups to enhance services. .	For young people's HRS services, we recommend not reducing the duration of support for young people. For adults' HRS services we recommend the reductions are taken forward for floating support. For adult accommodation-based services we recommend this is reviewed annually during the lifetime of the contract.	All HRS services will offer holistic and personalised support to meet need, promoting wellbeing, safety, resilience, independence to prevent, reduce and/or delay an individual's need for ongoing care and support. Clarity will be given within the specification with allowance for exceptions where necessary to support clients whose outcomes have not been met within the expected timescale. Reducing the duration of adult accommodation-based HRS may be particularly challenging due to the lack of affordable move-on accommodation across Warwickshire. WCC will work with District and Borough Housing to review their move-on protocol for HRS services

Proposal 5 – Change name to Supporting Independence

Consultation Feedback	Impact & Suggestions for redesign (Examples of comments provided)	We will	Further considerations for service model and specification
There was very little support for a name change. It was considered important to name the type of support on offer – 'housing related support'. Some liked the emphasis on independence Feedback includes: • lacks clarity and specificity • Concerns about confusion with other services • Potential waste of resources and money • Cost and rebranding concerns • Scepticism about intent behind it • Not clear what problem it solves Not answered within the Easy Read - people focussed on service design elements Proposals 2,3,4) Not asked in outreach.	The following quotes capture impact: *"The new name is confusing. There are too many other similar sounding services in Health and Social Care, for people to recognise what this actually is"* *"Confusing name, the word housing needs to be included"* *"We are learning to become independent, so this sounds good."* *"Changing the name is meaningless - the money spent on the re-branding can be better spent on the service itself"*	Not implement the proposal	Ensure the mobilisation of services is smooth and clarity of redesigned HRS services, referral pathways is communicated to the public and key stakeholders that refer people.

Proposal 6– current additional services (Street Outreach and Hubs in Nuneaton and Rugby) are not included in future service specification

Consultation Feedback	Impact & Suggestions for redesign (Examples of comments provided)	We will	Further considerations for service model and specification
Ask Warwickshire Respondents acknowledged the financial constraints facing the Council, viewing the removal of additional services as a necessary step given the budget restrictions. 29% agree – inefficient services, financial pragmatism, overlap and redundancy.	Impact on equalities: particular concern for people with multiple complex needs *"Lots of service users do not have telephones or a means of transport. Lack of outreach and navigation hubs makes it harder for those in need to get help they may require"* *"Street Outreach by P3 overlaps with our own Outreach Team and is not needed in Rugby although I can't comment on other areas in Warwickshire."*	Implement the proposal and not change the core activity of HRS services to include Street Outreach	Within the current contract ending in March 2025 the P3 street outreach team is looking to train and support volunteers as an exit strategy to the external funding received from WDC and SDC for the Rough Sleepers Initiative funding that

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They noted the inefficiency in the current system and believed that some services such as the navigator hubs and street outreach could be removed as long as clear signposting is available, indicating a belief that more streamlined services could potentially be more effective. "People will be approaching the correct service i.e., the council for housing advice…" 41% disagree – will increase pressure on other services, lack of clear alternatives, false economy (will increase costs in the long run) Not answered within the Easy Read - people focussed on service design elements Proposals 2,3,4) Not asked in outreach. In the stakeholder workshop professionals discussed the inclusion of additional services in the context of existing alternatives such as the specialist Street Outreach Health teams (physical health nurses and mental health practitioners) and local voluntary sector projects.	Many respondents expected a directly negative impact on homeless individuals, fearing that the loss of these services will leave them with decreased support. Services may be less targeted and fewer people might be reached. *"This is often the only way that some clients can access support, especially those that are street homeless".* Discontinuing the services would place a greater burden on other agencies, charities and community groups to provide support, which may already be stretched thin. Participants further pushed for community participation and inter-agency collaboration to strengthen the effectiveness of service provision. Respondents underlined the need to advocate for policy changes at government level, including lobbying for increased funding and promoting investment in social housing by central government.	and Hubs in two areas. Liaise with District and Borough Housing Teams and Health Services about the changes to street outreach to ensure an appropriate exit strategy.	supports half of the current staff team. Looking at future tendering the floating HRS services will include intensive support and this will be available through the redesigned commissioned HRS services. This has proved effective in supporting some rough sleepers 18+ into temporary accommodation/ moving into more secure accommodation which has been facilitated by District and Borough housing teams. The redesigned service will be offering an information and advice service across the county so the need for specific hubs is reduced. Providers will explain how they deliver this within their tender submission and may include both virtual and community-based locations.

4.16   The outreach findings told us about people's experience of accessing housing support, what works well and what gets in the way. (Table 2) Within the outreach findings we are unable to separate their experience specific to Housing Related Support services due to the complex nature of the housing support landscape (District and Boroughs Housing Options Teams, voluntary and community sector, non –commissioned housing support and the WCC commissioned HRS services). However, this level of detail offers a valuable insight for when we commission services and consider what is included in the specification and how we assess quality and performance.

