

Supplementary Agenda



Meeting name	Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee
Date	Tuesday, 29 April 2025
Start time	6.30 pm
Venue	Conference Room, Phoenix House, Nottingham Road, Melton Mowbray, LE13 0UL
Other information	This meeting is open to the public

Meeting enquiries	Democratic Services
Email	democracy@melton.gov.uk

No.	Item	Page No.
7.	Homelessness and Temporary Accommodation Pressures The Scrutiny Committee will consider a report on homelessness and temporary accommodation pressures.	41 - 70

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Homelessness and Temporary Accommodation Pressures

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Chief Officer Responsible:	<p>Michelle Howard, Director for Customers and Communities mhoward@melton.gov.uk</p>
Lead Member/Relevant Portfolio Holder	<p>Leader of the Council & Portfolio Holder for Housing, Leisure & Landlord Services</p>

Corporate Priority:	Helping People
Wards Affected:	(All Wards);
Date of consultation with Ward Member(s):	N/A
Exempt Information:	No

1 Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the following areas:
- 1.1.1 An overview of the service.
 - 1.1.2 An understanding of the homelessness demand for Melton
 - 1.1.3 An understanding of the need for temporary accommodation demand for Melton
 - 1.1.4 The cost of temporary accommodation since April 2022
 - 1.1.5 The challenges for homelessness for 2025/26 and the mitigation in place to deal with this

2 Recommendation

That the Scrutiny Committee:

- 2.1 **Considers the report and provides comments to Cabinet for reflection.**

3 Reason for Recommendation

- 3.1 To enable the Scrutiny Committee to fulfil its responsibilities in relation to scrutinising matters relating to homelessness and the use of temporary accommodation, on behalf of the council.

4 Background

4.1 The Process

- 4.1.1 The introduction of the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 in April 2018 saw one of the biggest changes in homeless legislation and changed the way local authorities work with people who are facing homelessness. The council's statutory homeless duties are administered by the Supporting Communities team which includes Housing Options, Homelessness and Resettlement.
- 4.1.2 When a person/household approaches a local authority, the housing options team needs to understand:
- i. If the household is eligible for assistance
 - ii. If the household is homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days
- 4.1.3 It is here that we decide if the household is owed a homeless prevention or a homeless relief duty.
- 4.1.4 **Homeless Prevention** – someone at risk of becoming homeless within 56 days i.e. someone who may be served a section 21 notice from their landlord. This duty runs for 56 days where it would then turn into a Homeless relief duty
- 4.1.5 The housing options team would work with the household to either prevent them from becoming homeless in the first instance using a range of options including but not limited to paying rent arrears, negotiating with landlords or family and friends or signposting to support agencies or find alternative accommodation using support such as paying deposits and rent in advance, referrals to supported accommodation.
- 4.1.6 This support is available to every household that is eligible and is threatened with homelessness or is homeless. There is no requirement for a vulnerability called a priority need at this stage.
- 4.1.7 If the household approaches during the prevention stage, the housing options team can work with them for 112 days (56 days prevention duty + 56 days relief duty). However, should they approach when they are homeless, the housing options team only get 56 days to work with them (relief).
- 4.1.8 **Homeless Relief** - someone who is homeless i.e. rough sleeping, past the notice period, sofa surfing. This duty runs for 56 days and it is here where the housing options team would decide that the household has given a "reason to believe" they are a priority need and is owed temporary accommodation.
- 4.1.9 After the end of the relief duty, the housing options team will then make a decision based on assessments made during the relief and possible prevention periods to decide if:
- i. The household has a priority need: –
 - fleeing domestic abuse,

- has dependent children who would reasonably be expected to reside with them
- pregnant or a member of the household is pregnant
- vulnerable as a result of old age, a mental illness, learning or physical impairment
- a 16 or 17 year old
- a person who is under 21 and was fostered between the ages of 16 and 18
- a person aged over 21 who is vulnerable as a result of having been looked after, accommodated or fostered
- a person who is vulnerable as a result of having been a member of His Majesty's regular naval, military or air forces
- a person who is vulnerable as a result of having served a custodial sentence;
- a person who is homeless, or threatened with homelessness, as a result of an emergency such as flood, fire or other disaster

ii. If the household has deliberately done or failed to do something and as a consequence has ceased to occupy accommodation where it was available and would have been reasonable for them to continue to occupy (Intentionally homeless).

iii. Local Connection - Has lived within the Melton Borough for 6 out of the last 12 months or 3 out of the last 5 years

4.1.10 If a household passes all 5 tests the council will owe a main homeless duty to the household, (eligibility, homeless, priority need, not intentionally homeless and local connection), The main statutory homeless duty can only be discharged by offer of private rented accommodation for 12+ months or offer of accommodation from the housing register.

4.1.11 If a household does not pass all 5 tests, the council has no further duty to the household

4.1.12 A flow chart of the homeless process is in Appendix 1

4.2 **Providing Temporary Accommodation**

4.2.1 Section 188 (1) requires housing authorities to secure that accommodation is available for an applicant (and their household) if they have a reason to believe that the applicant may:

4.2.2 (a) be homeless;

4.2.3 (b) be eligible for assistance; and,

4.2.4 (c) have a priority need.

4.2.5 This is applicable when a household is owed a relief duty. The threshold to provide this is low and is only a "reason to believe". A priority need does not have to be proved at this point

4.2.6 For those owed a prevention duty, temporary accommodation is not required which is why efforts need to be made to resolve cases owed a prevention duty to prevent the household needing temporary accommodation.

4.2.7 For Melton Borough Council, temporary accommodation would take the form of:

- i. A placement in supported accommodation such as Westbourne House with EMH Homes
- ii. Bed and Breakfast accommodation
- iii. Private self-contained flats rented on a nightly basis
- iv. Council properties

4.2.8 Temporary accommodation is a demand led service and our current arrangements do not always provide the flexibility we need to prevent the unnecessary use of expensive emergency nightly paid accommodation such as B&B.

