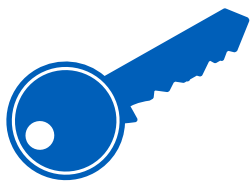




LEADING A PUBLIC
DEBATE FOCUSSED ON
HOMELESSNESS IN
WARRINGTON



Report of the Commission

March 2014

WARRINGTON
Borough Council



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Foreword

The establishment of the Warrington Homelessness Commission has provided a unique opportunity to lead a fundamental review and rethink of homelessness in Warrington.

The role of the Commission has been to build upon the significant housing and economic achievements across the town. We also needed to take account of changes to both the economic and policy context over the last few years.

As an integral part of the work of the Commission we consulted with local stakeholders to listen to their views and concerns. It was important for us to recognise that much has been achieved in Warrington to address our aims. However, much more remains to be done.

Warrington has an increasing number of people accessing homelessness services who have complex needs.

The magnitude and complexity of the issues that face Warrington should not be underestimated. It is critical to the success of this Commission's recommendations that there is a joint approach by all those who work in varying roles across the town to work in partnership.

Our work has enabled us to form a series of recommendations to maintain a strategic focus in tackling homelessness and bringing together services through a joined up approach. These build on past successes but, above all, have at their core an underlying emphasis upon preventing homelessness.



Our work has highlighted the impact that can be achieved through the council's unique approach to the establishment of an independent Commission, particularly how valuable this collaborative approach to problem solving can be.

I would like to take the opportunity to publicly thank my fellow members of the Commission who have given their time and expertise to inform this debate, supported by a number of Officers within the Council. It is only through this collective input and experience that we have been able to ensure that the recommendations are built upon a firm evidence base and are realistically achievable.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Atkin'.

Nick Atkin

Independent Chair of Warrington Homelessness Commission
Chief Executive, Halton Housing Trust

Future Vision and Recommendations


In undertaking our work the Warrington Homelessness Commission has developed a proposed vision for homelessness in Warrington which is outlined in recommendation 1. We have put forward a series of recommendations to support this vision; these are based on the findings and subsequent conclusions as outlined in this report.

A Clear Vision and Strategic Partnership Approach

1

Vision for Warrington

We recommend that the following vision is adopted by all stakeholders within the borough and is used to drive all associated activity



Our vision is simple; there is no room for homelessness in Warrington. This vision will be a reality by 2018, through a focus on prevention and strong integrated partnership working.

2

Partnership Borough Wide Strategy

A partnership borough wide strategy is developed to prevent homelessness in Warrington. It is recommended that the strategy be owned by Warrington Partnership Board. The strategy will define how the shared vision for Warrington will be achieved and build on the work of the Homelessness Commission. It is recommended that the voluntary and faith sectors be closely involved in its development. A medium term delivery plan (3-5 years) will be developed to support the partnership borough wide strategy.

3

Multi-Agency Governance Group

A strategic multi-agency group is developed by the Warrington Partnership Board to govern and lead the delivery of the vision and all future homelessness work in Warrington. The group will also provide oversight of the delivery of the Homelessness Strategy.

4

Strategic Commissioning and Service Delivery

4

Strategic Review of Commissioning, Management and Delivery of Homelessness Services

A Warrington wide strategic review should be conducted to determine the way in which homelessness services are commissioned, managed and delivered in the future, based on levels of need and evidence of what works. This review should identify options for the future commissioning and delivery of services to ensure that future resources follow the priorities.

5

Single Central Gateway Approach

Future commissioning of all homelessness services should be undertaken at borough wide level. It should be focused on achieving outcomes on prevention and should support the provision of holistic, psychologically informed services¹ delivered through a single central gateway approach.

6

Homeless young people

There should be a particular focus in commissioning and delivery activity on ensuring that the needs of young people are met, from early intervention to assisting and supporting those at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

Impact of Welfare reform

7

Monitoring the Impact of Welfare Reform

The impact of welfare reform on household budgets is closely monitored to assess the potential impact on levels of homelessness. This should involve close working with the private rented and social housing sectors as well as mortgage lenders. Preventative and early intervention initiatives should be further developed to assist people who are at risk of losing their home. All partner agencies in Warrington should support prevention and early intervention activity.

¹ Psychologically Informed Services are places or services where the overall approach and day to day running have been consciously designed to take into account the psychological and emotional needs of service users.

Lack of Information about Effectiveness of Current Services

8

Review of Homelessness and Housing Statistics

That an in-depth review of all homelessness and housing statistics be undertaken to measure trends and levels of need. Following this action partnership wide performance indicators are developed to improve the future quality of data in order to effectively measure outcomes.

9

Peer Review

The Department for Communities and Local Government Gold Standard Peer Review be undertaken to review council housing advice and homelessness services in Warrington. The review should build on the work of the Commission and review outcomes and how best value for money can be achieved.

Rough Sleeping

10

Preventative Approach

Warrington's future approach to rough sleeping should be on the prevention of rough sleeping. In order to achieve this objective a consistent reconnection policy should be developed and implemented throughout the town by all stakeholders. In the transition from current practice to a preventative approach appropriate intermediate solutions should be put in place.

Early intervention and prevention provide better outcomes for people vulnerable to homelessness.





Why hold a Homelessness Commission?

Nationally homelessness is increasing. This is partly due to housing shortages including a reduction in the availability of social housing. In addition some parts of the private rented sector are becoming increasingly difficult for some individuals and groups to access. Key national policy drivers include the growing impact of welfare reform, cost of living, reductions in public sector expenditure and localism. National research and leading experts all agree that the cost of preventing homelessness is cheaper than that of helping someone once they become homeless. With this in mind we need to plan for the future to ensure that there are sufficient services and support in place to negate any potential rise in homelessness in Warrington.

Did you know?

Homelessness can affect anyone

In Warrington levels of need are growing and an increasing number of people accessing services have complex or multiple needs. These include a rise in the number of people accessing services who have a mental health disability and increasing numbers of people who have been victims of domestic abuse. Additionally more people are accessing services who have an alcohol and/or substance misuse problem and there is a lack of suitable accommodation for people leaving prison. Evidence received indicated that there is a need to develop an integrated

partnership approach to meeting the needs of people facing homelessness but particularly those with complex or multiple needs.

Young people in the 16-24 age group are more likely to become homeless in Warrington than any other age group therefore early interventions are essential. Young people very often struggle with the journey into adulthood and affordability to maintain a tenancy is a key issue for this age group.

Legislation requires the council to publish a homelessness strategy. The last strategy was developed in 2008 and expired in 2013. Therefore we felt that this was a timely opportunity to review homelessness particularly as the economic and policy context have changed considerably over the last few years.

Concerns have been raised by several stakeholders regarding the number of rough sleepers in the town centre. Latest statistical evidence highlighted that this is a growing problem and the longitudinal trend is increasing. A Government Ministerial Working Group published a vision to end rough sleeping called “no second night out”. Because the trend for rough sleeping is increasing in Warrington there is a need to review the town’s approach and implement the philosophy of the “no second night out” vision.

“Transition into adulthood is a key issue for young people and very often 16/17 year olds are expected to act like adults.”

Aims of the Homelessness Commission

The Warrington Homelessness Commission was set up with the aim of objectively leading a public debate focussed on homelessness in Warrington involving key partners from the public, voluntary and business sectors and people who have experienced homelessness. The work was informed by local and national evidence and advice was obtained from national homelessness experts.

Based on consideration and discussion of a range of evidence, the Commission committed to draw conclusions on the current position, identify areas for improvement and make collective recommendations for change. The Commission will also reconvene at any point to review any developing action plans and the resulting impacts and improvements.