Table 2: Additional Outreach Findings

For those with experience of accessing support:	What works well included:	What gets in the way
• 3 in 4 sought or received housing support • 63% of those who tried accessed housing support; 37% did not • 52% found it challenging to access the desired support • 19% waited over 6 months for housing support; a third never received it • Half of respondents found the support helpful, but 28% did not	• Online availability makes accessing information easier • Strong knowledge of clients helps in tailoring support • Diverse range of services, although it can be overwhelming • Effective professional relationships and collaboration between teams • Acknowledgement that different approaches work for different individuals • Willingness to engage and support people with complex needs • Positive impact of partnership working involving various agencies	• Insufficient resources and funding; more resources are needed • Waiting lists for services • Confusion regarding service roles and boundaries • Local connection and priority needs can be unclear • Challenges related to the two-tier authority • Lack of support for individuals with personality disorders

4.17   Equality Impact Assessment feedback is outlined in Table 3.

4.18   We have updated the Equality Impact Assessment in response to feedback. Equality Impact Assessment (EAI) Summary and Equality Impact Assessment Version 2. Appendix 3/4

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Table 3: Equality Impact Assessment Feedback

Equality Impact Assessment			
Consultation Feedback	*Impact & Suggestions for redesign (Examples of comments provided)*	*We will*	*Further considerations for service model and specification*
From Ask Warwickshire Stopping the dedicated Disabled people floating HRS - Concerns about exclusion of certain individuals and its impact on waiting lists, accessibility should remain a priority. 42% believe EIA accurately reflects impact, 30% were unsure and 28% felt it did not. Those who use HRS services were most likely to say they did not know whether the EIA identified the impact of these proposals, a finding that was consistent with Easy Read responses did not Outreach findings: Women found it easier and quicker to access support, but men found the support more helpful Disabled respondents (36%) found it easier to access the required support compared to non-disabled (24%) Young people (18-24) were less likely to seek out support but were quicker at accessing it when they did	Concern and lack of specificity for vulnerable groups were outlined from some respondents, this included: refugees, asylum seekers and those from countries at war; those with disabilities, including mental health and autism; male offenders; illiterate individuals; young parents and their babies; Gypsy, Roma, Travellers, and young people. Impact of decommissioning some services, service delivery and effectiveness, lack of involvement. *"No mention of the impact on Gypsy, Roma or Traveller communities - only generic 'other ethnic groups'"* *"The issue of ex-prisoners not being allowed onto the council housing register."* *"I think it forgets about illiterate people, who cannot navigate the housing system"* How to reduce the impact focussed on staff training; service availability and accessibility with face to face alongside virtually/telephone; communication strategy so everyone is aware of changes and support through the transition of mobilisation; consideration of specialist team within the redesign services to meet specific needs in particular people living with disabilities; robust monitoring and data collection. *"Warwickshire Public Health is pleased to see the level of detail that has been collated in this EIA"* *"I think the EIA is quite clear on impact"*	We have updated the EIA. We will continue to monitor equality data (access and outcomes) throughout the life of the contract.	Requirements for providers to align to WCC policy regarding equality will be clearly stated in the service specifications and tested in the tendering process. Staff training, accessibility and the requirement for personalised approach with be outlined in the specification to meet the diverse needs of vulnerable groups, including those with protected characteristics Ensure the mobilisation of services is smooth and clarity of redesigned HRS services, referral pathways is communicated to the public and key stakeholders that refer people.

4.19 These redesigned services will offer a personalised support service that meets individual needs of customers, inclusive of those with disabilities.

4.20 During the tender process it will be clear from the specification that providers are to respond to and deliver ongoing support to customers through an inclusive and non-discriminatory approach. There will be a requirement for staff teams to be adequately trained to support the range of customers who may require support. We will expect our providers to make reasonable adjustments for people with disabilities to ensure everyone can access the support they require.

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Housing Related Support

Consultation Report

October 2023

Contents

Introduction

During 2023, Warwickshire County Council (WCC) commissioned Social Engine to help support a consultation on the redesign of their Housing Related Support (HRS) services.

The HRS services support vulnerable people – including homeless people and those at risk of becoming homeless - to acquire necessary skills for independent living.

WCC are now faced with the challenge of reducing the annual Housing Related Support (HRS) budget by £1 million, from the current figure of £3.8 million.

A series of proposed changes were developed following discussions with key stakeholders and a wide-ranging consultation sought views on these.

People were also asked how they thought the proposed changes would impact on equalities groups. They were also asked for ideas to minimise any negative impact.

Proposed Changes

Six key proposals formed the basis of the consultation:

1   Retain both Accommodation-based and Floating Support services for young people and adults by allocating the available budget in the same proportions as currently.

