

DESIGNING OUT HOMELESSNESS: PRACTICAL STEPS FOR BUSINESS

2019



**Practical steps designed for employers to take action
to prevent homelessness.**

In partnership with:

DESIGNING OUT HOMELESSNESS: PRACTICAL STEPS FOR BUSINESS

Drawn from the work of the West Midlands Homelessness Taskforce, these practical steps are designed for employers to take action to prevent homelessness, offer help to organisations tackling it and provide pathways to employment in their businesses.

FOREWORD BY ANDY STREET, MAYOR OF THE WEST MIDLANDS

During my time as managing director of John Lewis, I came to realise that business has a wider purpose, both in how it employs people and in how it can play a key role in the community to do good. Drawing on evidence of what works locally and nationally, I believe that access to good employment can act as a preventative measure as well as a sustainable route out of homelessness.

When I was elected as Mayor in May 2017, one of my first actions was to set up the Homelessness Taskforce. The purpose of the Taskforce has been to ensure we are drawing on all of our collective resources to design out homelessness.

There is a huge amount of good work being done to tackle homelessness across the region, but there is much more that can be done. Through embedding homelessness prevention within an organisation's day-to-day business, employers can be an important part of the solution.

This new resource is part of the Homelessness Taskforce's programme of work to design out homelessness and rough sleeping across the West Midlands. For the first time we have brought together the practical steps that businesses can take to help prevent and tackle homelessness.

Within your businesses, I encourage you to consider as employers how you can implement

the actions set out in this checklist to prevent homelessness within your workforce, give practical help to your employees when issues arise, and create pathways to employment for people who have experienced homelessness.

Working together, we have the opportunity to prevent and design out homelessness across the West Midlands.



Andy Street,
Mayor of the West Midlands



FOREWORD BY JEAN TEMPLETON, ST BASILS

I am really pleased to have the opportunity to chair the West Midlands Homelessness Taskforce. Our collaboration across the region, across sectors and disciplines is focused on adding value rather than adding work.

By working together, we have the opportunity to tackle the systemic issues which contribute to homelessness and replace these with approaches and processes which prevent and design out homelessness.

As Chief Executive of [St Basils](#), I am very conscious of the systemic and personal issues that contribute to homelessness. Generally, we focus on the personal because we rarely have the opportunity to tackle and improve the systemic issues. This perpetuates a perspective that people are the problem; troubled individuals and families. Yet a major factor is troubled systems, which are much harder to tackle and change.

The business sector has a key role to play and the will, skill and resources to make a significant difference. Prevention by design is a perpetual, intentional process influencing mainstream systems. Good employment is a key protective factor and the more we are able to keep people in our systems, the less likely they are to find themselves homeless. Homelessness is the ultimate exclusion. This checklist has been collaboratively developed to promote INclusion rather than EXclusion. I commend it as a tool to all who care and want to help us design out homelessness.



Jean Templeton

**Chair of the
West Midlands
Combined Authority
Homelessness Taskforce
Chief Executive, St Basils**



The private sector currently makes up over 83% of the UK workforce and this means that businesses can have a huge impact on breaking the cycle of homelessness. This is especially true in the West Midlands where we have sadly been experiencing some of the highest levels of rough sleeping and insecure housing in the country.

No-one is immune to the pressures that can lead to homelessness. Many of us have experienced insecure housing and relationship breakdown and, without the right support, pressures like these can build into a crisis. That's why it has been a pleasure to work with the Mayor's Homelessness Taskforce and [Business in the Community](#) to focus on prevention, including the practical steps businesses can take to help end homelessness.

We know that the business community wants to help – but we desperately need to think beyond offering help to people in crisis and about how we can support employees who may be vulnerable to homelessness before they reach that crisis point. In the same way that businesses have moved the dial on mental health we need to remove the stigma associated with homelessness – let's start talking about the 'H' word!

When we do help people in crisis – particularly rough sleepers – let's make sure we do it in the

right ways, working in partnership with the experts so that we can be sure our help is going to give rough sleepers the best chance of getting off the streets and moving on to safe, sustainable independent living.

We also need to help people who have experienced homelessness get back into the workplace. This part is critical to breaking the homelessness cycle and it is something that we as employers are perfectly placed to do. Through Gowling WLG's support of Business in the Community's Ready for Work programme I have seen for myself the power of employability support and work to change the course of people's lives. Offering good work that provides stability and structure, fair pay and benefits, and training and development opportunities can support both existing employees who find themselves under pressure and people who are trying to get their lives back on track.

This resource – covering prevention, practical help, and pathways to employment – is just what we need to get started.