The aims of the Commission are summarised as follows:

- Review the current levels of need in Warrington and into the future.
- Review the current approach in responding to local need; and the impact on outcomes that this is having.
- Review the current and developing statutory duties, associated resources and national policy drivers.
- Review the current cross sector costs to Warrington of preventing and responding to homelessness.
- Review practice elsewhere, focusing on lessons learnt from best and innovative approaches to preventing homelessness and supporting those at risk or in need.
- Review current relationships and engagement/ interaction/planning between commissioners, providers and key stakeholders.
- Determine whether current arrangements are effective and provide value for money; and identify any potential areas for development and improvement.
- Report on its findings and conclusions. Recommend any changes in approach required to ensure we are best meeting the needs of our local community, delivering positive outcomes for those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness - and support the development of a cross sector action plan for change.



1,000s
of hidden
homeless
exist throughout
Britain





Did you know?

The cost of preventing homelessness is cheaper than that of helping someone once they become homeless.

What did we do?

The Commission was launched on Monday 7 October 2013 and membership included key representatives from the public and voluntary sectors, social housing providers, the business community and the council. A full list of commission members is included at the end of the report and can be found on the Homelessness Commission webpage detailed below.

An inclusive and engaging approach was adopted for the review which was undertaken in several stages. Each stage informed the next, resulting in a comprehensive body of evidence and themes to enable the commission to identify key issues and potential solutions, forming the basis of the resulting recommendations.

A desktop review was completed to pull together as much information and evidence as possible to find out what we already knew about homelessness at national and local level. The emerging issues and the aims of the commission were presented at the Commission's first meeting in October 2013.

An in-depth extensive engagement programme was undertaken to understand in detail the views and perceptions of stakeholders and service recipients and identify areas for improvement. Full details of our engagement activities and how they informed our findings can be found at Appendix A.

During this time benchmarking with other Cheshire Local Authorities, national statutory statistics and a process mapping exercise with the Council Housing Options Team was undertaken. Work was also undertaken to gather additional intelligence and information about the costs of homelessness, hidden homeless, mental health, ex armed forces personnel and the latest national economic and policy developments.

Following this there was a formal full day commission meeting on Friday 6 December 2013 which was held in public, where a wide range of witnesses were invited to present evidence. These included national homelessness practitioners and experts, service providers, Cheshire West & Chester Council, the Mental Health Outreach Team and an Outreach Worker from the Basement Advisory Centre (support centre for the homeless in Liverpool).

In their final meeting on Tuesday 28 January 2014, the commission reviewed the emerging findings, areas for improvement and potential solutions from all the evidence gathered to date and agreed the recommendations outlined in this report.

All documents relating to the commission, its members and activity to date can be found on the Homelessness Commission webpage.
<http://www.warrington.gov.uk/homelessnesscommission/>



Commission Findings

What the evidence was telling us

What is Homelessness?

Homelessness means not having a home and can affect anyone. Rough sleeping is a very visible form of homelessness but many people's experiences are out of view.

The triggers that can tip people into homelessness are complex and can be numerous in some cases. Some of the causes of homelessness include structural factors such as lack of affordable housing and/or personal reasons such as relationship breakdown.

The effect of homelessness on children can be long-lasting. National research has shown that the insecurity and disruption of living in temporary accommodation has a damaging effect on children's health and wellbeing. Homelessness can have a detrimental impact on young people, with long-term implications for their education, employment prospects and health, and can lead to an escalation of substance abuse.

Most people are fortunate enough never to have to experience homelessness. But for those who do, it can be a very traumatic experience that is hard to escape from, damaging physical and emotional wellbeing along the way.

The National Context

Nationally homelessness is on the rise and figures indicate that it has risen for three consecutive years with an estimated 185,000 people a year now affected in England. This is partly due to housing shortages and a reduction in the availability of social housing. There are over one million fewer homes owned by local authorities or housing associations now than in 1977. National research has found that there is a current shortfall of accommodation for those who cannot afford market rates and that this trend is predicted to rise to 934,388 by 2021.

There are a number of national policy drivers which are impacting on homelessness which could cause levels to rise in Warrington. Some national drivers are impacting on household budgets and potentially increasing the level of debt. Such factors include static wages, high energy costs, potential interest rate rises and increases in rent. Research suggests that the average household debt stands at £54,000 almost twice the level of a decade ago. In a study conducted by Shelter in 2013 it was found that the number of people struggling to pay their rent or mortgage each month had increased over the past year and the North West was identified as a hot spot for evictions with 1 in 112 homes at risk.

There are a number of factors relating to welfare reform which could affect future levels of homelessness in Warrington. These include the introduction of the spare room subsidy or "bedroom tax". This has already resulted in increased demand for 1 and 2 bedroom social housing properties and lack of demand for three





and four bedroomed properties in Warrington. Universal Credit for couples who are looking for work or on a low income will be more widely introduced in Warrington from June 2014. It is anticipated that Universal Credit will be more widely introduced from September 2014.

One of the key components of universal credit is the direct payment of housing costs to individuals rather than landlords. Warrington is a Universal Credit pathfinder area and early indications show that direct payments are causing significant problems for social housing providers and their tenants. During the five month pilot there has been a 31% increase in rent arrears.

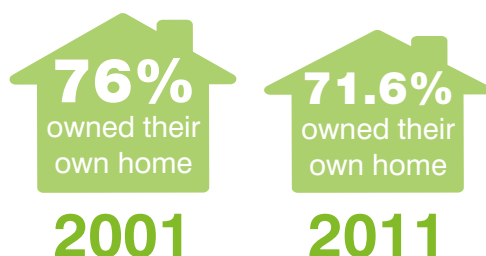
A new benefit sanctions regime was introduced in 2012 for people receiving Jobseekers Allowance or Employment and Support Allowance. This means that if certain conditions and requirements are not complied with benefits can be stopped. Latest national research indicates that there has been an 11% rise in the use of sanctions from 2012 to 2013. National homelessness charities believe that sanctions are very often unfair and can leave people destitute and at severe risk of homelessness. Local social housing providers also believe that sanctions could affect a tenant's ability to pay their rent.

Warrington: the People and the Place

Warrington lies between Manchester and Liverpool at the centre of the North West region's transport network. The population of Warrington has grown and was 203,700 mid 2012. Warrington is becoming a more culturally diverse place and the proportion of non-White British ethnic groups is growing and currently stands at 2.3%. The older population has also grown (65 and over) which will have implications for services including housing. The proportion of the population living alone has increased which could increase demand for housing. Warrington is a place of stark inequalities between the most affluent and deprived. In Warrington 13 of our areas, which are predominately located in the centre of Warrington fall within the most 10% most deprived in the country. There are 19,253 residents living in these areas and they are predominately located in the centre of the Borough.

Warrington has a relatively resilient economy. In August 2013 unemployment was slightly lower at 3.5% than the North West figure of 3.9%; however this is still slightly higher than the national figure of 3.3%. The average gross weekly full time pay in Warrington in 2012 was slightly higher at £492.3 than the North West average of £472.5 but lower than the national average of £508.00.

In 2011, 71.6% of the population owned their own property; this has reduced from 2001 when 76% of the population owned their own home. In 2011, 15.6% of the population rented a property from a registered social landlord and 11.2% of properties were privately rented. Average house prices in Warrington are lower overall than the average for England and Wales; however they are higher than the North West region's average prices.



Legal Requirements – What the Council is required to do

The Council has a number of statutory duties which include the requirement to provide permanent accommodation for unintentionally homeless people in priority need. This includes pregnant women, dependent children, vulnerable people, young people, care leavers, armed forces personnel, ex-offenders and people fleeing domestic violence. These people are often referred to as statutory homeless.