5 Main Considerations

5.1 The **Housing Options Function** is comprised of the following officers:

- 5.1.1 Strategic Lead, Supporting Communities - Rachel Chubb is responsible for managing the team and ensure delivery of objectives which contribute towards the council's homelessness strategy, that the council is compliant with delivering the statutory homeless duties and that any risks re temporary accommodation and raised and mitigated as early as possible.
- 5.1.2 Rachel is also the Council's Lead Officer for Resettlement & Asylum, Domestic Abuse and Care Leavers. These service areas are outside the scope of this report.
- 5.1.3 Housing Options Officer (HOO) – Michelle Partridge is responsible for delivering the council's homelessness statutory duties. Michelle has worked in the housing options team for 16 years
- 5.1.4 Housing Options Officer (HOO) – Oliver McElroy is also responsible for delivering the council's homelessness statutory duties. Oliver was recruited to the role in Nov 2023. Whilst never formally working in a local authority environment his experience is with rough sleepers and chaotic homelessness via a homeless charity in a 56-bed hostel in Nottingham.
- 5.1.5 Senior Housing Options Officer (HOO) – Azmat Havani. Azmat started with the council on 2nd April 2025 after the departure of a previous officer on 3rd January 2025. Azmat has been a housing options officer with Peterborough and Stevenage councils as well as previous roles as a debt advisor for the Citizens Advice Bureau.
- 5.1.6 Temporary Accommodation Officer (TAO) – William Frost. William was recruited to the role in Oct 2023 with experience of providing support to people facing unemployment. He is responsible for managing the moves in and out of people in temporary accommodation and working with customers to reduce stress and anxiety during this process. This role is currently on a fixed term basis subject to future funding and demand.
- 5.1.7 Triage and Allocations Officer – Melanie Hammond. Melanie started with Melton Borough Council as a customer services advisor in June 2024 and started with the Housing Options team on 10th March 2025. This role is currently only for 12 months. Melanie is the first point of contact for all customers offering early preventative advice and highlighting any major concerns to the housing options officers which could escalate as well as allocating customers to council properties through the choice-based lettings system. This role is currently on a fixed term basis subject to future funding and demand.

- 5.1.8 Housing Options Support and Systems officer – Nicholas Evans. Nick has worked for Melton Borough Council for 11 years but has worked with the Housing Options team for 7. Nick's role is to maintain the administration of the housing register, shortlist applicants for properties and ensure the IT system meets the needs of the team.
- 5.1.9 Capacity challenges and impact - since 1 April 2024, the Housing Options team operated with 2.75 FTE housing options officers which was a reduction from 3 FTE due to staff changes in hours. From 3 January 2025, the team operated on 1.7 FTE housing options officers due to changes in personnel.
- 5.1.10 In December 2024 a decision notice was approved for the Housing Options establishment to be: 2.75 housing options officers, 1 x senior housing options officer, 1 x FTE triage and allocations officer (fixed term until March 2026, 37 hours), 1 x FTE systems and support officer and 1 x FTE temporary accommodation officer (fixed term until May 2025).
- 5.2 Provision of council owned Temporary Accommodation (TA)**
- 5.2.1 With the rising costs of providing temporary accommodation (TA), Housing Options led a TA project in 2024 to consider the most cost-effective response to the provision of TA in all forms of accommodation.
- 5.2.2 This included ensuring the use of MBC stock was value for money, appropriate and met regulatory parameters.
- 5.2.3 The project explored opportunities to resolve the following:
- i. Understand the full costs associated with temporary accommodation
 - ii. Reduce the costs associated with voids following the use of MBC stock for temporary accommodation.
 - iii. Formalise the internal arrangements for use of MBC stock for temporary accommodation with a written and agreed service standard, ensuring flexibility to meet the needs of vulnerable people needing our support and reduce the requirement for long stays in Bed & Breakfast (B&B) accommodation.
 - iv. Maximise the rents and charges for temporary accommodation.
 - v. Investigate whether a formal arrangement with EMH (East Midlands Housing Group www.emh.co.uk) would be appropriate to provide accommodation to meet our needs and present a paper to SLT with recommendations.
- 5.2.4 The costs of MBC temporary accommodation are predominantly attributed to the void turnover of each property. Prior to April 2024, Housing Options used a set number of properties at the same addresses. This meant that properties were used on average 2.5 times a year by different households.
- 5.2.5 The project resolution was to use different council properties and convert those in appropriate council properties to introductory tenants at a time when was appropriate. This was not a shortcut to accommodation but minimised the turnover and void costs to the council. Example of this process is shown in Appendix 2
- 5.3 Cost of temporary accommodation**
- 5.3.1 The increased demand for the use of temporary accommodation is a national issue. In 2023/24, The LGA reported that councils spent nearly £2.3 billion on temporary

accommodation - around £1.06 billion of this cost needs to be met by councils from the specific homelessness grant and then subsidised from general funding.

- 5.3.2 A night in bed and breakfast accommodation can cost the council anywhere between £85-£110 per night. The VAT element is recoverable but does mean VAT invoices need to be provided by the supplier to ensure this can be achieved. The council only receives £13.04 back in housing benefit and only where the person being housed is eligible for Housing Benefit. This amount is based on the rate of Local Housing Allowance set in January 2011. This amount is not reflective of rents in 2025. There is much lobbying across the local government sector for this amount to be increased.
- 5.3.3 The council receives a grant from central government called the homeless prevention grant. This is intended to be spent on homeless prevention and until 2025/2026 this was not ringfenced.
- 5.3.4 The grant for Melton Borough Council has increased over the last 3 years which is in part due to better reporting of figures and lobbying from local government. This has increased from £103, 500 in 2022/2023 to £256, 167 for 2025/2026.
- 5.3.5 Changes to the conditions for 2025/26 mean that the grant is ringfenced, to maintain prevention activities during this period. This will mean that 49% of local authorities' funding allocation must be spent on prevention, relief and staffing activity. The 49% within this ringfence may not be spent on temporary accommodation
- 5.3.6 This ringfence is based on figures submitted for 23/24 ¹. Below are figures for how regions and Melton allocated their homelessness prevention grant.