2   Stop commissioning the separate Floating Support service for disabled people and meet those needs within redesigned inclusive Floating Support services, one for young people aged 16-25 and one for people aged 25+ years.

3   Add a flexible range of shorter interventions that respond to individual needs as efficiently as possible and give earlier, focused support for customers who do not need longer-term support.

4   Reduce the maximum duration of services. Floating support for people aged 16-25 be reduced from 24 months to 12 months, for those over 25 the maximum duration would be reduced from 12 months to 9 months and the maximum period for accommodation-based support would be reduced from 24 months to 18 months.

5   A new name for the services. The name of these services is changed from Housing Related Support to Supporting Independence Services.

6   Additional services. Not to include the Street Outreach and 'Navigator' Hubs in the services that providers are asked to deliver. These additional services were not part of the previous specification WCC tendered.

What We Did

A series of engagement activities gave people the opportunity to to share their views on the proposed changes and to contribute ideas and experiences to inform the decision-making for the service redesign.

- **Ask Warwickshire** - online survey hosted on WCC's consultation and engagement hub. 129 responses were received, nine of these were formal responses received on behalf of organisations.

- **Email** – people could respond to the consultation via email. Four responses to the consultation were received by email. Three of these were from individuals with experience of using HRS services and one was a formal response on behalf of Warwickshire District and Borough Heads of Housing

- **Easy-read survey** – designed and promoted to enable those with access requirements to respond. 25 responses to the easy-read survey were received from individuals with experience of using HRS services.

- **Outreach** – individual interview and small group discussions conducted with previous, current or potential HRS service users at locations across Warwickshire. A total of 311 people participated in the outreach, including 185 individual interviews, 126 people participating in 43 street focus groups and three written responses (included in individual interviews)

- **Consultation Workshop** – held with 30 key stakeholders and partners, including District and Borough Housing, health services, the voluntary sector and current HRS providers.

- **Stakeholder Focus Groups** – held with 22 support workers from the WCC Learning Disability Team and the Physical Disability & Sensory Service Team.

- **Service User Focus Groups** – held with service users from St Basil's, Doorway, the House Project and Warwickshire Vision Support.
19 young people participated in a mix of three online and in-person sessions and 44 participants in two in-person focus groups with sight-impaired service users.

The questions people were asked in the workshops, outreach, focus groups and Ask Warwickshire were not all the same. Relevant responses are in this report.
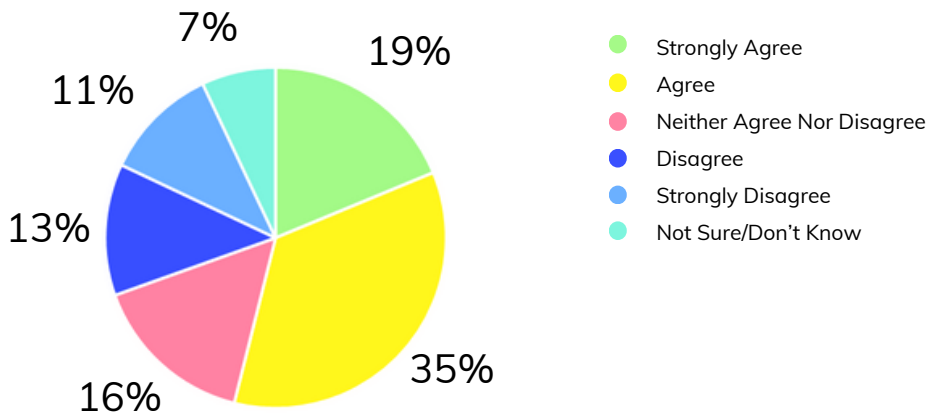
Findings

Proposal 1 - Retain both Accommodation-based and Floating Support services for young people and adults by allocating the available budget in the same proportions as currently.

Ask Warwickshire

People were asked if they agreed
or disagreed with the proposal

7%
19%
11%
13%
16%
35%

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree Nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Not Sure/Don't Know

Outreach

Do you agree or disagree with the council's plans to keep providing services to support people who are homeless and need help finding somewhere to live, and services for people that need support to prevent them becoming homeless?

1%
3% 1% 2%
4%
89%
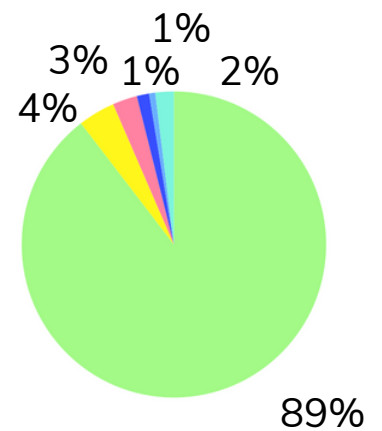
Workshop and focus groups with professionals

Professionals who took part in discussions in a workshop and focus groups felt both accommodation-based and floating support services were needed for young people and adults. Some people felt it might be worth allocating more of the budget to floating support services and less to accommodation-based services as most people they worked with had housing.