All Local Authorities are required to review homelessness in their area and publish a Homelessness Strategy based on this review; Warrington's strategy expired in 2013. There is a requirement to keep the strategy under review and consult other local, public and voluntary bodies before adopting or changing the strategy.

The Council is also required to provide free advice and information about homelessness and prevention to everyone living in the Borough.

The Council is required to keep a housing allocations policy and procedure in place. This sets out who is eligible to register on the waiting list for social housing and a framework to assess priority. Although the council has a statutory role the housing waiting list is currently managed by Golden Gates Housing Trust. National evidence suggests that the homelessness function and the management of the housing waiting list should be managed by the same organisation. The Localism Act 2011 introduced flexibility to the way in which local authorities can manage housing need in their area. This means that suitable accommodation can now be offered in the private rented sector.

The Cost of Homelessness

There has been a range of studies published nationally regarding the costs of homelessness. All national experts, academics, sector led organisations and central government agree that the cost of preventing homelessness is cheaper than that of helping someone once they become homeless. The average saving per statutory homeless case is £1,286. The average saving per non-statutory single homelessness case is £22,300.

National Government had released in 2014 a unit cost database which brings together more than 600 cost estimates in a single place, most of which are national costs derived from government reports and academic studies. The costs cover crime, education and skills, employment and economy, fire, health, housing and social services. These costs could be used to evaluate the cost of homelessness in Warrington.

A report by the Department of Health puts the gross costs of homelessness to the NHS at around £85 million a year. This is equivalent to about £2,200 a year per homeless person, which is four times the average amount spent on someone aged 16-64 in the general population

The total Council budget for homelessness services in Warrington in 2012/13 was £3,011,814. This included staffing, premises, funding to third parties and indirect costs such as management. The total budget for 2013/14 was forecast at £2,773,981. Direct funding to third parties for homelessness services in 2012/13 was £1,740,778 and was forecast at £1,542,464 for 2013/14.



Levels of Need

To date Warrington has not followed the national trend and there has been a downturn in the number of people being accepted as statutory homeless from 2008/9 to 2012/3. The reasons for this downturn are uncertain. This highlights the need for improved needs assessment of homelessness in Warrington which is reflected in recommendation 8.

There is another category of homelessness which is often referred to as “hidden homeless”. These are people who are homeless, but are not visible in official figures. These include individuals and families who become homeless but find a temporary solution by staying with family members or friends. It is extremely difficult to accurately estimate the size of this population but national research suggests that there are countless thousands of hidden homeless throughout Britain. No evidence has been received to suggest that Warrington is any different in this respect.

The Council's Housing Options Team operates a range of preventative services that are available to anyone who is over 18, homeless or at risk of homelessness and has a connection to Warrington. These have been successful, in 2012/13 the housing options team dealt with 640 preventions. Since 2011/12 there has been an increase in the number of people accessing such services.

There are a significant number of people accessing homelessness services in Warrington who have mental health needs. In 2012/13 99 people accessed services that had mental health needs. This is consistent with national trends and research has shown that 42% of clients of homelessness services in England have mental health needs.

The number of people accessing services who have alcohol and/or substance misuse problems, particularly female clients is rising. In 2010/11 48 people accessed services, this rose to 82 in 2012/13. Nationally people from BME communities are over represented in homelessness statistics. This is more likely to be problematic in areas where BME communities make up a higher proportion of the population.

Domestic abuse is one of the leading causes of homelessness amongst women and according to latest national evidence is on the rise. No evidence has been received to indicate that Warrington is any different in this respect. In 2012/13 27% of people presenting as homeless gave domestic abuse (or threat of domestic abuse) as the cause and it is important that this level of need is taken into account.

In the last 12 months in Warrington 17% of prisoners released on licence were of “no fixed abode”. Additionally 11% of offenders in the last 12 months were still of “no fixed abode” at the end of their licence period. It was found that there were a number of barriers that prevented offenders from finding accommodation when they were released from prison. These included their previous offending history, housing arrears and lack of skills to access and complete forms online. Evidence received also indicated that there was currently a lack of suitable accommodation in Warrington for ex-offenders.

“Lack of support for people with low level mental health needs. People return to mental health services because of a lack of move on services and support to develop sustainable lifestyles.”



Statistics from Golden Gates Housing Trust indicated that in Warrington in 2012/13 there were a small number of ex armed forces personnel accessing supported accommodation or floating support services. A small number of ex armed forces personnel had applied for social housing; however this was much less than originally anticipated.

The experience of homelessness can have seriously detrimental effects on physical and mental wellbeing. National research shows that on average, male rough sleepers die at 47 years old; women rough sleepers die at 43 years old. Nationally access to healthcare is a problem for the homeless and many people may have difficulty registering with a GP either on a temporary or permanent basis. Many people use emergency facilities instead which are not equipped to manage primary care.

Early Interventions for Young People

Young people in the 16-24 age group were more likely to become homeless in Warrington than other age groups. This follows the national trend and latest evidence from the Homeless Link shows that the number of young people who are facing homelessness nationally is increasing.

In Warrington in 2012/13 there were 90 presentations for housing advice from 16/17 year olds, of these there were 14 homelessness applications from this age group. These figures do not take into account young people who could be classed as hidden homeless. Young people who participated in focus groups stated that they had slept rough in Warrington for periods which ranged from one night to twenty. Evidence received revealed that young people from the age of 14 recognised that they may need to leave home.

There are a number of factors which could affect levels of homelessness amongst young people, these include:-

- Transition into adulthood is a key issue, and some young people struggle with this journey
- Affordability and being able to sustain a tenancy independently.
- Increasing numbers of young people have complex needs which include drug and/or alcohol issues and mental health problems.
- Incidents of domestic abuse in the 16-25 age group in Warrington are growing and teenage relationship abuse is a particular problem.

Legislation makes clear that Local Authority children services must accommodate 16 and 17 year olds who have been assessed as homeless and provide assistance and support to those at risk. In Warrington there are a number of different services for young people, an overview is provided at Appendix B.

Evidence was received to suggest that there was not enough provision to meet the varied needs of this age group. Identified gaps in service provision included pre-birth support for young pregnant women, move on accommodation for under 18's and early intervention services.

Did you know?

Young people in the 16-24 age group are more likely to become homeless than any other age group.





Rough Sleeping

Rough sleeping is the most visible form of homelessness. People who sleep rough may fall outside of the definitions of statutory homelessness and move in and out of temporary accommodation. The Government published “Vision to end rough sleeping: No Second Night Out nationwide” in July 2011. The aim of this document is to give local people the tools to tackle rough sleeping and put an end to second nights out on the street.

There are a number of services for rough sleepers in Warrington, these can be categorised into accommodation, support services and facilities provided by the faith sector, an overview is detailed at Appendix D. There is an emergency night shelter in Warrington called Room at the Inn. Support services include the Brighter Futures Team who are commissioned by the council to support rough sleepers that are currently sleeping rough or are accessing Room at the Inn. Services provided by the faith sector include tea and toast and food parcels.

Evidence shows that rough sleeping in Warrington is a growing problem and there has been an upward trend over the last couple of years. This is consistent with the national trend and latest information from the Communities and Local Government shows that since 2010 England has seen rough sleeping increase for the fourth year. Information from the 2013 Rough Sleeper Count showed that the number of rough sleepers in Warrington had risen from 7 in 2012 to 11 plus 10 people at Room at the Inn. Rough sleeping is predominantly centred in the town centre which is impacting on town centre businesses.

Evidence from the benchmarking exercise showed that the strategic approach to rough sleeping in other Cheshire Local Authorities is to “prevent rather than support”, emergency night shelters are not provided. Additionally Cheshire West and Chester has developed a sustainable reconnection policy which relocates rough sleepers with their local area.