Region	Staffing	Prevention and relief activities (not staffing)	Temporary accommodation	other
Yorkshire and Humber	48%	19%	31%	1%
East Midlands	38%	21%	39%	2%
West Midlands	34%	33%	30%	3%
East of England	34%	19%	44%	3%
Melton	19%	45%	35%	1%

- 5.3.7 The councils spend on non-MBC temporary accommodation for the last 3 years is

- 2021/22 - £133,350
- 2022/23 - £86,000
- 2023/24 - £94,000
- 2024/25 - £394,520

- 5.4 The councils spend on MBC temporary accommodation is:

- 2022/2023 - £55,590 (based on a void cost of £1,895 per property turnover for 12 properties)

¹ [Homelessness Prevention Grant 2025-26: technical note - GOV.UK](#)

- 2023/2024 - £52,532 (based on a cost of £2,221 per property turnover for 10 properties)
- 2024/2025 – Est £33,600 (based on a void cost of £2400 per property turnover for 8 properties). **This figure will be finalised before scrutiny committee**

- This cost includes rent, void turnover costs and any repairs and maintenance whilst being used as temporary accommodation.

5.4.2 To reduce the spend on MBC properties, the use of temporary accommodation was reduced from 10 to 8 properties. In January 2025 we attempted to increase this back to 10 but property availability affected the ability to do this.

5.4.3 The current number is 9 properties as at 16.04.2025

5.4.4 The Council received the following in housing benefit in each of the following years along with the percentage of claimants this related to:

- 2032/24 - £23,000
- 2024/25 - £46,615. 6% of claims submitted were ineligible due to earnings, a further 6% did not have a housing benefit claim submitted due to short stays and/or out of hours calls so no contact with an officer was made to complete the claim.

5.5 Understanding the Homeless Demand

5.5.1 Homeless Duties accepted vs Placements into Temporary Accommodation

Year	Homeless duties accepted	Households placed into temporary accommodation	No of households over 100 days	Average stay in temporary accommodation
22/23	385	78	30	70
23/24	351	67	14	61
24/25	384	93	37	71

5.5.2 Outcomes achieved

Year	Secured accommodation for 6+ months Prevention duty	Secured accommodation for 6+ months relief duty	Secured accommodation under a main duty	Main duty accepted
22/23	84	60	45	4
23/24	66	71	45	16
24/25	34	53	48	24

5.5.3 Approaches have remained similar since 2022/23 and until 24/25 the number of households in temporary accommodation remained even. Placements surged in 24/25 for a variety of reasons.

- Increase in complex cases which is shown in the table below which mean more people meet the threshold for temporary accommodation

	23/24		24/25	
	Placements in all forms of TA	No of Households	Placements in all forms of TA	No of Households
Mental health	22	17	45	37
Domestic Abuse (victim)	17	15	41	27
Learning disability	0	0	1	1
Dependent children	29	25	42	35
Physical disability	1	1	3	3
Elderly	2	2	2	1
Pregnant (main reason)	1	1	4	3
SWEP	2	2	7	6
Care Leavers	2	2	1	1
Asylum	0	0	4	4
Total		65		117

- ii. Reduced number of MBC properties as temporary accommodation. MBC properties are less expensive to the general fund but incur a cost due to the rigidity of the repairs contract. Converting tenants from TA tenants to introductory tenants in the same property has happened more in 2024/25 which means we have had a longer wait for a new property to replace it. In 2023/24, someone could move out and then the same property would be brought back into use in a few days. Whilst this has created a sustainable community, reduction of move ins and positive impact for the customer, it has influenced the availability of properties we can use as temporary accommodation.
- iii. Increase in number of complex cases where independent living solutions have taken multi agency involvement to resolve, such as people with a physical disability and/or care needs. This has resulted in longer stays in temporary accommodation. 2 cases were in temporary accommodation for more than 12 months which meant we were unable to move them on and secure further properties.
- iv. Increase in cases from asylum move-on accommodation where English has not been a first language. The lack of asylum support within the borough would place single households at a vulnerability due to lack of services and assistance and subsequent eligibility for priority need
- v. More complex cases but limited options of supported accommodation. Some households have stayed longer than they should have done because they were due to access rare spaces in supported accommodation.
- vi. Decrease of people referred into private rented sector due to lack of availability, landlords leaving the sector and tougher barriers for people on Universal Credit
- vii. Changes in behaviour of customers making investigation of cases lengthier and more complex.
- viii. Delayed after-effects from a departure of 50% of the team in 2023/24 and the start of a new team in November 2023 which made it difficult to get in front of cases whilst also learning a new system and new processes. This is now being addressed with the recent recruitments.

- ix. Reduction in hours of a housing options officer reducing the resource from 3 FTE to 2.7 since April 2024 and departure of a full-time officer since early January 2025. This meant the team operated on 1.7 FTE housing options officers for 3 months of the year.
- x. 24/25 saw a rise in people approaching with mental health issues which on evidence of proof indicated there was a reason to believe there was a priority need. Households fleeing domestic abuse are also given an automatic priority need following changes implemented in The Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- xi. Reduction of options for supported accommodation within the county. Leicestershire county council ceased funding for the single person hostel in April 2024. Future funding arrangements mean that only people with a connection to the Charnwood area can now be considered.

5.6 Challenges for 2025/2026

- 5.6.1 Uncertainty around the introduction of legislation affecting the private rented sector (Renters Rights Bill). It is unknown the effect this piece of legislation will have but a working group has been established to navigate this.
- 5.6.2 Potential increase in rough sleeping and homeless duties due to increase in closure notices and projected increase in intentionally homeless decisions.
- 5.6.3 Challenges with organisations such as MEARS and SERCO who have government contracts to find and lease accommodation for asylum seekers and refugees.

5.7 How this will be addressed in 2025/26

- 5.7.1 Clear processes have been established and new staff given time to learn processes and legislation before being asked to deal with cases. This promotes clear communication and decision making from the start.
- 5.7.2 Introduction of the triage post which means more of the administrative work in gathering information can be completed by this officer rather than the housing options officer dealing with all queries which may not be relevant to them.
- 5.7.3 Joint work with housing services to establish a team to develop the IT system used by housing options, tenancy services and housing assets. The housing options support officer has huge amounts of knowledge on the system which was not being utilised to its potential. The aim of this initiative is to streamline processes, reduce workarounds and have the IT system do more of the “manual work” currently covered by officers. This would free up capacity and resource as well as creating resilience within the council. This venture means a small amount of income is brought into housing options and will be used to support the cost of the triage officer.
- 5.7.4 Upgrade of a housing options officer to a senior housing options officer to enable more support for officers in the team as well as focusing on efficiencies that can be created to streamline processes, increasing resource within the current structure.
- 5.7.5 Joint work with Leicestershire districts to create a SWEP (severe weather emergency protocol) provision which will be a sit up service as opposed to a night in bed and breakfast. A sit up service could be a chair in a community hall rather than a bed in a bed and breakfast costing £85 per night. This should focus potential rough sleepers on resolving long term goals rather than people sofa surfing only approaching when the temperatures drop below freezing.

