



Title	Tackling Homelessness Together ‘a partnership approach’ 2020-2025
Scope	This policy applies to all businesses within emh group
Authors	Head of Quality & Standards
Date Approved Approved By	10 th March 2020 emh homes Board 3 rd March 2020 emh care & support Board 20 th March 2020 emh group Board
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Key Values	Diversity: This strategy sets out our approach to providing homelessness housing and support services for diverse client group. Accountability: We recognise the need to provide joined up services that compliment those others provide. Excellence: we will aspire to be the best among our peers, particularly in the quality of our provision of homelessness services.
Business Plan Key Strategic Goals	Housing and Neighbourhood Services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Establish high performing and highly effective estate services and community development services. ➤ Maximise our impact in alleviating homelessness through the implementation of our homelessness strategy, including the roll out of our ‘Housing First’ pilot in Leicester City ➤ Ensure the highest standards of safe working practices, ensuring our homes and communities are safe places to live and work. Care and Support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Working with emh homes to integrate our housing and care services to provide a holistic support solution for customers

1. INTRODUCTION

There are an estimated 320,000 homeless people in the UK¹. Over 4750 people sleep rough on our streets every night². These are not the only concerning numbers surrounding homelessness, with 6 million households at threat of homelessness or denied the right to a safe home and 90,000 households stuck in temporary accommodation the UK is facing a growing crisis despite the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017; and the Government's 2018 Rough Sleeping Strategy.

Regionally, homelessness grew fastest during 2018 in the West Midlands and Yorkshire and Humberside, which saw 12% increases, followed by the north-west with an 11% rise. Homelessness fell in the north-east and south-west regions of England by 8%.

The government statistics show that there were 62,000 homeless families living in temporary accommodation in England at the end of 2018. Among these families were 124,000 children. This means that there are 80% more children living in temporary accommodation than in 2010.³ These figures hide the true picture, they do not include the families who sofa surf, estimated to have been around 92,000 children in 2016/17.⁴

Official figures also fail to capture a small but highly vulnerable group of homeless children who have been placed in temporary accommodation by children's services rather than by the council's housing department. This includes families who have been deemed to have made themselves "intentionally homeless", and therefore are not entitled to a permanent home from the housing department, and those ineligible as a result of their immigration status. There is no publicly available data on how many families are being housed in this way.⁵ In addition, the government estimate that there could be as many as 375,000 families at risk of becoming homeless.⁶ The true picture for children could be as many as 585,000.

Spiralling rents, welfare cuts and a total lack of social housing, means record numbers of people are sleeping out on the streets or staying in unsuitable hostel accommodation. There has been a steep decline in Government welfare benefit spending (including in-work benefits), the revenue funding of support services and the capital funding of new services.

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 was the first major piece of homelessness legislation for 15 years and has the potential to transform the way homelessness services are delivered to ensure that all eligible applicants are able to access the help they need through a wide ranging partnership approach. The Act requires local housing authorities to help all eligible applicants – rather than just those with a 'priority need'. It builds on an already established preventative approach by requiring public authorities (such as the NHS) to notify the housing authority if someone they are working with is facing homelessness. The Act introduces the duties to take steps to:

➤ **prevent homelessness;** and to

➤ **relieve homelessness**

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/nov/22/at-least-320000-homeless-people-in-britain-says-shelter>

² https://england.shelter.org.uk/what_we_do/our_strategy

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness>

⁴ Children's Commissioner's Office using the English Housing Survey results for 2016/17

⁵ Children's Commissioner's Office, Bleak Houses Report – August 2019

⁶ Based on the new analysis of Wealth and Assets Survey 2014-2016

The Government's 2018 Rough Sleeping Strategy aims to reduce rough sleeping by half by 2022, eradicating it completely by 2027. The Strategy's delivery plan is ambitious, with reference to rapid rehousing pathways and new funding streams, but there is compelling evidence to suggest that it is much needed; rough sleepers die on average at the age of 47, 30 years earlier than the general population. They are at a higher risk of violence, theft and other crime.

There are steps that emh can actively participate in and support other partners to tackle – our Strategy brings together what we can do and what we plan to do in the future.