Current Local Action to Address Homelessness

There are a range of homelessness services in Warrington which are provided and commissioned by the council and the voluntary sector. These can be broadly categorised into prevention and relief

services, services for people who have been assessed as statutory homeless and specialised services for particular groups of people. A diagram giving an overview of these services is attached at Appendix C.

Housing advice and homelessness services for the council are delivered and/or managed by the Housing Options Team which comprises of eight officers. The team is located at the Gateway which is a community resource centre which is located in the town centre. The number of staff employed by the Council to deliver homelessness services was lower than other Cheshire Local Authorities. Housing teams at other local authorities were as follows; 26 staff at Cheshire East, 30 staff at Cheshire West and Chester and 11 staff at Halton.

“People feel that they have to repeat their circumstances numerous times to statutory providers.”



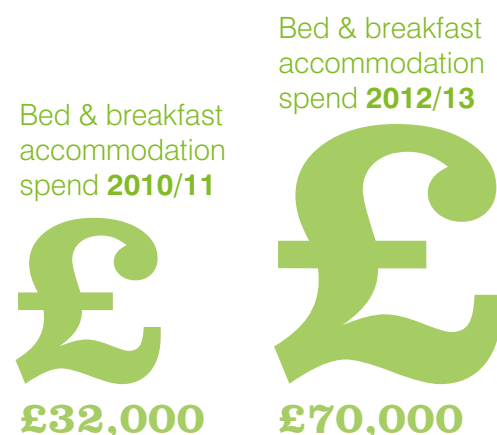
Even though the team is small they have a significant workload and on average they work with between 150-200 customers per month. Front line officers in the Housing Options Team work effectively together and there is noticeable evidence of knowledge sharing to provide the best outcomes for customers. There are a wide range of preventative services which include mortgage rescue and bond guarantee schemes. Details are outlined in Appendix C. Warrington compared well to other Cheshire authorities for its preventative work and had helped a high percentage of people to stay in their own home through its preventative services.


Temporary accommodation and Bed and Breakfast accommodation is used as a last resort in Warrington to provide accommodation for those people who are in priority need and have been classed as statutory homeless. The annual spend on bed and breakfast accommodation has risen over the last three years from £32,000 in 2010/11 to £70,000 in 2012/13.

Evidence received showed that at the present time there is no single point of access or a gateway approach for housing and homelessness services in Warrington. The central gateway approach is considered to be best practice by national experts and this approach is adopted by other Local Authorities. This approach ensures that there is an integrated co-ordinated approach to service delivery.

Views on services were received from a range of organisations and people affected by homelessness. It was the view of a number of people who took part in the engagement activities that “current service provision was not the most effective for customers and needed to change”. Other views that were expressed included the need to develop multi agency working and improve communication between different organisations. A number of organisations participating in engagement activities wanted a more integrated co-ordinated approach to homeless services in Warrington. The need to improve working relationships between different agencies was expressed by those people currently experiencing homelessness.

Gaps in service provision were identified and it was found that there is a lack of move on or support services particularly for those people with complex or multiple needs. As a result there was evidence of “revolving doors” syndrome in the town.





Services that take into account the psychological and emotional needs of people are the key to preventing and ending homelessness.

Different approaches to delivering homelessness and advice services

There is overwhelming evidence from national experts, central government and sector led organisations that the cost of preventing homelessness is cheaper than helping someone once they become homeless. In Warrington the prevention services offered by the Housing Options Team are good but need to develop further to meet growing levels of need.

There is national evidence that services that are delivered in a psychologically informed environment (PIE) are the key to preventing and ending homelessness. PIE's are places or services where the overall approach and the day to day running have been consciously designed to take into account the psychological and emotional needs of service users. This approach has been adopted by other local authorities and other organisations working in this field.

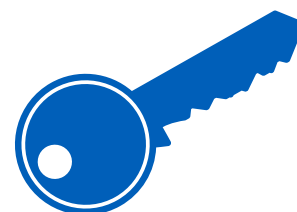
From the bench marking exercise and evidence received at the meeting on 6 December 2013 a number of approaches for the delivery and commissioning of homelessness services were identified. The following is a summary of some of the approaches undertaken by other Local Authorities and organisations:-

- Outreach bus for rough sleepers with medical facilities, food and showers.
- Abstinence houses for people returning from rehab
- Housing sharing in the private rented sector for the under 35's
- Hospital discharge scheme which provides short term accommodation and support for homeless people who have been discharged from hospital.
- Wirral Churches' Ark project mental health initiative.
- Appointment of an elected homelessness member champion to drive forward the homelessness agenda.
- Re-commissioning of services by a competitive dialogue process and "payment by results" whereby providers are paid on their outcomes.
- New Government initiative to develop personalised budgets for homeless people.

As part of the Department for Communities and Local government "Gold Standard Scheme" there is a diagnostic peer review toolkit which enables Local Authorities to assess services and their impact and develop improvement plans.

Key Conclusions & Recommendations

Conclusion - A Clear Vision and Strategic Partnership Approach



A consistent emerging theme is the need to develop a partnership wide approach to homelessness and prevention strategies in Warrington. This could be attributed to the lack of an overall clear partnership vision for the town regarding homelessness. The vision should aim to prevent homelessness which is consistent with advice from national homelessness experts and the Government. The need to promote this vision widely amongst all public, private, voluntary organisations and customers is essential. This will ensure that everybody is clear on their role in combating homelessness and everybody is working towards the same goal.

Strong partnership wide governance arrangements are required to deliver and drive forward the vision. A strategic level partnership group is required to achieve this objective and govern all future work. A joint partnership agreement also needs to be developed to improve links between different organisations.

It is important that a partnership homeless strategy be developed to meet growing levels of need and ensure compliance with legal requirements. The strategy should be owned by the Warrington Partnership Board. The aim of the strategy should be to deliver the vision and drive forward homelessness services. Decisions made on homelessness should always have regard to the strategy. The strategy should have a clear community intention and the faith sector and other voluntary organisations should be involved in the development of the strategy. A partnership wide strategy will have to develop integrated working to enable partners to work together more effectively in this field.

Recommendations

1

Vision for Warrington

We recommend that the following vision is adopted by all stakeholders within the borough and is used to drive all associated activity

Our vision is simple; there is no room for homelessness in Warrington. This vision will be a reality by 2018, through a focus on prevention and strong integrated partnership working.

Recommendations

2

Partnership Borough Wide Strategy

A partnership borough wide strategy is developed to prevent homelessness in Warrington. It is recommended that the strategy be owned by Warrington Partnership Board. The strategy will define how the shared vision for Warrington will be achieved and build on the work of the Homelessness Commission. It is recommended that the voluntary and faith sectors be closely involved in its development. A medium term delivery plan (3-5 years) will be developed to support the Partnership Borough Wide Strategy.

3

Multi-Agency Governance Group

A strategic multi-agency group is developed by the Warrington Partnership Board to govern and lead the delivery of the vision and all future homelessness work in Warrington. The group will also provide oversight of the delivery of the Homelessness Strategy.

Conclusion - Strategic Commissioning and Service Delivery

One of the strongest reoccurring themes was the lack of a clear borough-wide commissioning steer to guide future decisions about service provision. It was found that there was a mismatch of resources across Warrington and all services needed to be mapped against levels of need to identify gaps and future requirements. In the future services should be intelligently designed, managed and commissioned and there should be an outcome based approach to all commissioning activities. Joint commissioning opportunities with partners should be maximised to develop a more integrated approach.