- 5.7.6 Discussions with different providers re cheaper forms of temporary accommodation. Other self-contained, private accommodation can be used on a nightly basis for a cost of £55-£65 per night but we are eligible to claim a higher rate of housing benefit for these forms of accommodation. This return can be approx. £20.22 per night. We do not want to use too much of this accommodation as this then creates a bigger demand on resource in the private rented sector.
- 5.7.7 Discussions about separate contracts for void and repairs of council owned temporary accommodation.
- 5.7.8 Providing feedback and comments to national consultations on the pressures to homelessness budgets ensuring Melton has their voice and opinions heard.
- 5.7.9 Housing benefit maximisation by processing claims in a timely manner and for the eligible family members.
- 5.7.10 Ensuring all Vat is recoverable on temporary accommodation

5.8 Case Studies

Case Study 1: Hoarding

- 5.8.1 A referral was received by Leicestershire hospital partnership in February 2024 re a person that was unable to return to their property due to its conditions. The property had multiple infestations of rats, no clear walkways, no electricity and no working sanitation. He had to crawl under items to get out of his door but was able to walk to the shop to buy food and basic necessities.
- 5.8.2 The property was inspected by environmental health and a subsequent prohibition notice was served meaning he could not return to the property. They owned this property which provided further complications re assets and equity.
- 5.8.3 The council accepted a homeless duty as they had no home to return to and was a priority need because of his physical and mental health needs. The person was involved with adult social care but assessments said that the person was able to address his own care needs, he just chose not to. There were some physical needs which couldn't be addressed in his former property.
- 5.8.4 The person was ready for discharge from hospital and as such the council needed interim accommodation which was accessible whilst we assessed the homeless duty and worked with him to find appropriate accommodation. Work with tenancy services meant we could accommodate him in the short term in one of the council's sheltered schemes.
- 5.8.5 They had clear hoarding issues and as such private rented accommodation was unsuitable. A referral was meant to the county provision "Safe Spaces" but as they had left the accommodation they no longer qualified for their assistance. They were accommodated albeit temporarily, in March 2024. adult social care closed the case. The only support the person received was from housing options.
- 5.8.6 Complaints were received from other residents and tenancy services re the smell of the flat despite regular interaction from our temporary accommodation officer. The officer made a new referral to adult social care whilst also doing the following actions which were over and above any expectations:

- i. Removed rubbish bags as the person claimed he could not open the door to the rubbish chute.
- ii. Requested an adaptation to the door handle and keys so the person could open and lock his door properly.
- iii. Removed urine-soaked sofa cushions and took them to the washing area whilst showing the person how to use a washing machine.
- iv. Cleaned the bathroom
- v. Continued communication with adult social care to update of the circumstances despite them closing the case

5.8.7 A meeting was arranged in August 2024 with adult social care so we could understand why the person did not meet the threshold for their support. They explained the sale of the house meant they could now fund any additional support they needed, there was potentially undiagnosed autism, but they reinforced the person was able to meet their care needs, they just didn't want to. The person was affecting other residents and as such tenancy services wanted the person accommodated elsewhere.

5.8.8 Following this information, we met with tenancy services and explained the situation.

- i. The council had a statutory duty to accommodate this person. We had to offer a property to him
- ii. If he was to move into a flat with no communal facilities he would be forgotten about and the hoarding would restart. With staff resource and capacity, it was unlikely tenancy services officers could do a physical check on the property every week which is what was needed. Staying within a sheltered scheme meant he would have contact with the Independent Living Coordinator which could raise any concerns should they arise.

5.8.9 An agreement ensued that we would work with the person to employ a personal assistant as he now had funding from the sale of his house. A personal assistant was employed but they left within a month due to the person's behaviour and it was then decided that we would encourage him to employ a cleaner. If he didn't keep the property in a reasonable standard, he would be served notice and asked to leave meaning he would be homeless.

5.8.10 A cleaner was employed but evidence was required from tenancy services to show this would not be ended prematurely. This property was converted into an introductory tenant on 7 April 2025. This person used 1 unit of our 8 units of temporary accommodation for the entirety of 2024/25.

Case Study 2: Modern Slavery

5.8.11 A couple approached with 2 children fleeing a caravan site. Significant concerns were raised about the suitability of the accommodation and the coercive nature of the owners of the site.

5.8.12 The couple had only lived at the site for 3 weeks and prior to that lived out of area.

5.8.13 The couple had moved into a caravan believing they were moving into a house. No due diligence had been undertaken and there was a suspicion they had fled their property in the previous area. There was no local connection to the Melton borough but there was family in another area where the applicant's father lived.

- 5.8.14 The couple had 3 school age children and the threats made to them were significant to warrant police support of a move. The council's safeguarding responsibilities took precedence in this instance over the production of formal identification and initial investigative work which would ordinarily have happened.
- 5.8.15 The family were placed in a taxi to another area and placed in self-contained accommodation. A referral was made to the receiving authority to pick up a homeless relief duty as Melton had no homeless duty to this family. A referral to another local authority should be addressed by the receiving authority within 10 working days.
- 5.8.16 The referral was eventually picked up by the receiving authority after 12 weeks which cost the council approx. £15,000 in temporary accommodation. This was only resolved after escalation to Melton Borough Council's chief executive and an agreement was reached that the receiving authority would pay £6000 of the accommodation costs.
- 5.8.17 During this process referrals were made to police, children's services and environmental health to bring together professionals to address wider issues with this case.