We recognise however, that legislation alone won't be enough. If neither of the above steps work and the household becomes, or remains, homeless, then those in priority need retain their right to be rehoused, but non-priority households will not be entitled to further help and many homeless people will still slip through the net. There needs to be a range of deliverable options that offer the right solution depending on the needs of homeless people, the communities they live in and the providers supporting them.

2. OUR OBJECTIVES

The homeless community is seeing increased numbers of people with mental health needs including those with learning disabilities and autism, our specialist care and support arm is well placed to offer a leading voice on support for some of these needs. We have a long history of providing accommodation and support services to domestic abuse and substance misuse clients; alongside homelessness services provided through our supported living accommodation at Durban House, MYST Lodge and Westbourne House. However, we acknowledge that we need to be clear what services and provision we can provide directly; and what is best provided by working in partnership with others.

We have identified a number of key objectives where we believe we can add value and help to prevent and relieve homelessness, these are:

- Provide a range of housing to support homeless people or those threatened with homelessness;
- Identifying specific support for those with diverse, complex needs, vulnerabilities and other challenges;
- Act as an ambassador for homelessness by participating in campaigns and lobbying to raise awareness of the severity of the situation
- Work with partners to trial new initiatives to support homeless people and provide additional homes, including options for those leaving prison, care or health units
- Provide a signposting service to other service providers; or where we are best placed to do so, provide specialist information and support services
- Meeting our new home development targets to contribute to the national social housing provision
- Actively preventing our own tenants from becoming homeless through ensuring our policies and processes provide the right support at the right time
- Providing our staff with up to date training on homelessness and rough sleeping to ensure they are able to identify homelessness or those at risk of homelessness and to signpost or offer the right support
- Ensure that we are actively pursuing any opportunities to provide homelessness services and homes that align with our objectives and capabilities
- Attending and participating in homeless strategy/working groups meetings with key partners.

3. OUR CURRENT POSITION

emh is a social housing and care provider. We have significant landlord presence in the East Midlands and a strong reputation and track record in delivering homeless accommodation and support services. We have a diverse range of skills, expertise and experience. We pride ourselves in being able to offer solutions on a number of levels:

3.1 Provision of homes

emh is a developer of social housing. We are one of the Homes England strategic development partners, working across local authorities to provide 600 new homes each year to help meet the housing shortage, our aim is to provide the right homes in the right locations, but also to ensure that we can provide housing management and support services to enable tenancies to be successful.

We currently provide homelessness accommodation and support services directly to 60 clients through hostel and temporary accommodation with either floating or on-site support. Clients supported include single people, couples and families. These are managed within our care and support arm and provide a settled home where life skills can be obtained, employment prospects enhanced and wellbeing nurtured. We are supporting individuals with complex needs and alcohol and substance dependency within these settings.

We have the privilege of working with some like-minded local authority, statutory agency, faith and volunteer partners to provide innovative solutions to the homelessness problems facing the communities we work in. We are committed to continuing this work.

3.2 Preventing homelessness

Our prevention work starts with an effective risk assessment and support referral framework for all would be and new tenants. Our income and housing teams work together with our tenants to develop and support sustainable tenancies.

Providing the right support and advice is inherent in our mainstream offer, reducing the number of evictions through strong partnership working, and developing a robust framework. We are currently partnering with three local authorities, undertaking a deep dive into our evictions data to look at additional ways we can prevent failed tenancies of this nature. We want to help prevent the problem of homelessness and not add to it.

emh provides a range of accommodation and support services to prevent and reduce homelessness through direct access hostels as well as intensive housing management funded services. Our care and support arm, provides specialist support services for extra care and learning disabilities clients thus contributing to homelessness prevention. Our approach to preventing evictions through the development of a sustainability toolkit was part of the National Housing Federation's 'innovation lab' project during 2018. Tenancies offered must be sustainable.

3.3 Lobbying

Participating in regional and national forums; making the case for accommodation, support and services; and addressing the stigma of homelessness is important to us.

Our involvement in high profile events that raise awareness of the real issues facing homeless people are increasingly important if we want to see more awareness of the real detriment, homelessness places people at.

We are proud and humbled to support the 'Homes for Cathy' campaign – highlighting that fifty years from 'Cathy come Home' there is little, if no progress and in many areas, homelessness is still at a crisis point and getting worse.