Another strong theme was the lack of a joined up approach to the way in which services across Warrington are delivered and a lack of consistent advice and support. A single point of contact for all homelessness and housing services through a gateway approach is essential. This will help to ensure that advice and support is consistent and accessible for all.

The need to develop a move-on strategy was required to reduce the “revolving door” syndrome in Warrington. This should be supported by lifestyle support and holistic wrap-around services. The development of such services that are delivered in a psychologically informed environment will enable people to develop sustainable lifestyles.

From the evidence received some specific gaps in service provision were identified. These included the need for a more varied mix of temporary accommodation. Some specific gaps were identified which included a lack of temporary accommodation for families and females.

Evidence suggested that there was not enough provision to meet the varied needs of 16-17 year olds. Identified gaps in service provision included pre-birth support for young pregnant women, move on accommodation for under 18's and early intervention services.

It was clear that early intervention and prevention provided better outcomes for people who were vulnerable to homelessness. Early intervention is particularly important for young people as they are more likely to be significantly impacted by homelessness. Additionally national research shows that prevention services are much more cost effective than providing support to someone once they become homeless.

Recommendations

4

Strategic Review of Commissioning, Management and Delivery of Homelessness Services

A Warrington wide strategic review should be conducted of the way in which homelessness services are commissioned, managed and delivered in the future which is based on levels of need and evidence of what works. This review should identify options for the future commissioning and delivery of services to ensure that future resources follow the priorities.

5

Single Central Gateway Approach

Future commissioning of all homelessness services should be undertaken at borough wide level. It should be focused on achieving outcomes on prevention and should support the provision of holistic, psychologically informed services² delivered through a single central gateway approach.

6

Homeless young people

There should be a particular focus in commissioning and delivery activity on ensuring that the needs of young people are met, from early intervention to assisting and supporting those at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

Conclusion - Impact of Welfare Reform

Nationally homelessness is on the increase due to a number of factors including housing shortages and the growing impact of welfare reform. Even though levels haven't yet risen in Warrington there is no doubt that welfare reform will impact in the future. The economy in Warrington has proven to be resilient during the economic downturn. However the town does have areas which fall within the most deprived in the country which are more vulnerable to the impact of welfare reform.

Early indications from the Universal Credit pathfinder project show that there has been a significant increase in rent arrears. If this trend continues when Universal Credit is more widely introduced it will adversely affect levels of homelessness. Other factors such as the introduction of a new benefits sanctions regime and an increase in its use also puts people at greater risk of homelessness. In order to prepare for these national policy trends it is essential that there is a robust approach to homelessness prevention to meet anticipated growing demands.

Because of reductions in the availability of social housing in the future other affordable housing options such as the private rented sector needed to be explored.

² Psychologically Informed Services are places or services where the overall approach and day to day running have been consciously designed to take into account the psychological and emotional needs of service users.

Recommendations

7

Monitoring of Impact of Welfare Reform

The impact of welfare reform on household budgets is closely monitored to assess the potential impact on levels of homelessness. This should involve close working with the private rented and social housing sectors as well as mortgage lenders. Preventative and early intervention initiatives should be further developed to assist people who are at risk of losing their home. All partner agencies in Warrington should support prevention and early intervention activity.

Conclusion - Lack of information about effectiveness of current services

Concern was expressed regarding the robustness and accuracy of homelessness statistics and the conclusion reached was that they did not accurately reflect what is happening in Warrington. A thorough analysis of all data needed to be undertaken including preventions and homelessness in BME communities. This would help to gain a better understanding of levels of need and why Warrington was not following national trends.

The hard work and dedication of front line staff in the Housing Options Team was recognised and it was acknowledged that a suitably resourced and well trained housing function was crucial.

It was not possible to assess the overall effectiveness of current services and whether they provided value for money. In order to achieve this, current resources, including staffing needed to be mapped and the allocation of budgets reviewed. This should be undertaken through the Department of Communities Local Government Peer Review Toolkit. This process would also assess whether services were providing value for money and the human and financial cost of homelessness. This process should build on the conclusions and recommendations contained within this report.

To ensure that services are continually monitored and reviewed in the future partnership wide performance indicators should be developed to measure outcomes and improve the quality of data in the future.

8

Review of Homelessness and Housing Statistics

That an in-depth review of all homelessness and housing statistics be undertaken to measure trends and levels of need. Following this action partnership wide performance indicators are developed to improve the future quality of data in order to effectively measure outcomes.

9

Peer Review

The Department for Communities and Local Government Gold Standard Peer Review be undertaken to review council housing advice and homelessness services in Warrington. The review should build on the work of the Commission and review outcomes and how best value for money can be achieved.



Conclusion - Rough Sleeping

The number of rough sleepers in Warrington is increasing and it is clear that the current approach is not helping to reduce numbers. The Commission learnt from the evidence received that there is a strong desire for change from all stakeholders and all partners would like to end rough sleeping in Warrington. In addition Warrington is more likely to attract national funding for homelessness initiatives if levels of rough sleeping are low.

Although there are a number of services provided by different partners including the voluntary and faith sectors the approach taken is reactive rather than preventative. The robustness of rough sleeper data was questioned and there was a need to identify the true needs of the town. At the present time services are not commissioned consistently and are not delivered in psychologically informed environments that comply with Government guidelines. The need for an emergency night shelter was questioned and whether this was the result of the failure of other services or whether it creates a need. A need to develop a consistent reconnection policy was identified so that all stakeholders are helping to reconnect rough sleepers with their local area.

10

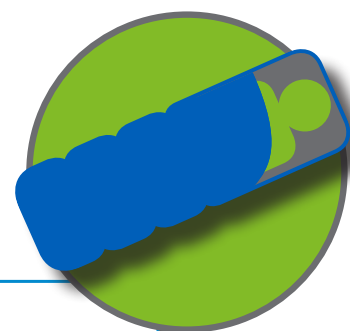
Preventative Approach

Warrington's future approach to rough sleeping should be on the prevention of rough sleeping. In order to achieve this objective a consistent reconnection policy should be developed and implemented throughout the town by all stakeholders. In the transition from current practice to a preventative approach appropriate intermediate solutions should be put in place.



Did you know?