6 Options Considered

- 6.1 Early discussions with the Leicestershire YMCA for the potential for a 30-40 room supported accommodation project.
- 6.2 To operate a process which is not person-centred and ask customers to produce all forms of documentation on arrival before any accommodation is provided. This would not be best practice and would be at odds with the trauma informed and person-centred approach the team currently operate. However, there is a balance which can be achieved.
- 6.3 Form a stronger relationship with drug treatment agencies to understand the options of rehab and detox facilities for our most difficult and entrenched customers. This is with a view to providing sustainable options for those that are ready to enter treatment.
- 6.4 To employ agency staff if there will be significant absences of staff within the time which will affect performance. A balance needs to be made about which is the higher cost.
- 6.5 Joint work with other Leicestershire districts re enforcement work and support offered to landlords impacted by Renters Rights Bill to encourage more landlords to take our customers.
- 6.6 Development of a county domestic abuse protocol to ensure consistent methods are used and prevent "housing authority shopping".
- 6.7 To continue to submit bids through the Local Authority Housing Fund which requires local authorities to secure properties for ARAP refugee resettlement and temporary accommodation. The council has secured 2 properties for its own stock for ARAP families and 1 for temporary accommodation during LAHF 2. We were unsuccessful for a bid in the LAHF 3 round.
- 6.8 To engage the mediation service operated by the Local Government Association at an earlier stage to resolve issues where homeless duty referrals are not picked up by the receiving authority.

7 Consultation

- 7.1 Not applicable

8 Next Steps – Implementation and Communication

- 8.1 Any feedback will be considered as part of future planning and shared with Cabinet as appropriate
- 8.2 Consider temporary accommodation as an option when looking at conversion of MBC assets
- 8.3 To continue to submit bids for Government funding to increase the use of temporary accommodation
- 8.4 To continue a monitoring system for cases in temporary accommodation and audit of cases to ensure stays in bed and breakfast are justified and appropriate in length.

9 Financial Implications

- 9.1 The actual cost of the homelessness service for 2023/24 and forecast outturn for 2024/25 are set out below. The net direct cost of the service to the council in 2023/24 was £65k rising to a forecast net direct cost of £470k in 2024/25. This does not include any overhead costs for management time and other indirect staff costs such as customer services, finance, legal etc. This shows how much the rising cost in temporary accommodation is adding to the overall net cost to the council which has to be met from the general fund budget. There has been a recent consultation paper containing new proposals relating to the allocation of Homelessness funding which could see a significant reduction in funding received by this council for which lobbying is being undertaken across the local government sector.

	23/24	24/25
Expenditure	£	£
Staffing	214,832	239,525
Bed and Breakfast	96,060	441,224
Other	55,436	71,678
Rent Deposit	29,508	29,525
Total Expenditure	395,836	781,952
Income		
Homelessness Prevention Grant	- 107,430	- 109,031
Homelessness Prevention Grant Top up	-	- 65,727
Ukraine Claim	- 52,695	- 842
Asylum Grant	- 112,500	- 44,750
Rough Sleeping	- 20,095	- 51,158
New Burdens	- 34,123	- 34,766
Afghan Funding for DHP	- 4,000	-
Northants	-	- 6,000
Total Income	- 330,843	- 312,274
Net cost	64,993	469,678

Financial Implications reviewed by: Director for Corporate Services

10 Legal and Governance Implications

10.1 There is a wide range of legislation which is relevant to a local authority's Social Housing Allocations Policy. The principal obligations are created by Part VI of the Housing Act 1996 which has been amended at various points to refine those requirements. The Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (England) Regulations 2006 are made under the 1996 Act and specify certain categories of person who are or are not eligible for allocation of local authority housing.

10.2 In addition, the 1996 Act requires local authorities to have regard to Guidance issued by the Secretary of State when exercising its housing allocation functions. The latest amendment to that Guidance was issued in June 2024. The Guidance highlights specific legal obligations which are relevant to allocation of housing for example the duties applying to certain people who left Afghanistan since 2021 or those who left Ukraine after the Russian invasion.

10.3 The Council must ensure that its Allocation Policy does not prevent those who may be eligible for allocation of housing from registering and being considered under the scheme.

10.4 The additional legislation and guidance which has amended or is relevant to housing allocation includes the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, Homelessness Code of Guidance 2018, Domestic Abuse Act 2021, Localism Act 2011, National Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018, Children Act 2004, Equality Act 2010, Care Act 2014 and Armed Forces Act 2021. The proposed policy has been drafted having regard to these provisions.

Legal Implications reviewed by: Monitoring Officer

11 Equality and Safeguarding Implications

11.1 Our statutory duties are in line with meeting equality and safeguarding requirements

12 Data Protection Implications (Mandatory)

12.1 A Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA) has not been completed because there are no risks to the rights and freedoms of natural persons.

13 Community Safety Implications

13.1 As the council continues to do more work on resolving complaints of anti-social behaviour, this will create an increase in approaches to housing options and subsequent homeless investigations. However, the Housing Options team are fully appraised of these activities so that we can take a collaborative approach.

14 Environmental and Climate Change Implications

14.1 None

15 Other Implications (where significant)

15.1 Potential increase in rough sleeping without appropriate long-term accommodation.

16 Risk & Mitigation

Risk No	Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Risk
1	Staff shortage leads to increased caseloads and households stay in temporary accommodation longer than necessary	Low	Critical	9
2	Officers do not follow a set procedure and differences in practices and decision making across the different housing options officers.	Low	Critical	9
3	Cost of bed and breakfast accommodation increases meaning overall cost increases to the council exceeding budget	Very Low	Catastrophic	8
4	Use more MBC properties as temporary accommodation incurring further cost to the council	Very Low	Critical	6
5	Due to shortage of temporary accommodation rates paid are difficult to be negotiated meaning they are high	High	Catastrophic	20
6	Housing benefit is not maximised	Very Low	Critical	6

		Impact / Consequences			
		Negligible	Marginal	Critical	Catastrophic
Likelihood	Score/ definition	1	2	3	4
	6 Very High				
	5 High				5
	4 Significant				
	3 Low			1,2	
	2 Very Low			4,6	3
	1 Almost impossible				

Risk No	Mitigation
1	Allocate a set amount of money to fund an agency worker for 3 months should there be staff absence

1	Regular checks, 121's in place to manage staff welfare and ensure the team feel supported to prevent absence
1	Ensure staff are multi skilled to be able to pick up other job roles if required in an emergency
2	Quarterly audit of homeless applications and checks made during monthly 121's to ensure applications are investigated thoroughly
2	Introduction of senior housing options officer to provide support to the team with decision making if needed.
2	Build on work within private rented sector and provide a package across council services to prevent people entering temporary accommodation.
3	Continued contract discussions with repairs contractors. When a contract is to be renegotiated, temporary accommodation to be included as a separate cost than general needs accommodation
4	Charging Policy to be introduced to increase support charges for those in MBC temporary accommodation. This would be extra income for the council
5	To continually investigate other companies to ensure we achieve the best price for accommodation
6	Auditing of cases in TA and checklist monitored re claims made to housing benefit