What people who use HRS services said

Service users felt both accommodation-based and floating support services were needed for young people and adults and appreciated having access to both depending on their needs.

Proposal 2 *- Stop commissioning the separate Floating Support service for disabled people and meet those needs within redesigned inclusive Floating Support services, one for young people aged 16-25 and one for people aged 25+ years.*
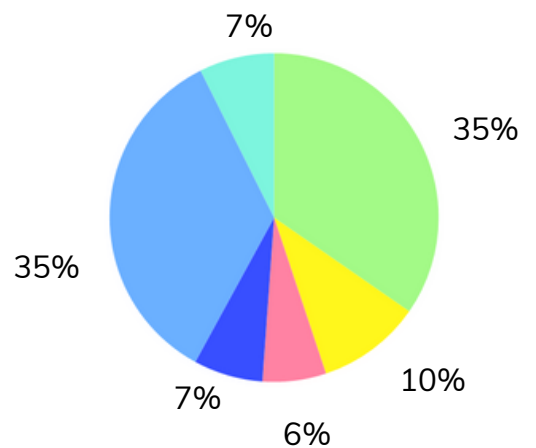
Ask Warwickshire

People were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the proposal
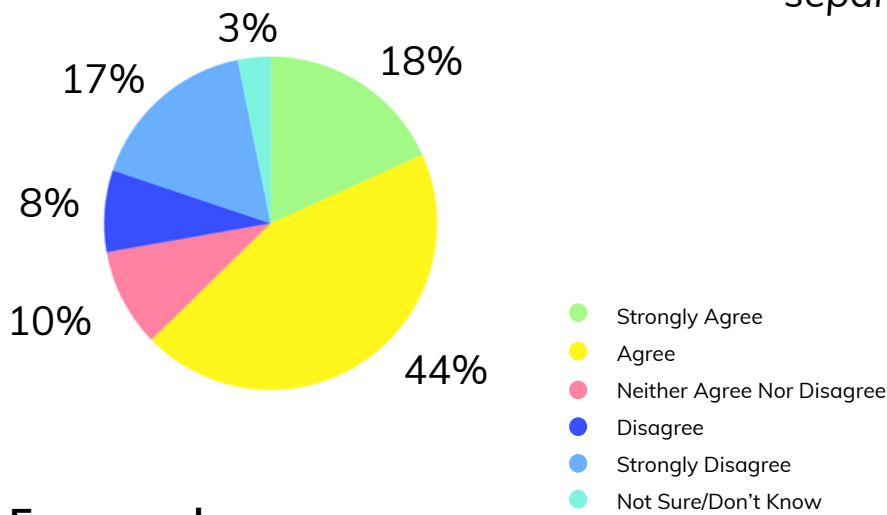
Outreach

Do you agree or disagree with the council's proposal to have a single inclusive service for disabled people and non-disabled people, rather than separate services?

Left pie chart (Ask Warwickshire):
- 18%
- 3%
- 17%
- 8%
- 10%
- 44%

Legend:
- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree Nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Not Sure/Don't Know

Right pie chart (Outreach):
- 7%
- 35%
- 35%
- 7%
- 6%
- 10%

Easy-read responses

92% (23 out of 25) of people who completed the easy read survey disagreed (**28%**) or strongly disagreed (**64%**) with this proposal.

Workshop and focus groups with professionals

Professionals who took part, agreed that creating inclusive support services instead of commissioning a separate service for disabled people could create a simpler and streamlined approach but emphasised that inclusive services would need the resources and knowledge to cater to the needs of disabled service users.

"This sounds like a good idea in principle, as long as staff have the specialist training and knowledge"
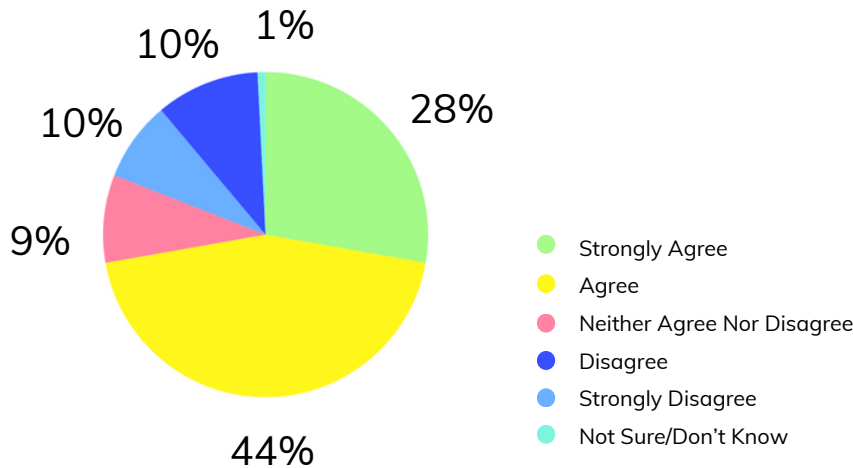
What people who use HRS services said

While focus group participants mostly agreed that turning separate services into an inclusive service supporting disabled residents could be beneficial, they emphasised the need for specialist training for staff to ensure disabled service users would have a positive experience tailored to their needs.