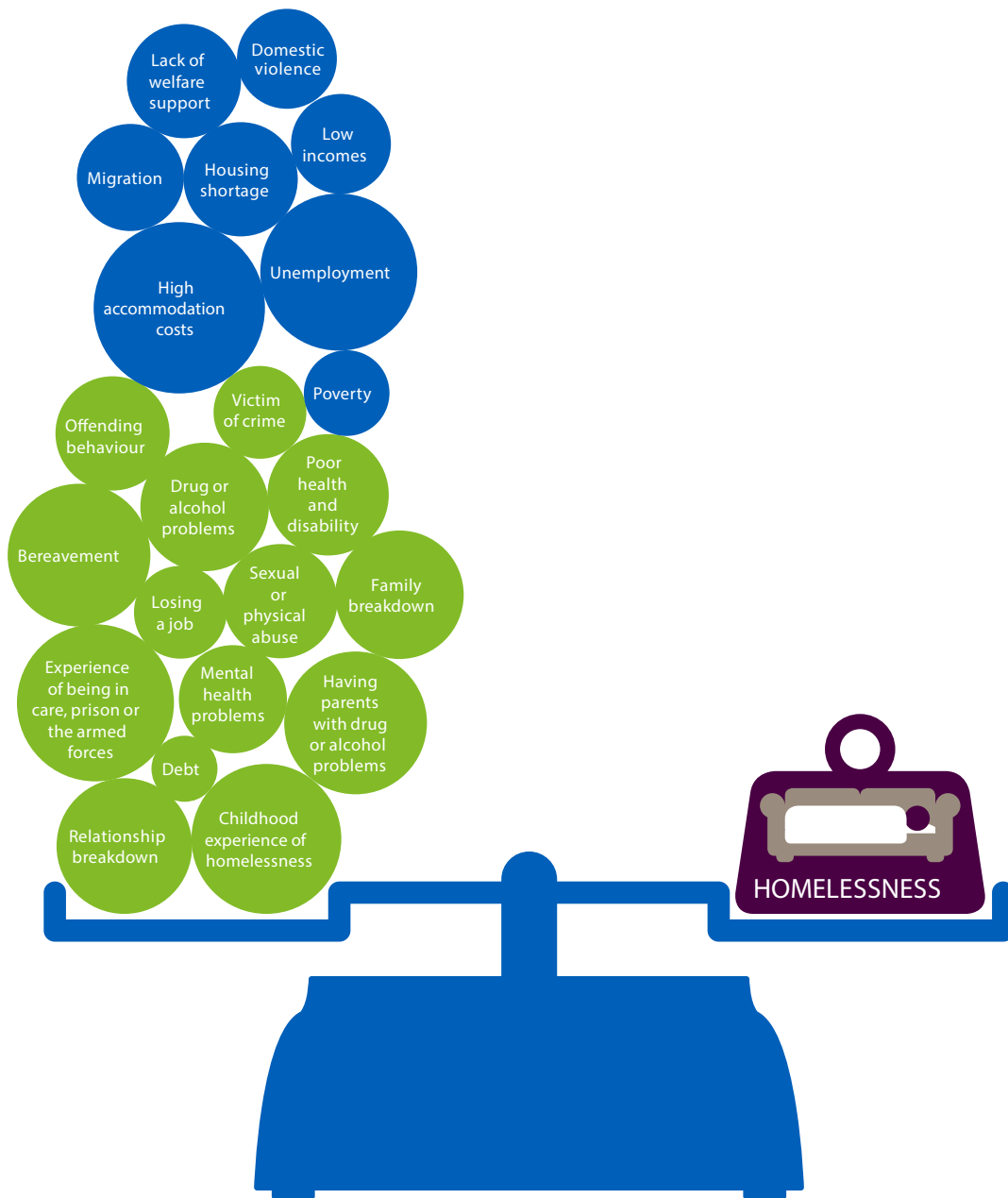
Rough sleeping is the most visible form of homelessness



Next Steps

The Warrington Homelessness Commission will formally draw to a close on Tuesday 1 April 2014, during an event at Warrington Town Hall.

It is proposed that the recommendations contained within this report be taken forward, and governed, by the Warrington Partnership Board. A report will be taken to the Partnership Board in June 2014 for formal agreement.



Who took Part?

Commission Membership

Nick Atkin, Independent Chair of the Commission, Chief Executive, Halton Housing Trust
Sarah Boycott, Chief Superintendent, Cheshire Police
Cllr Paul Bretherton, Elected Member, Warrington Borough Council
Steve Cullen, Managing Director, Citizens Advice Bureau
Andy Farrall, Executive Director, Warrington Borough Council
Cllr David Keane, Elected Member, Warrington Borough Council
Simon Kenton, Assistant Director, Integrated Commissioning, CCG/
Warrington Borough Council
Rev Stephen Kingsnorth, Faith Advisor, Third Sector representative and Chair of Town Centre Management Board
Peter Mercer, Chief Executive, Golden Gates Housing Trust
Dr Rita Robertson, Director of Public Health, Warrington Borough Council
Jan Souness, Managing Director, Livewire and Culture Warrington Trust
Dave Thompson, Assistant Director, Inclusions and Partnerships, 5 Boroughs Partnership NHS Foundation Trust
Fiona Waddington, Assistant Director, Families and Wellbeing Directorate, Warrington Borough Council
Cllr Pat Wright, Elected Member, Warrington Borough Council

Project Team

Melanie Alsop, Programme Officer, Partnerships & Performance
Lynn Campbell, Principal Manager, Families & Wellbeing
Dave Cowley, Head of Service, Housing Standards & Options Division
Tracy Flute, Principal in Public Health
Kathryn Griffiths, Assistant Director, Partnerships & Performance
Helen Hill, Senior Partnerships & Policy Analyst
Jan Holding, Principal in Public Health
Simon Kenton, Assistant Director, Integrated Commissioning, Warrington Clinical Commissioning Group/
Warrington Borough Council
Frank Pacey, Head of Service, Families and Wellbeing
Dr Rita Robertson, Director of Public Health
Doug Ryan, Community Safety Partnership Manager
Colin Wojtowycz, Customer Insight Business Partner
Ann Woods, Homelessness and Housing Services Manager





National Homeless Practitioners and Advisors

Neil Morland, Housing Consultant
Paul Connery, Homeless Link
Anne Doyle, National Practitioner Support Service
Joe Kent, Homeless Link

Who we engaged with

We would like to thank the following people who kindly attended our meeting on 6 December 2013 to share their experiences and advice on homelessness.

Tommy Allman, Basement Advisory Centre for the Homeless, Liverpool
Pauline Craughwell, Cheshire West and Chester Council
Eleanor Moulton, Cheshire West and Chester Council
Danielle McCann, Your Housing, Verve Place
Emma Perris, Your Housing, Verve Place
Phil Redmond, Mental Health Outreach Team, Warrington Borough Council
Carl Roberts, CRI Pathways to Recovery
Mandy Taviner, Warrington Speak up

We would also like to thank everybody who took part in our engagement activities or submitted their views in writing. A full list of who took part can be found at Appendix A. The views and advice we have received has been invaluable and have helped us form our conclusions and recommendations



Further Information

Further information about all are work can be found on the Homelessness Commission webpage.
http://www.warrington.gov.uk/info/200921/warrington_homelessness_commission

A list of all the documents that were produced is listed below. All documents can be downloaded here:-
http://www.warrington.gov.uk/info/200921/warrington_homelessness_commission/1427/warrington_homelessness_commission_documents

Commission Member Biographies

Launch documents – Terms of reference, Desktop Study October 2013, time-line, details of commission members -

Schedule for 6 December 2013 meeting

Interim Report December 2013

Engagement Activity Executive Summary Part 1

Benchmarking Exercise Executive Summary

Media Coverage Summary

Minutes 6 December 2014

Summary of Key Findings Report January 2014

Engagement Activity Executive Summary Part 2 January 2014

Additional Evidence Gathering January 2014

Minutes 28 January 2014

References

1. HM Government Vision to end Rough sleeping: No Second Night Out nationwide” July 2011.
2. Shelter.org.uk/campaigns/why_we_campaign/tackling_homelessness/what_is_homelessness.
3. Shelter Factsheet Young People and Homelessness.
4. LGiU Daily News 14.12.13
5. Clarke A & Burgess G, Cambridge Centre of Housing & Planning Research “mapping the number of extra housing units needed for young people” December 2012
6. LGiu Housing Progress Report 13.11.13
7. Health and Homelessness J Gray, Director/Consultant Nurse & Queen’s Nurse
8. The costs and savings of tackling and preventing homelessness, N Morland, August 2012.
9. Value for money in housing options and homelessness services, Cunningham & Awberry 2010 and How Many, How Much? Single homelessness and the question of numbers and cost, Kenway & palmer 2003
10. Inside Housing 25.2.14 Rough sleeping up by a third



Appendix A – Engagement Activities

Executive Summary

Background

The Commission has sought key representatives from a number of sectors to join them and participate in this debate.

The overall objective of our engagement activity was to:

“Understand in detail the views and perceptions of stakeholders and service recipients on Warrington’s current position and identify areas for improvement”

What did we do – our engagement activity

To help determine underlying views and perspectives, amongst our key stakeholder groupings, a series of focus groups, presentations and 1:1 meetings took place throughout October 2013 – January 2014. A wider, formal, call for evidence was circulated to all stakeholders offering the opportunity for them to submit evidence to the Commission.