Lorna Gavin,
Head of Diversity,
Inclusion and Corporate
Responsibility,
[Gowling WLG](#)



INTRODUCTION

Despite strong business growth, the West Midlands has experienced the highest increase in homelessness in the country – from 2017 to 2018 rough sleeping in the region had increased by 42%. Homelessness is complex, coming often as a result of the breakdown of structures that should protect people. Homelessness is also multi-faceted, including rough sleeping, living in a hostel, temporary accommodation or ‘sofa-surfing’. Unfortunately, homelessness extends far beyond the visibility of rough sleeping – the West Midlands experienced a 12% increase in the number of people living in temporary accommodation from 2016 to 2018.

The West Midlands Homelessness Taskforce aims to ‘design out’ homelessness. This means we want to see the prevention of homelessness built into policies, systems, structures and organisations. If people do become homeless, we want to make sure that the right services, with the right resources, are in place to help them at the earliest opportunity. When people are at the point of getting their lives back on track, we want them to be able to access good work, where they are supported, developed and given the opportunity to progress.

This resource is the first part of a national toolkit that will be launched in December 2019. This toolkit will include details on each of the interventions covered in the checklist on the next page, as well as case study examples of businesses and charities innovating in these areas. The toolkit draws on not only the work going on here in the West Midlands but on experiences from across England and Wales. In taking these practical steps, businesses will be taking a pivotal role – alongside government and civil society – in designing out homelessness for good.

If you would like a copy of the full toolkit on release, please contact

Joe.Rawlinson@bitc.org.uk.

POSITIVE PATHWAYS MODEL



This resource draws on the West Midlands Positive Pathways model and shows how businesses can have an impact along this pathway to prevent, provide help and create pathways to employment.

PREVENT HOMELESSNESS AMONG YOUR EMPLOYEES

Make sure you provide [good work for all](#), ensuring job security, rights and a fair income.

Offer **mental health support** through workplace initiatives and employee assistance programmes.

Recognise the symptoms of **substance misuse** and put support in place to help employees address it.

Know how to spot signs of **domestic abuse** and how to support employees who may be affected.

Talk about homelessness in the workplace, raising awareness to combat stigma around **poverty, debt and financial exclusion**.

Support employees in times of **relationship breakdown, bereavement and trauma**.

Offer opportunities and remove barriers for **people with criminal convictions**.

Understand the problem of **modern slavery** and act to stop it in communities and supply chains.

OFFER PRACTICAL HELP TO TACKLE THE ISSUES

Equip your employees with the knowledge and resources to understand homelessness and know how best to respond e.g. signposting to StreetLink and local services.

Encourage employees to fundraise, donate and support alternative giving schemes.

Support charities tackling homelessness and its causes by **giving financially** as part of your responsible business strategy.

Create strategic charity partnerships to support projects through **skills-based employee volunteering**, for example with offering legal, financial, insurance, marketing and IT expertise.

Consider what products or services your business may be able to **give in kind** either to directly support homeless people or to provide much-needed resources to charities.

PREVENT

HELP

CREATE PATHWAYS TO EMPLOYMENT IN YOUR BUSINESS

Remove barriers in your recruitment process, such as asking about criminal convictions in the first stage of the process, requiring unnecessary qualifications, using jargon-filled job descriptions and requesting comprehensive address histories.

Partner with charities to support their efforts to **get people ready for work**, for example through helping with CVs and interview skills or outlining expectations in the workplace.

Provide a **chance for jobseekers to see inside your workplace** to hear from staff members about the jobs they do, their career pathway and opportunities with your organisation.

Offer work placements or work experience to give people direct experience in the workplace, helping them build confidence and gain an understanding of their strengths and weaknesses.

Offer apprenticeships to people of all ages, providing a way to learn on the job and start on a new career pathway.

Offer jobs through charities or specialist recruiters to enable you to reach people who may have experienced homelessness.