Proposal 3 - *Adding a flexible range of shorter interventions that respond to individual needs as efficiently as possible and give earlier, focused support for customers who do not need longer-term support.*

Ask Warwickshire

People were asked if they agreed
or disagreed with the proposal

10%   1%

10%

9%

28%

- ● Strongly Agree
- ● Agree
- ● Neither Agree Nor Disagree
- ● Disagree
- ● Strongly Disagree
- ● Not Sure/Don't Know

44%

Easy-read responses

There were 21 easy-read responses to this question. **72%** of respondents (15 people) either disagreed (**29%**) or strongly disagreed (**43%**).
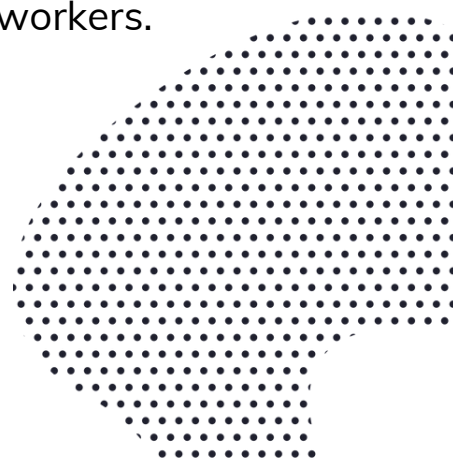One person neither agreed nor disagreed and five respondents (**24%**) agreed.

Workshop and focus groups with professionals

Professional respondents felt that alongside long-term support, shorter interventions could be appropriate for people with more straightforward support needs. They were clear that this ought to be in addition to, rather than a replacement for long-term support. Support would still need to be tailored to the needs of individuals.
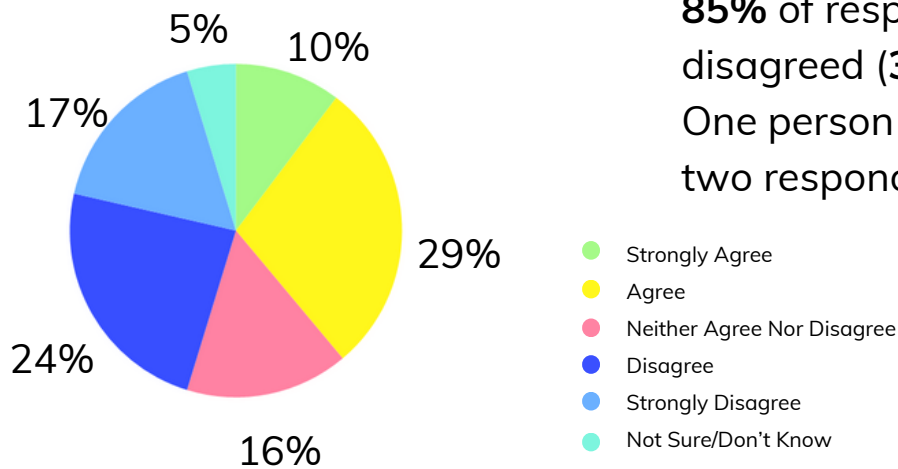
What people who use HRS services said

Service users felt that while shorter, flexible interventions might suit some, personalised long-term support would generally produce the best outcomes, as it took time to develop a trusting relationship with support workers.

"I do agree with short term interventions provided they are not at the expense of those who need more intensive floating support..."

Proposal 4 - *Reducing the maximum duration of services*

Ask Warwickshire
People were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the proposal

5% 10%

17%

29%

24%

16%

- 🟢 Strongly Agree
- 🟡 Agree
- 🔴 Neither Agree Nor Disagree
- 🔵 Disagree
- 🔵 Strongly Disagree
- 🟢 Not Sure/Don't Know

Easy-read responses
There were 21 easy-read responses to this question.
85% of respondents (18 people) either disagreed (**33%**) or strongly disagreed (**52%**). One person neither agreed nor disagreed and two respondents (**10%**) agreed.

Workshop and focus groups with professionals
Professionals felt it could be very difficult to deliver a personalised service in a tight deadline. In particular, young people and disabled people might need support for longer, and shortening how long they could be supported for might prevent people from becoming independent in the long run.

What people who use HRS services said
People highlighted the time it takes to build trust with their support worker. Young people said they felt that support for 2 years at least would be most useful and appropriate. Most people had no idea how long their support was due to last.

"Many that need these services have complex needs and issues that take time, patience and ongoing support to resolve and manage."