17 Background Papers

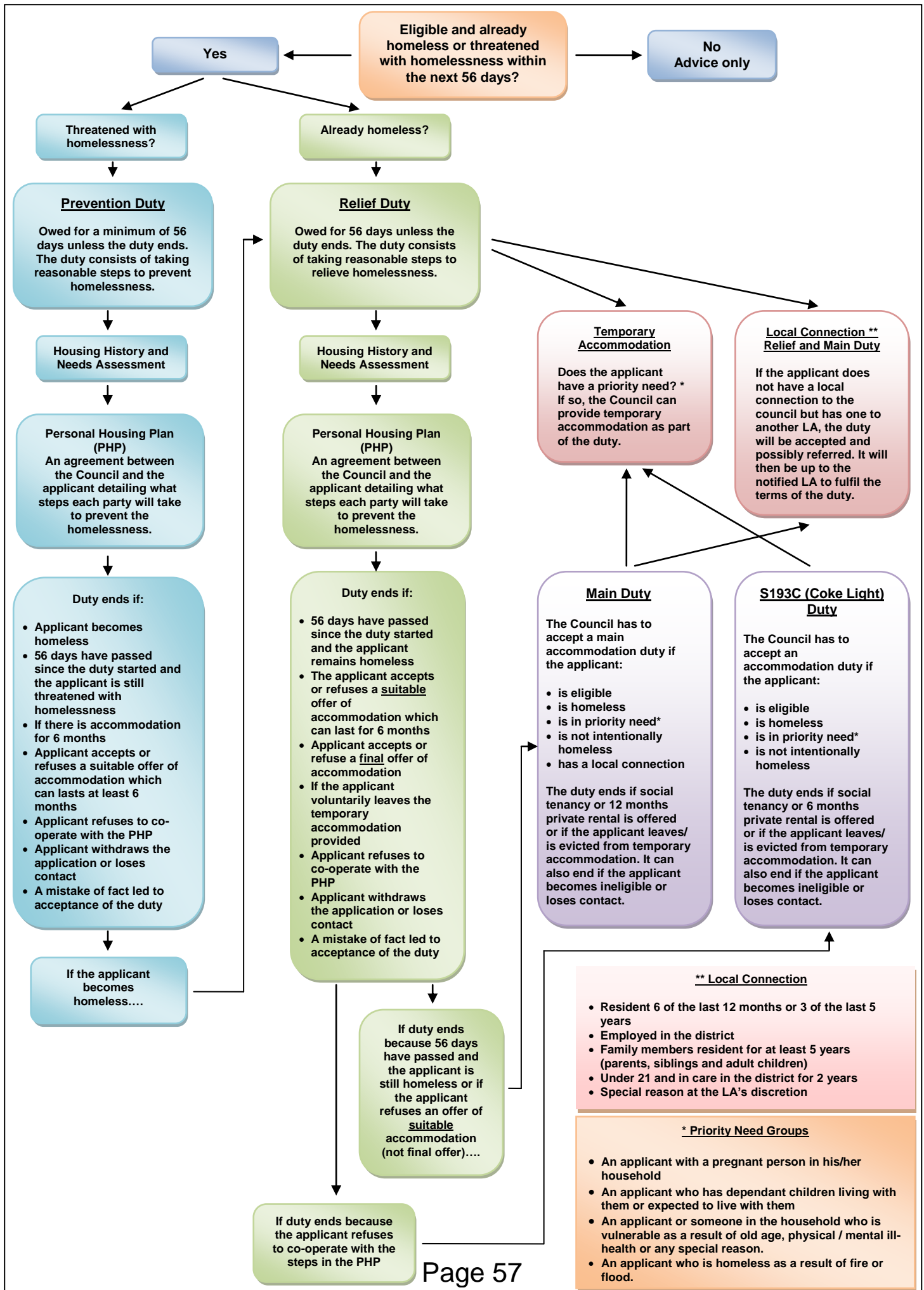
17.1 None

18 Appendices

18.1 Appendix A – Diagram of homeless process

18.2 Appendix B – Diagram of use of MBC Temporary Accommodation properties

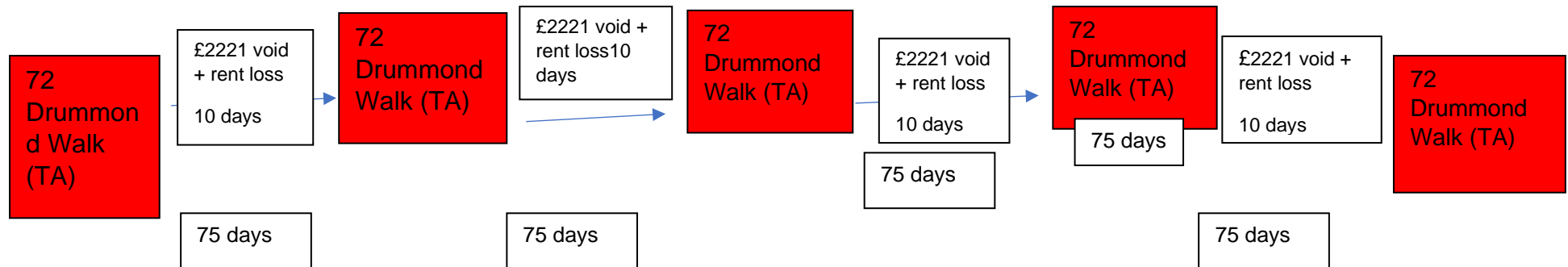
18.3 Appendix C – Temporary Accommodation Booklet



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Example of TA usage - original method

Average stay in TA is 75 days. Turnover of TA property is therefore on average every 75 days