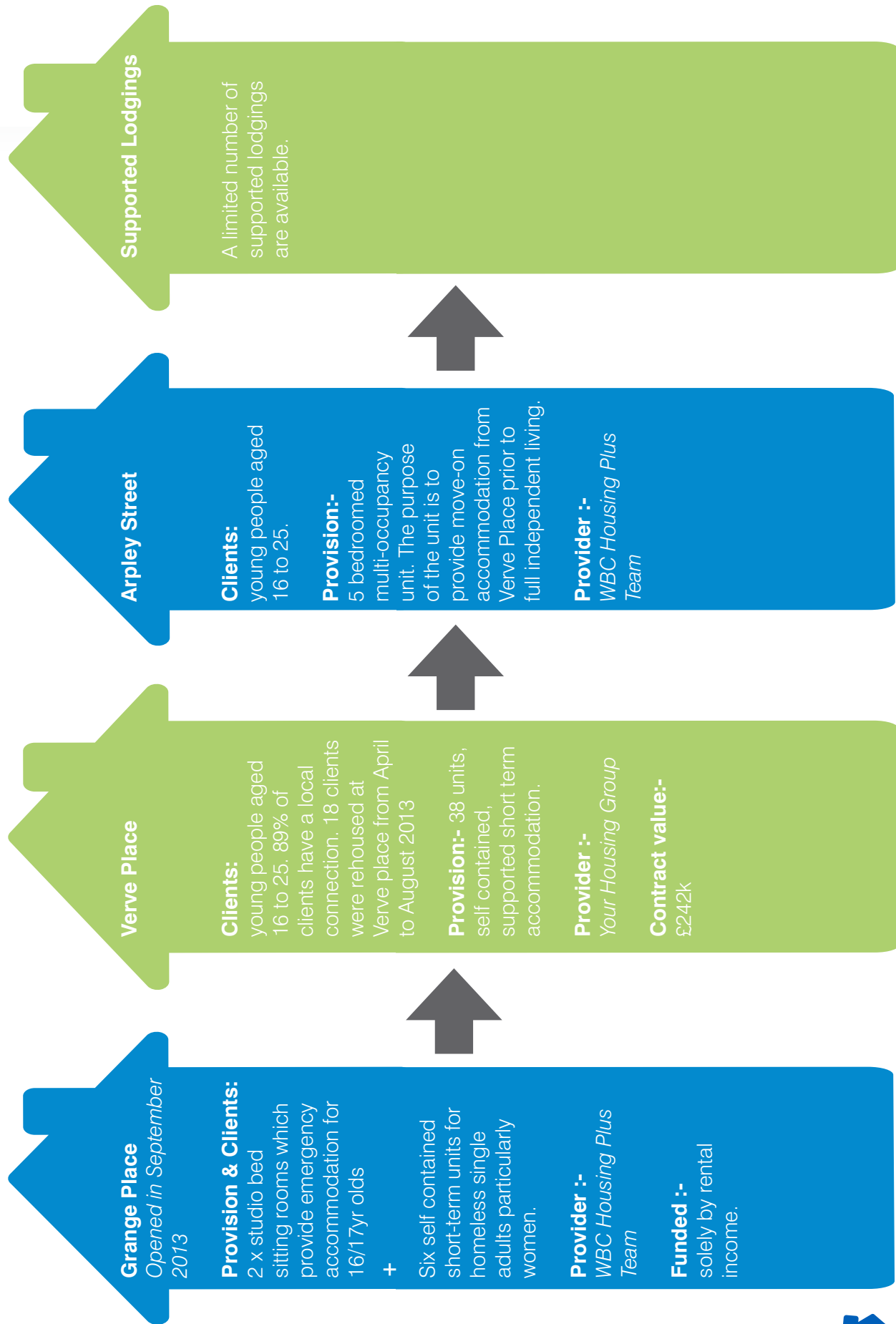
The engagement activity was conducted by the project support group, with the aforementioned aim, providers (commissioned and non), the voluntary sector, businesses in the town centre, the health sector, and those in receipt of homelessness services an opportunity to express their views and concerns directly to the Warrington Homelessness Commission.

A summary of all the engagement activity can be found below:

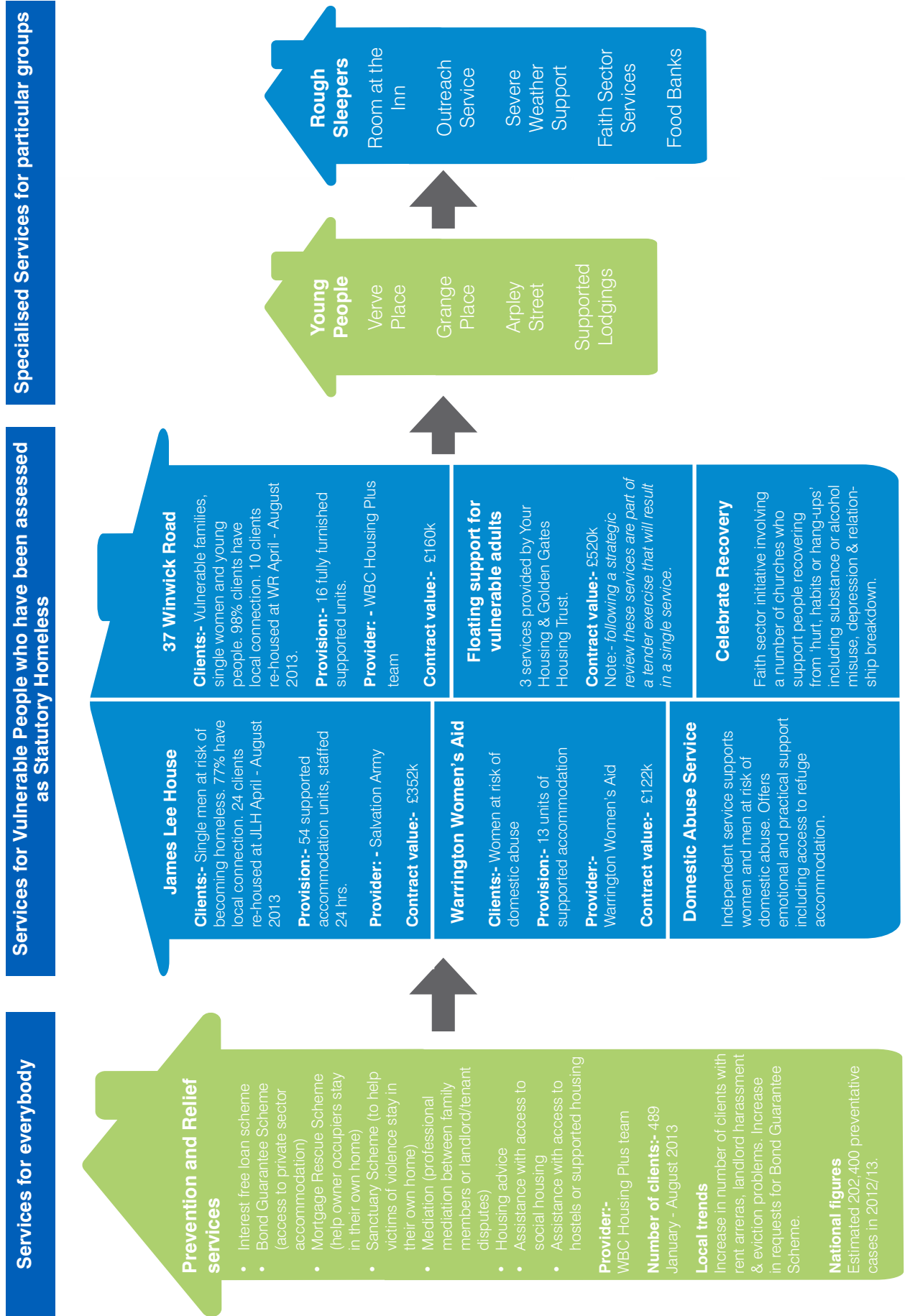
Organisation	Method of engagement
Borough Ministry	Attended voluntary sector focus group 12.11.13
Brighter Futures	Attended provider focus group 8.11.13 and responded to formal call for evidence
CRI	Updated via DAAT
CCG - Safeguard lead	Engaged via formal call for evidence and questionnaire circulated
Cheshire West, Halton and Warrington Youth Offending Service	Submitted evidence
Citizens Advice Bureau	Attended voluntary sector focus group 12.11.13
Cultural Quarter business forum	1:1 meeting with 29.10.13
Golden Gates Housing Trust	1:1 meeting, attended provider focus group 8.11.13 and responded to formal call for evidence
Health Watch	Engaged via formal call for evidence
Health sector (Bridgewater, NHS England, Warrington CCG, Warrington Hospital, 5BP	Engaged via formal call for evidence and questionnaire circulated