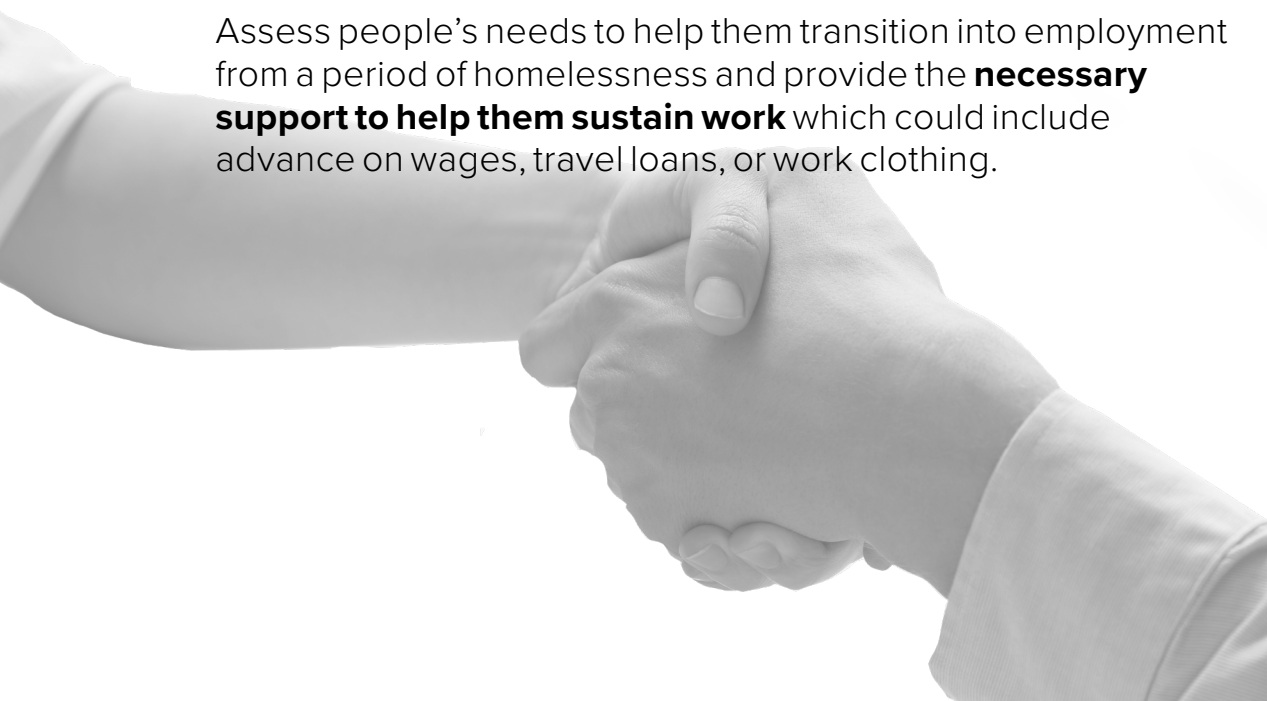
Ensure your jobs **offer fair pay and in-work benefits** that would be of most benefit to people rebuilding their lives.

Ensure you provide **job security, certainty of hours and flexibility** to enable employees to plan and fit in their outside commitments.

Make **training and development** available to all your employees, including those working part-time or shifts, and offer clear career progression pathways.

Assess people's needs to help them transition into employment from a period of homelessness and provide the **necessary support to help them sustain work** which could include advance on wages, travel loans, or work clothing.

CREATE PATHWAYS



USEFUL PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

There are many individuals and organisations working to prevent and relieve homelessness, locally and nationally. This is a list of just a few. We've included details of the homelessness lead for each Local Authority who can provide further information on groups working in their area.

REGIONAL

ACCORD HOUSING ASSOCIATION

Social and supported housing, health and social care across the Midlands, including a domestic violence refuge in Walsall.

Email: paul.wright@accordgroup.org.uk

Contact: Paul Wright, Director of Specialist Support

Tel: 0300 111 7000 (office and emergencies) / 01527 591170 (Redditch only)

<https://accordgroup.org.uk>

BUSINESS IN THE COMMUNITY

Offering employment programmes to support people into work and support for businesses to offer employment for excluded groups and good work for all.

Email: Andreea.Tudor@bitc.org.uk

Contact: Andreea Tudor

Tel: 07713 620 642

CHANGE INTO ACTION

Change into Action is an alternative giving scheme supporting specialist charities and street teams in Birmingham and Solihull working to change the circumstances of rough sleepers. All donations are kindly received and held by Birmingham Voluntary Services Council (BVSC) before being assigned to individual needs.

<https://changeintoaction.org.uk>

SUITED FOR SUCCESS

Suited for Success is charity that provides free high-quality interview clothes, styling and interview preparation skills for unemployed men and women who have a confirmed job interview.

Tel: 0121 236 7770

Email: info@suitedforsuccess.co.uk

LOCAL

BIRMINGHAM

SIFA-FIRESIDE

Homeless Daycentre including Shelter Emergency Housing Advice Team, food, clothing, activities, health care, showers, debt and welfare benefits advice and specialist tenancy support.

Tel: 0121 766 1700

Email: office@sifafireside.co.uk

CEO: Carly Jones CarlyJones@sifafireside.co.uk

<https://www.sifafireside.co.uk>

ST BASIL'S

Birmingham, Solihull, Coventry and wider West Midlands.

Youth homelessness advice, outreach, accommodation and support.

Email: Jean.Templeton@stbasils.org.uk

CEO: Jean Templeton

Tel: 0121 776 9617

TABOR HOUSE

Homeless night shelter including support into employment.

Email: SharonFear@fatherhudsons.org.uk

Contact: Sharon Fear

Tel: 0121 6475106

CRISIS SKYLIGHT

Housing-related wellbeing coaching, support, education, employment and training for people who are or have recently been homeless.