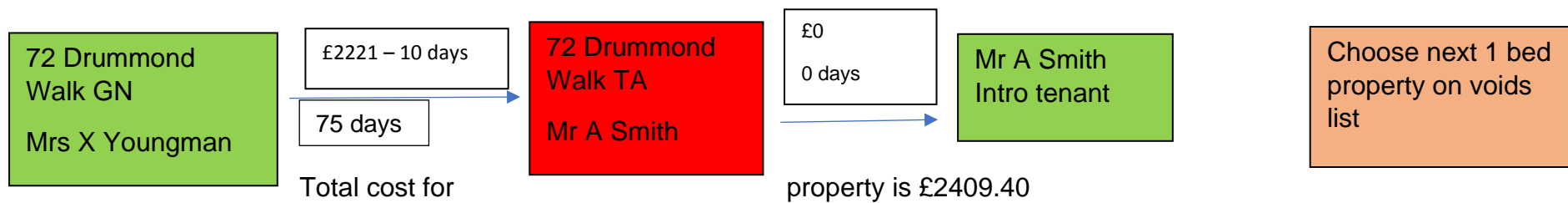
Rent per day is £18.84

Total cost for use for of 1 property to HRA for 12 months = £9637.60

New method for TA reduce void spend

72 Drummond is a 1 bed flat

Mr A Smith is a 1 bed need



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Temporary accommodation

What happens now?

Your checklist

Things you have to do in the first few days:

- Complete a 'Change of Circumstances' update on your Universal Credit account.
- Provide the documentation your housing adviser requests.
- Make a separate claim for Housing Benefit on Melton Borough Council's website to get support with housing costs.
- Read and understand your license or tenancy agreement.
- Check if you're liable for Council Tax. If so, apply for Council Tax reduction from the council.
- Make a budget plan (including rent payments, service charges, Council Tax and other living expenses).
- Google search local services that can help you.
- Register with a GP and health services.



Rights and responsibilities

Understanding emergency accommodation

What is emergency accommodation?

When you make a homeless application, you will be offered interim emergency accommodation while your case is being assessed. It is very likely that the 'emergency' or 'nightly paid' accommodation that's provided by the Council will be hotel accommodation. What we offer you depends on your family composition and what is available at the time. A lot of emergency accommodation has a 'no pets policy'. We can help with kennelling if you need it, but you will have to cover these costs yourself. Please discuss your questions with the temporary accommodation officer by emailing housingoptions@melton.gov.uk or by calling 01664 502502.

As your homeless application progresses, you will be moved into self-contained accommodation. We try to move households with children into self-contained accommodation within six weeks. It can sometimes take quite a bit longer, depending on what is available at the time.

Can I refuse emergency accommodation?

We will only offer you accommodation which we believe is suitable and meets your needs, but we will listen to your reasons for refusing a property if you feel it is unsuitable for you. If the Council believes that the accommodation we have offered is suitable, and we don't accept your reasons for refusing it, we may discharge our duty to provide you with emergency accommodation and no further offers of accommodation will be made. Therefore, please seek advice from organisations like Shelter and Citizens Advice and read this factsheet '[applying as homeless: suitable accommodation](#)', before you refuse any offer of emergency accommodation from the Council.

Understanding temporary accommodation

What is temporary accommodation?

Temporary accommodation (TA) is accommodation provided by the Local Authority. It is where you move out of emergency accommodation and into accommodation where you hold a tenancy agreement.

Whilst you are in temporary accommodation the council will investigate a homeless application.

Can I still bid?

You will still continue to bid for permanent and your priority date/position will not be affected.

How long will I be in temporary accommodation?

Your move into temporary accommodation is your final move before you are permanently housed. The length of time all depends on how long it takes you to secure a permanent accommodation through bidding on the housing register or being offered privately rented accommodation (PRA).

How long will it take for me to get permanently housed?

It is not possible to say for sure how long it will take for you to secure permanent accommodation. This depends on current demand and availability of properties. We would ask that you actively search for private rented properties, provide all documents required and you will need to make a housing register application. This will mean you have to make a bid on a property every week.

If you fall into rent arrears, your bidding account will be suspended and thus temporarily prevent you from bidding so it is vital to stay on top of your rent.

If you come first for a property the council will look to see if this is suitable for you. The council will look at location, access to employment and education facilities, specific support needs, the make up of the property and any adaptations needed. If you refuse the offer made to you. A suitability review can be requested but there is no guarantee the council will find in your favour. Please read advice from [Shelter](#) before you refuse any property.

Who should I contact if there is a fault in my accommodation?

You will have a Temporary Accommodation Officer and a named Housing Options Officer. They will have provided their contact details on your personal housing plan.

Can I refuse an offer of Temporary Accommodation?

We would only offer you accommodation that we deem suitable. If you feel the property is unsuitable, you have the right to request for a review. However, if you refuse to move into the property, request for a review and the review is unsuccessful, we can discharge our housing duty to you and you will be asked to leave your current accommodation and no further offers will be made to you.

What happens when I get offered temporary accommodation?

Your Temporary Accommodation Officer will arrange a time to sign you up to your property. This will involve making a claim for housing benefit to cover the rent and additional charges that apply whilst you are in temporary accommodation.

Will my temporary accommodation be furnished?

All of our TA's are partly furnished if you have no belongings. This means you will need to arrange for your own furniture and white goods to be delivered but if you have nothing we will provide basic items such as beds, fridge and cooker. If you have any belongings in storage, they will come out of storage and into your new TA address.

What rules are there in temporary accommodation?

Whilst you are in emergency or temporary accommodation you will be charged either a charge in bed and breakfast or rent for a property. This charge or rent can be covered by making a claim for [housing benefit](#). If you are ineligible for housing benefit then the payments will need to be made from your income. Failure to do so will result in a loss of this accommodation.

Budgeting and Money

Make a budget plan

Making a budget will help you understand where your money goes and where you can save money. It is the first step to take control of your financial situation, including knowing what's coming in, what's going out and when. It will also help you see whether you're living within your means.

You can use this [budget planner](#) on the Money Advice Service webpage. [Christians Against Poverty](#) also offer a free course to help you budget your money.

Ways to cut costs

It is easier to decrease your spending than it is to increase your income.

There are simple ways to reduce your household bills, such as switching utility providers, shopping around for groceries or getting a cheaper mobile phone deal.

You can find more information and ideas on how to reduce your expenses on the [Money Helper](#) web page.

You can obtain specialist debt advice from [Citizens Advice](#) and [MADMAC](#) (Melton and District Money Advice Centre)



Emergency grants

There is support available, which includes:

- Beds, fridges, fridge-freezers, cookers and washing machines
- Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) can provide help if you need further financial assistance with housing costs or council tax payments.