Proposal 5 - *A new name for the services. It was suggested that 'Housing Related Support Services' become known as: 'Supporting Independence Services'*

Ask Warwickshire
Most people opposed the change and felt the proposed name could be confused with other services and felt it should mention housing. Several people said that the name did not matter as long as there was a high-quality service.

Workshop and focus groups with professionals
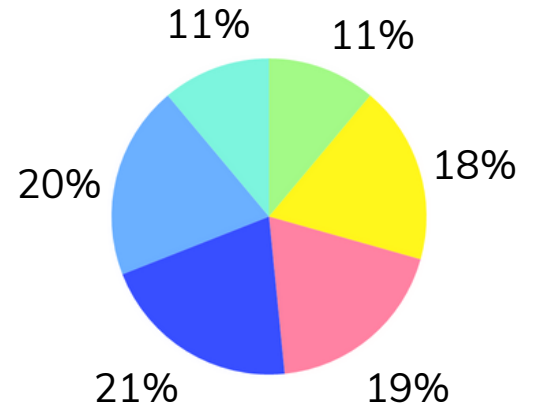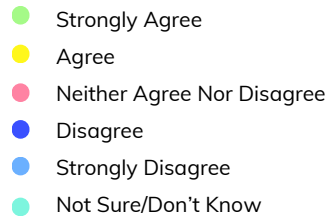Professionals strongly favoured the HRS service retaining its current name.

Proposal 6 - *additional services removed from future service specification*

Workshop and focus groups with professionals

Professionals felt that these additional services were valuable and needed but should not be included in the HRS services.

Ask Warwickshire

People were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the proposal

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree Nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Not Sure/Don't Know

11% 11% 18% 19% 21% 20%

Do you think this Equality Impact Assessment identifies the impacts of these proposals?

Ask Warwickshire

People were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the proposal

30%, Not sure/Don't know   42%, Yes

28%, No
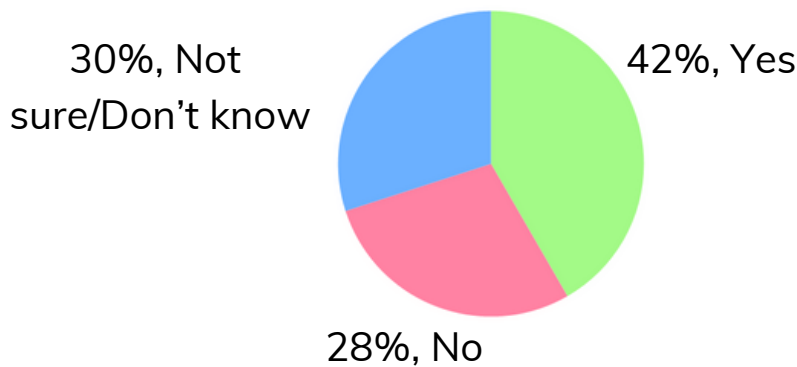
Easy read findings

There were six responses to the question from easy-read surveys. One respondent (**17%**) felt that the EIA identified the impacts of the proposals, two respondents (**33%**) did not and three respondents (**50%**) said they were unsure or did not know.

People's experience of accessing support with their housing from the outreach

Surveyors were asked a number of questions about their experience of accessing support with their housing. We asked them about support in general and not just from HRS, to learn from their experience, both positive and negative, about accessing support.

Have you ever been worried that you might have significant difficulty in paying your rent or having a place to live, whether due to debts, money problems, loss of income, health problems, being harassed, addiction, abusive relationships etc?

20% of respondents (36 people) said they were currently experiencing concerns about their housing due to factors such as debts or health issues and **48%** (88 people) said that they had experienced these worries in the past.
Although **32%** of respondents (58 people) said they have never faced such issues, even some of these people went on to tell us how they were worried about different aspects of their finances, housing and social wellbeing.

Have you ever tried to access or ever received help or support around your housing (including help to find somewhere to live, keep you in your current home or move to a more suitable place)?

73% of respondents (127 people) said they had either tried to access or have received support concerning their housing situation, which includes aid in finding a new place to live, staying in their current home, or moving to a more suitable location. **26%** of respondents (45 people) said they had not accessed or received such assistance.

Did you have help finding somewhere to live (Accommodation- based support) and/or support where you already lived (Floating Support)?

Of the 127 respondents who had tried to access housing support, around two-thirds (**63%**) said they had either had help finding a new place to live or assistance where they already live. However, **37%** said they had not accessed this sort of such housing support.

How easy did you find it to access the support you wanted?

People had very different experiences of accessing housing support. **28%** of respondents (37 people) had positive experiences (either 'very easy' or 'easy'), whilst **20%** (27 people) said it had been 'neither hard nor easy'. However, over half the people we heard from said they had found it difficult to get the support they needed - **22%** (29 people) found accessing the support 'hard', while **30%** (39 people) described the process as 'very hard'.