3.4 Partnership working

We collaborate with a number of strategic partners, raise funds to support homelessness charities and participate in rough sleeper counts. Supporting local authorities in the discharge of their duties and helping shape new services is one of our key functions. Some of our partners include:

- PlaceShapers
- Action Homeless Leicester
- Homes England
- Adult and Childrens' Services
- Police
- Health Authorities
- Local Authorities including Erewash Borough Council, Blaby District Council and North West Leicestershire District Council
- Canaan Trust

There are opportunities to build upon these strong relationships. A proven track record of delivery brings confidence of future delivery and we realise that the landscape is right for innovative joined up solutions to address the significant homelessness problem.

emh works with around 40 local authority partners; in some of these regions, we have very few homes, and so our impact in relation to rehousing homeless people will be negligible. We will therefore concentrate on key local authority partnerships, where we can add real value and homes; and where homeless levels require a concentrated effort from the sector. We recognise the enhanced role we have in supporting local authorities in delivering on their homelessness duties and strategies where we are the stock holder for former council stock (Blaby and Erewash areas).

3.5 Innovative partnership projects

There will need to be a widening of the range of housing and support to provide both temporary, and permanent housing solutions if we, as a sector, are going to tackle the growing homelessness situation. It is our intention over the next 5 years to develop and provide housing and support solutions in line with the Housing Reduction Act. We intend to continue with our existing service and support provision and we will actively work across the East Midlands to use a combination of housing and support models:

- In Erewash and Blaby we are supporting the Council by providing temporary units of accommodation to meet their obligations under the new duty. These are used in a variety of ways including as shared accommodation or one household use.
- We have provided a unit in Erewash Borough for a Syrian Refugee following a successful partnership approach with Derbyshire County Council.
- We are in discussion with Blaby District Council to help address their reducing private sector provision and use of hotels and bed and breakfasts.
- We continue to support the Erewash sleep out campaign; and the 'End to European Homelessness' campaign that is led by World Habitat a social enterprise organisation with which emh has a longstanding relationship.
- We are in discussion with Leicester City Council and Action Homeless to pilot a 'Housing First' model.

- We have signed up to the Leicester City Council Homeless Charter – demonstrating our commitment to preventing and reducing homelessness in the City.
- We are working with Melton Borough Council to remodel our nine bedspace homelessness hostel. Part of the plans include redesigning the support offer.

4. OUR FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Whilst emh does not have a statutory duty to prevent or eradicate homelessness it is our Business Plan objective to ‘maximise our impact in alleviating homelessness’. As an exemplar housing and care organisation in the East Midlands we must maintain the focus on preventing homelessness.

New initiatives from central government and opportunities which directly or indirectly support the reduction of homelessness along with any funding availability is essential. Provision can vary from direct access hostels, single pathways and floating support services. Providers vary from new commissioners such as Local Economic Partnership (LEPs) Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), and the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), with programmes around managing mental health, disability and employment which in turn supports strong financial capacity to manage homelessness. We will ensure that we develop the necessary partnerships, access relevant funding streams and opportunities to continue to help prevent homelessness and ensure the solutions are sustainable wherever we can.

4.1 Emerging Models of Provision

There are a number of emerging models for housing and support solutions to tackle homelessness, and we are keen to be involved in these, but acknowledge that we cannot be the solution in all scenarios. We will therefore explore how we can support and enabled other organisations to become involved:

- Rapid Rehousing - provides an immediate solution for people that are entering homelessness due to what is perceived to be a short-term crisis. This could be due to relationship breakdown, domestic violence or transition from other services, such as care, or prison releases.
- Housing First - designed to provide accommodation and support to people with a history of rough sleeping, with a need for a holistic and sometimes intensive package of support in their own accommodation. The principle of the model is to provide long term, settled accommodation first, and then to deliver the support required by the person to enable them to sustain their tenancy.

Models such as these, can bring real benefits but supporting a transition to secure accommodation with wraparound support services is essential.

For both the Rapid Rehousing and Housing First solutions, we have begun to explore how we can provide accommodation through our housing stock, and deliver the support services to people through our care and support team, or through the local authority funding provision. This is currently in Leicester and Leicestershire; however, Nottinghamshire authorities have also applied for Rapid Rehousing Pathway funding.

We will work with partner agencies, strengthening our relationships, particularly around mental health and addiction services to ensure the models we adopt are achievable and person centric.