Anyone who requires assistance with housing costs and is currently claiming Housing Benefit or Universal Credit can apply for a DHP on the Council's website.

Budgeting loans and advances are interest-free loans from the Social Fund that you might be eligible for. These can be used for:

- travelling expenses

- clothing or footwear
- furniture or household equipment
- money to help you look for or start work
- improving, maintaining or securing your home
- advance rent or removal expenses for a new home.

In some accommodation you might not have access to laundry facilities, so you will need to keep a budget to do your washing at a laundrette.

Other loans

Be very careful with other kinds of borrowing. Things like payday loans, log book loans and doorstep lending can seem like an easy solution, but can make a bad situation worse. They're often a very expensive way of borrowing, so always try to find other ways such as joining a credit union.

[Credit unions](#) offer banking services to people who would otherwise find them difficult to get. Clockwise Credit Union is the Leicestershire credit union for safe savings and affordable loans.

Claiming benefits and Universal Credit

If you are claiming benefits and have moved into emergency or temporary accommodation you must update whoever pays your benefits about your change of circumstances so that you keep getting the right payment. You will also need to make a separate claim for Housing Benefit from the Council to get support with housing costs.

If you do not report a change of circumstances to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), you might be paid too much. If you are, you might have to pay some of the money back.

You can calculate what benefits you are eligible for at: [entitled to](#)

Report changes using your Universal Credit online account or contact the Universal Credit helpline.

Disability benefits

Call the Disability Service Centre to report changes if you get Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payments (PIP). If you disagree with a decision about your entitlement to benefits, you can ask the DWP for a review. You usually need to request the review within one month.

Housing Benefit

If you are in emergency or temporary accommodation, this will be covered by housing benefit. Consult the [Council's website](#) to check how you can get help to pay for your rent or Council Tax. Call Melton Borough Council on 01664 502502 or apply online to claim Housing Benefit to cover your housing costs.

Council Tax Reduction

If you need help paying your [Council Tax](#), then apply for Council Tax Reduction on the Council's website. If you need support with the application, please contact the councils Temporary Accommodation Officer.

Practical things about your accommodation

You will need to set up utility accounts or pay service charges to cover for things such as heating, electricity and cleaning. If the accommodation is unfurnished and you need help to obtain white goods and/or furniture, the council can assist with basic items such as beds, fridge and cooker. For other items we would ask you to check Facebook Marketplace or visit [Melton and District Furniture Project](#).

Education and Childcare

If you have been temporarily placed outside the borough, your children might have to travel in to attend school, while you wait for longer-term accommodation. You might consider finding a school in the new area if it is too far for the children to travel into Melton.

Our officers at the council can contact the school, if safe to do so, to ensure they are aware of the current housing situation.

Parent and Toddler groups and Children Centres

[Family Hubs Leicestershire](#) parent and toddler groups are a good opportunity to meet other parents and enjoy activities with your toddler. Sure Start Children's Centres bring together a wide range of services for children 0-5 years and their families. The centre makes it easier for children and their families to access services such as health, employment, childcare and family support closer to where they live.

The services available at each centre vary but may include:

- Child and family health services
- Support for parents
- Integrated early education, childcare, play and early learning activities.

For information on what is available in melton check [Happity](#) for baby and toddler classes near you.



Health and wellbeing

How can I access health services?

[The NHS Choices](#) website is the best place to find health services in the borough. You will be able to find a GP, pharmacies, dentists, urgent care centre and other health services available to you and your family.

GP services

If you are not registered with a GP you will be unable to see a doctor unless you have a serious emergency. In most other cases, calling 111 is a better option. If you are not registered with a GP but need treatment, you can find a GP surgery near you and register there as a temporary resident if you will be living in the area for up to 3 months.

To register, the surgery will ask you to complete a temporary registration services form. When you register temporarily with a GP surgery you'll remain registered with your permanent GP surgery and the temporary GP surgery will pass details of any treatment you have back to your permanent GP. They will add the information to your medical records. If your application to become a temporary patient is refused, you can still receive emergency treatment for up to 14 days. After 3 months, if you are still living near the GP surgery where you registered as a temporary resident, you will have to apply to register with the surgery as a permanent resident. You can find more information on the [NHS website - registering with a GP as a temporary resident](#).

Dentist

The NHS Choices website will provide the most up to date information about NHS dentists near you. If you don't have a regular dentist or can't travel to your registered dentist you can still get emergency dental care by calling 111.

Midwives

If you are pregnant and cannot travel to see a midwife at your usual GP's surgery you can find a midwife closer to your emergency or temporary accommodation by finding and registering with a GP, as set out above. Once you have registered with the GP, make an appointment and, at the appointment explain that you are pregnant and need a referral to a midwife. The GP will then make the referral.

Health Visitor

Health visitors work with parents offering support and informed advice from the antenatal period until a child starts school at five years old. Families from all walks of life may need support and information on issues that affect their children's health and development. If you need advice or support from a health visitor please speak to your local GP or contact [Healthy Together](#).

Sexual Health Services

If you need advice and information on sexual health including STI testing and contraception, please consult the [Leicestershire County Council website](#).

Health and Wellbeing

Connect with the people around you.

Research shows there are five simple things you can do as part of your daily life to build resilience, boost your wellbeing and lower your risk of developing mental health problems. These simple actions are known internationally as the Five Ways to Wellbeing: Looking after your mental health and wellbeing.

1. With family, friends and neighbours.
2. Keep Learning. Try something new. Rediscover an old interest. Explore something new.
3. Be Active. Go for a walk or run. Step outside. Garden. Play a game.
4. Give. Do something nice for a neighbour. Thank someone. Volunteer your time.
5. Take Notice. Remark on the unusual. Notice the changing seasons. Savour the moment.

Regularly practising the Five Ways is beneficial for everyone, whether you have a mental health problem or not. It can provide much needed respite during this transition stage.

The [Joy app](#) helps you to find activities, groups and support offers near you. From walking groups to debt advice, it's about what matters to you.

Support

The council's [Community Support Hub](#) can be contacted to assist you with a variety of issues you may be struggling with.

For more specific support around domestic abuse, debt advice, please contact our website for the most up to date contact details.





Melton
Borough
Council