How long did it take for you to get the support you wanted?

46 people said they had never been able to get the support they wanted. **19%** of respondents (26 people) waited more than 6 months. **7%** (10 people) received support within a 3-6 month period and **11%** (15 people) received help within 1-3 months. **9%** of respondents (12 people) said they had received support in less than a month and around 1 in 5 (25 people) got it within a week or immediately.

"Sometimes it's as though you're not being heard. I can get quite angry I know it doesn't help overall, but what can I do. So frustrating."

How useful was the support you received?

131 people answered this question and **55%** of them (72 people) said the support had been positive, with **37%** (49 people) finding the support 'very helpful' and **18%** (23 people) 'helpful'. However, **13%** (17 people) found it 'unhelpful', and **15%** (19 people) 'not at all helpful'.

Conclusions

The consultation findings indicate that people value HRS services and the support it provides, which is seen as personalised, flexible and appropriate for the needs of service users. Whilst there was a general acceptance of the reasons why HRS funding is being reduced, there was concern over reducing budgets at a time when many people face considerable hardship due to the rising cost of living.

Many fear that less funding will cause particular hardship for those with the most challenging and complex needs – whose support needs are likely to take longer and be more resource intensive. There was concern that the proposed changes may make it harder for providers to work with these clients as their needs may not be easily compatible with the redesigned service.

Proposal 1 - Retain both Accommodation-based and Floating Support services for young people and adults by allocating the available budget in the same proportions as currently.

It is clear that among both professionals, service users and potential service users, retaining these separate services was welcomed, however people felt that demand for support was already higher than the HRS alone can possibly meet. This approach was felt both fair and reasonable.

Proposal 2 - Stop commissioning the separate Floating Support service for disabled people and meet those needs within redesigned inclusive Floating Support services, one for young people aged 16-25 and one for people aged 25+ years.

This proposal polarised opinion. Respondents to the Ask Warwickshire survey supported the proposal, almost all respondents to the easy read survey disagreed with it and among those engaged through the outreach opinion was divided. The primary concern for respondents was about maintaining and ensuring the quality of the service provided, in particular to disabled people. Whilst people saw simplifying and reducing inefficiency as a good thing, they wanted to be sure that a consistently high-quality service was maintained.

Proposal 3 - Adding a flexible range of shorter interventions that respond to individual needs as efficiently as possible and give earlier, focused support for customers who do not need longer-term support.

A majority of people expressed support for this proposed change. It was felt to be a positive and empowering development, if it meant people got the right support quickly. However, many people wanted to know more about how this would work in practice and what it might mean for people with complex and enduring needs.

Proposal 4 - Reducing the maximum duration of services

This proposal divided opinion. Some saw it as a positive opportunity to encourage independence, but others were concerned that people's needs can't easily be 'fixed' in this way. There was particular concern about young people reaching the maximum duration before they are 18 and in a position to take on their own tenancy.

Proposal 5 - A new name for the services.

There was little evidence of being being dissatisfied with the current name and the proposal was not strongly supported. People felt that 'supporting independence services' lost the housing focus which HRS services has, and thought that this should be retained.

Proposal 6 - Additional services removed from future service specification

Opinion was fairly divided on the proposal not to include additional services in the revised service specification, although the findings suggest views were not particularly strongly-held.

Impact on equalities groups

Whilst many respondents believed the EIA accurately reflected the impact of the proposed changes on people with protected characteristics, there were a number of people who said they either didn't know or didn't feel it did wholly capture the likely impact.

People mentioned a range of vulnerable groups who were felt might be negatively impacted by the proposed changes and were not explicitly identified within the draft EIA. Some of these – young people and disabled people – were included in the draft EIA. Others, such as offenders and asylum seekers, whilst potentially vulnerable, do not have necessarily have protected characteristic status. Nonetheless WCC wants to minimise the impact on vulnerable groups beyond the scope of the Public Sector Equalities Duty, as offenders were included in the full EIA.

Gypsies, Roma and Travellers were also identified as a vulnerable group which had not been explicitly mentioned in the draft EIA. Whilst we understand that Gypsies, Roma and Travellers were considered in WCC's assessment process, including them within 'other' means that their apparent absence was highlighted by some people.

Recommendations

Decisions about the future of HRS will rest with the WCC Cabinet. However our independent assessment of the evidence and general thoughts on design features for future HRS services is set out here.

Flexibility - A perceived strength of HRS is '**flexibility**'. The way the HRS is currently delivered allows support providers to respond to the individual and their needs. This flexibility is felt to be extremely important to retain in a redesigned service .

Securing simplicity whilst managing complexity - Respondents saw considerable potential in **simplifying** and **streamlining** processes. The challenge in redesigning the new service will be to ensure that people are able to get support more quickly. Whilst simplicity is good, it's also important to recognise that the needs of people who use HRS services are often **complex**, multi-faceted and potentially **long-term**.