Organisation	Method of engagement
Housing Partnership Board	Presentation to the board conducted on 2.12.13
James Lee House	Attended provider focus group 8.11.13
Landlords Association	Present during presentation given to the Housing partnership board
Life Time Service	Engaged via formal call for evidence
Livewire for Parr Hall and Pyramid	1:1 meeting 29.10.13
Navigate	Engagement activity via questionnaire and formal evidence submitted
Plus Dane	Engaged via formal call for evidence and invited to provider focus group
Police	Engaged via formal call for evidence
Police, Probation and YOT	Engagement activity via questionnaire and formal evidence submitted
Room At The Inn - night shelter	Attended voluntary sector focus group 12.11.13 and responded to formal call for evidence
Speak Up	Conducted engagement activity and presented feedback to the Commission on 6.12.13
The Gateway Centre	Attended voluntary sector focus group 12.11.13
Town Centre Management Board	Presentation 7.11.13
Warrington Housing Association	Presentation to the Housing partnership board
Warrington Women's Aid	Attended provider focus group 8.11.13, 1:1 meeting and attended the housing partnership board presentation
WBC Adult Social Care	Engaged via formal call for evidence
WBC - Mental health outreach service	Presented to the Commission on 6.12.13
WBC Children in Care	Engaged via formal call for evidence
WBC Childrens Services	Conducted youth engagement activity on behalf of the Commission
WBC Domestic Violence Co-ordinator	1:1 meeting
WBC Fostering Services	Engaged via formal call for evidence
WBC Housing Benefit	Engaged via formal call for evidence
YMCA	Attended voluntary sector focus group 12.11.13
Your Housing Group - Floating Support	Attended provider focus group 8.11.13
Your Housing Group - Verve Place	Attended provider focus group 8.11.13 and presented to the Commission on 6.12.13
CCN	Engaged via formal call for evidence and invited to provider focus group
Sanctuary Carr Gomm	Engaged via formal call for evidence and invited to provider focus group
WBC Housing Options Team	Member of the officer support group, attended provider focus group 8.11.13 and included within a high level process mapping exercise
WBC Drug & Alcohol Action Team	1:1 with alcohol strategy manager and presenting to the Commission on 6.12.13

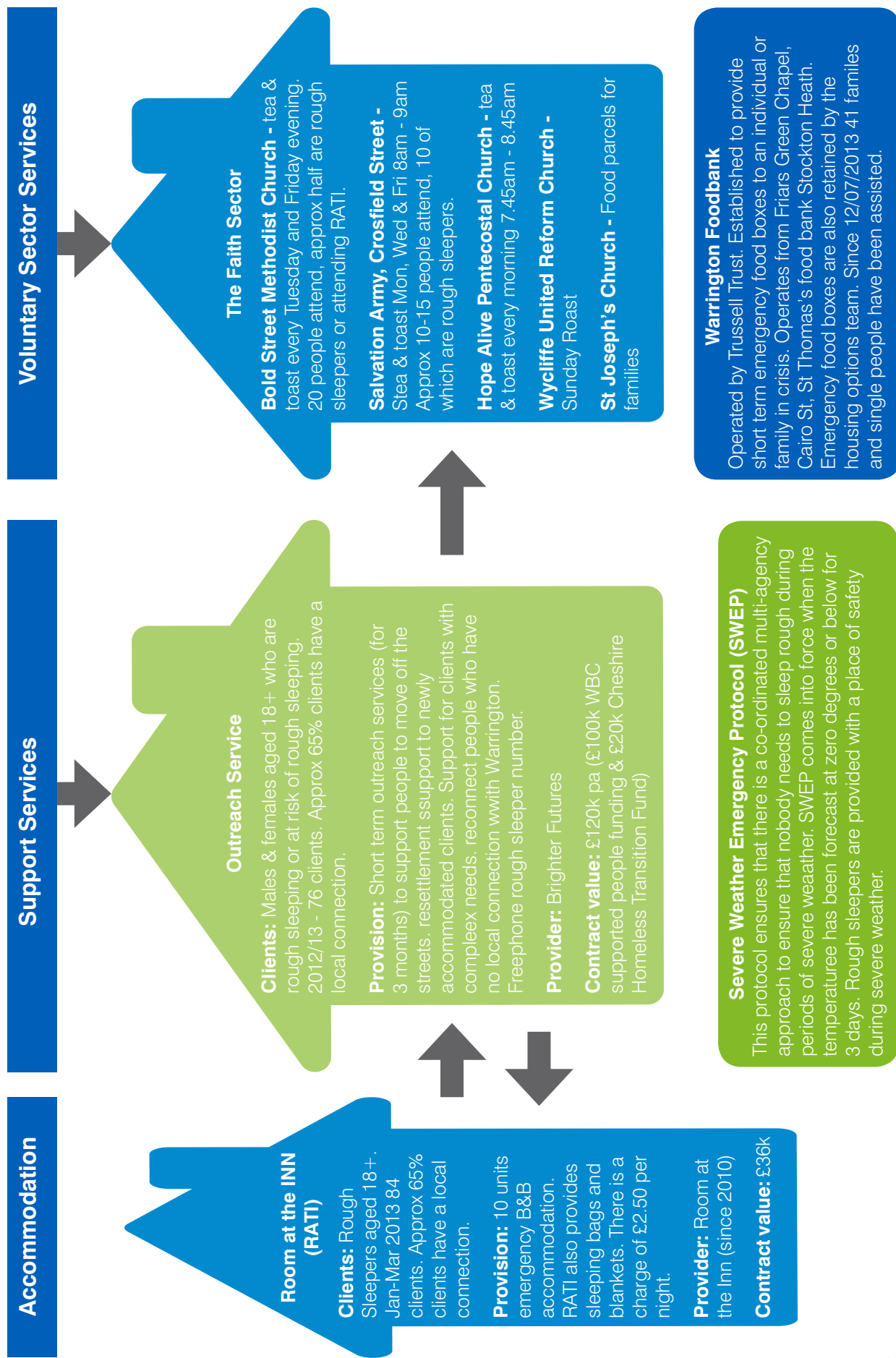
Appendix B - Overview of Warrington's Homeless Services for Young People



Appendix C - Overview of Warrington's Homeless Services



Appendix D - Overview of Warrington's Homeless Services for Rough Sleepers





Warrington Homelessness Commission
March 2014