Our current Housing First model is being developed with a set of principles to support it:

- People have a right to a home
- Flexible support is provided as long as it is needed
- Housing and support are separated
- Individuals have choice and control
- An active engagement approach is used
- The service is based on people's strengths, goals and aspirations
- A harm reduction approach is used

We are still working through this model's implementation, and we recognise that these principles may need to be refined.

- The 'Clearing House' model - being used in London to align empty homes to homeless people has some benefits but the issue is not about putting people into empty homes, but ensuring that the accommodation is the right accommodation with the right support. We would like to explore partnership opportunities to make this model work, and have a long history of working with private owners to bring empty homes back into use, but we also recognise the financial commitment required for such initiatives.

4.2 Existing emh provision – how can we do more?

We will continue to develop and improve our existing delivery based on funding availability and needs for the service. Every type of provision helps someone. Our specialist accommodation and support in both Melton and North West Leicestershire has been successfully meeting the provision of short-term homeless housing and intensive support for many years. However, times change and so we want to strengthen our relationships, and develop our offer in these areas. We will therefore look to other providers across the sector and wider to learn from them and will identify ways in which their approaches can add value to our own.

In particular, we will learn from the Housing First street intervention team pilot projects that are operating in both Greater Manchester and the West Midlands so to learn from, and develop models and housing and support based on this. The pilots in each region, bring together their respective agencies including their Combined Authority, the Mayor's homelessness fund/taskforce, housing providers and homelessness charities. Funding is provided from central Government.

We will develop links with key stakeholders across the East Midlands with an ambition to expanding the areas in which we provide services to reduce homelessness. This will include positioning ourselves for new opportunities such as floating support for complex needs, such as homelessness services for those with mental health or learning difficulties.

We are committed to developing our move on accommodation offer from our hostels/temporary accommodation where stock levels and turnover allow.

We will also appraise our existing provision to ascertain whether it is fit for purpose and what levels of investment may be needed moving forward. Each scheme will be assessed on its own merits and decision to invest made on the basis of the findings and funding priorities.

We acknowledge that some of our homes are under occupied or overcrowded and we are keen to do all we can to ensure that wherever possible, people choose to move to more suitable accommodation. We are assessing a project to encourage more moves through mutual exchanges, and particularly moves between a number of tenants to ensure people meet their own needs and home aspirations.

4.3 Expanding Preventative Support

emh has low levels of evictions and we have made it our mission to ensure that we are supporting our tenants to maintain their tenancies. This must continue. We do however want to ensure that anyone faced with homelessness knows their rights and what support is available to them. We also appreciate fully that we cannot be everyone's solution. We will therefore commit to achieving the following:

- Developing a webpage for homelessness advice with links to key support services in our areas of operation
- Ensuring our policies and procedures for managing homes and income collection consider tenancy success throughout every interaction
- Training our staff to enable them to identify early warning signs for potential tenancy failure and homelessness interventions they can take
- When developing our 'Housing First' model, we will ensure the support levels are viable and sufficient
- Explore the development of a tenancy onboarding solution to help create sustainable tenancies from the outset
- Ensure that we are raising safeguarding referrals for potentially homeless cases where needed
- Use our staff volunteering days to support homeless related services and advice

5. MEASURING SUCCESS

We have developed an action plan spanning the five years of our strategy. This sets out how we intend to achieve the overall strategic aims. Our action plan is a working document, and is therefore fluid, changing as the environment and priorities change.

To establish the success of our approach, we have developed a suite of metrics – these are detailed below and will be reported to our Boards annually.

- Number of emh tenancies ending in homelessness
- Total number of households being rehoused directly from a homeless situation (CORE reporting)
- Number of rough sleepers being helped through our 'Housing First' or 'Rapid Rehousing' schemes
- Number of lettings to specialist hostels accommodation
- Percentage of clients successfully rehoused from our temporary hostel accommodation
- Number of clients entering our homeless accommodation two or more times within the last two years

We will establish targets for these metrics and further actions to improve performance where they fail to meet the target. We will also regularly review and benchmark the target to ensure that it remains relevant.

6. STRATEGY REVIEW

This is a five year strategy. It is our aim to review our progress annually and we will update this Strategy in five years time. We will also review it if there is a fundamental change in the provision, funding or legislation, that impacts on the way we deliver services and homes for homeless people.

February 2020