Consistency and quality assurance - We found major discrepancies in the speed of accessing support and of the usefulness of the support received. Whilst this reflects experiences of accessing support more broadly than solely HRS, it does suggest a degree of inconsistency in the experiences of homeless and vulnerably-housed people. Understanding and addressing these to ensure a consistently high-quality service would be beneficial.

Clarity of offer and brand positioning - A number of findings point to the importance of a **clear HRS offer** and brand positioning. It is crucial that homeless and vulnerably-housed people understand clearly what HRS offers, how it can support them and that it is a service which is relevant to them and their needs. Indeed, a lack of clarity is likely to create additional administration (as people try to navigate) and it may in turn lead to less good outcomes.

Proposal 1 - Recommendation – Our assessment of the consultation findings is that there is sufficient support for this proposal for WCC to proceed with this change.

Proposal 2 - Recommendation – We recommend, on the basis of the consultation findings, that WCC proceed with this proposed change only if guarantees around consistency and service quality can be secured.

Proposal 3 - Recommendation – We recommend, on the basis of the evidence from the consultation response, to proceed but with clear explanations of how this will be delivered and with clear guidelines to ensure support for clients with complex and enduring needs.

Proposal 4 - Recommendation – On the basis of the responses to the consultation, we recommend that the new time limits for young people are not taken forward, but that other proposed changes proceed with clear allowance/permission for exceptions where they are necessary to support clients with long-term support needs.

Proposal 5 - Recommendation – The lack of support for this proposed change and the potential risks of adverse perceptions of doing so, lead us to conclude that WCC should not proceed with the proposed name change.

Proposal 6 - Recommendation – Our assessment of the consultation findings is that WCC proceed with this proposed change.

The significant reduction in HRS budget is going to be a challenge to continuing to support those in need, particularly at a time when many face increased pressures and hardship. Any changes will need to be made carefully, being sensitive to the risks such changes pose in service design and delivery to mitigate, as far as possible, adverse impacts on the most vulnerable.

Warwickshire
County Council

Housing Related Support

Consultation Report

www.social-engine.co.uk

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General Exception Procedure Notice Pursuant to Standing Order 17 and reg 10(1) and 10(3) of The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangement) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012

Directorate:

Resources

Confidential or Exempt [*please state category of exempt information***]**

Exempt

Decision Taker: Member Body or Officer [*if officer please give name and title*]

Cabinet

Proposed Date for Decision/ Time Period

14 December 2023

Summary of Matter

Cabinet previously approved the issue of a loan from the Property Investment Fund ("PIF") pillar of the Warwickshire Recovery Investment Fund (WRIF) of up to £10m, for a period of 30 months. In accordance with the WRIF governance structure, due diligence was undertaken and the Stage 2 report was received by the WRIF Investment Panel on 6 October 2023 when no material changes to the original business case were identified.

However, due to longer than anticipated negotiations regarding relevant property achange to the timing of the loan has been proposed which requires a waiver of the currently approved deadline for the completion of the loan.

The loan term will remain as per the previous Cabinet decision but there will be consequent changes to the interest rate to be implemented whenever the loan is signed to allow the rate to be in line with the market at the time. Furthermore, it is anticipated that it will take several more months to unwind the current loan facility restrictions at one of the two project sites involved and the full implications of this are set out in the appendix to the report, It is important to note at no point is the Council financially exposed without security.

The report seeks amendment to the original Cabinet decision in relation to these matters.

Proposed Decision

1. To approve amendments to the issue of a WRIF PIF loan of up to £10m as set out in the report.
2. To authorise the Executive Director of Resources, in conjunction with the Finance and Property Portfolio Holder, to finalise and approve the loan agreement terms and to authorise the draw down of the facility.
3. To note and require that the funding for the investment will be managed within the parameters and policies set out in the Council's Treasury Management Strategy and Investment Strategy.

If the proposed decision is made, would it be contrary to or not wholly in accordance with the policy framework or budget?

No

List of documents/reports provided

Draft report to Cabinet
Loan Opportunity Update November 2023

List of Background Papers

Previous approval documents (June 2023)

Is consultation proposed Yes/ No *[if yes, say who and how]*

No

Members of the public wishing to make comments on this matter should write to:

Monitoring Officer
Warwickshire County Council
Shire Hall
Warwick
CV34 4RL

monitoringofficer@warwickshire.gov.uk

Comments should be made by	**14 December 2023**

Office Use only

Directorate Contact *[please give name and number]*

Emily Reaney
Lead Commissioner – Treasury and Investments
Warwickshire County Council
Telephone: 01926 412858
Email: emilyreaney@warwickshire.gov.uk

To be completed by Member Services

	Date
Copy Notice served – Chair of Resouces & Fire and Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee	**06/12/23**
Copy Notice published on website and available at the offices of the Council	**06/12/23**

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