Email: matthew.green@crisis.org.uk

Director: Matt Green

Tel: 0121 348 7950

BIRMINGHAM AND SOLIHULL WOMEN'S AID

Domestic abuse related support and accommodation.

Email: Maureen.connolly@bswaid.org

Contact Person: Maureen Connolly

Tel: 0121 685 8687

COVENTRY

CRISIS SKYLIGHT

Housing-related wellbeing coaching, support, education, employment and training for people who are or have recently been homeless.

Email: Kieran.lyons@crisis.org.uk

Director: Kieran Lyons

Tel: 024 7708 7400

COVENTRY HAVEN

Domestic abuse support service.

Email: eyates@coventryhaven.co.uk

Contact: Elaine Yates

Tel: 0121 553 0090

DUDLEY

SALT BROOK PLACE (MIDLAND HEART)

Homeless hostel with support.

Email: Jonathan.greenwood@midlandheart.org.uk

Manager: Jonathan Greenwood

Tel: 01384 423 771

BLACK COUNTRY

YMCA BLACK COUNTRY GROUP

Sandwell, Dudley, Walsall, Wolverhampton and Cannock Helping homeless young people with supported accommodation, night stop, training, health and support.

Email: info@ymcabc.org.uk

Chief Operations Officer (Housing): Sally Cowan

Tel: 0121 524 1950

<https://www.ymcabc.org.uk>

BLACK COUNTRY WOMEN'S AID

Dudley, Sandwell and Walsall

Domestic abuse support service.

Email: Sara@blackcountrywomensaid.co.uk or raj@blackcountrywomensaid.co.uk

Contact Person: Sara Ward

Tel: 0121 553 0090

SANDWELL

P3 - SANDWELL SUPPORTED HOUSING

Homeless hostel, accommodation, outreach and support.

Email: mandeep.kang@p3charity.org

Service Manager: Mandeep Kang

Tel: 0121 522 4161

SOLIHULL

SIAS (AQUARIUS)

Outreach, information, advice and guidance to those rough sleeping.

Email: siashomelss&housing@aquarius.org.uk or ruth.spencer@aquarius.org.uk

Contact: Ruth Spencer

Tel: 0330 0083 957

SOLIHULL COMMUNITY HOUSING

Information, advice and guidance, temporary accommodation and permanent housing.

Email: kholmes@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk

Contact: Kim Holmes

See also St Basils and Accord Housing.

WALSALL

See contacts for Accord Housing, St Basils, Black Country Women's Aid and Black Country YMCA.

WOLVERHAMPTON

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Food, support and advice.

Email: operations@gsmwolverhampton.org.uk

Contact person: Tom Hayden

Tel: 01902 399 955 / 074 8331 5794

ST. GEORGE'S HUB

Daycentre for vulnerable and marginalised men. Drop in, breakfast club, advice, guidance and support, tenancy sustainment, health, life skills, employment, help for male victims of domestic violence and abuse and their children, bereavement support.

Email: info@st-georges-house.org.uk

CEO: Fazia Bano

Telephone: 01902 423 112

THE HAVEN

Domestic abuse support service.

Email: Popinder.Kaur@havenrefuge.org.uk

Contact: Popinder Kaur

Tel: 01902 904 677

LOCAL AUTHORITY LEAD CONTACTS ON HOMELESSNESS:

BIRMINGHAM

Contact: Gary Messenger

Email: gary.messenger@birmingham.gov.uk

COVENTRY

Contact: Jim Crawshaw

Email: Jim.Crawshaw@coventry.gov.uk

DUDLEY

Contact: Jo Forbes

Email: joanne.forbes@dudley.gov.uk

SANDWELL

Contact: Neville Rowe

Email: neville_rowe@sandwell.gov.uk

SOLIHULL

Contact: Gemma Thompson

Email: gemma.thompson@solihull.gov.uk

WALSALL

Contact: Neil Hollyhead

Email: Neil.Hollyhead@walsall.gov.uk

WOLVERHAMPTON

Contact: Anthony Walker

Email: Anthony.Walker@wolverhampton.gov.uk



NATIONAL

CRISIS

Crisis is the national charity for homeless people. They offer one-to-one support, advice and courses for homeless people in 12 areas across England, Scotland and Wales through their Crisis Skylight Centres. Together with homeless people and Crisis supporters, they campaign for the changes needed to end homelessness for good.

Tel: 0300 636 1967

Email: enquiries@crisis.org.uk

www.crisis.org.uk

HOMELESS LINK

The national membership charity for organisations working directly with people who become homeless in England, Homeless Link works to make services better and campaign for policy change that will help end homelessness. They run a searchable directory of local homeless services in England: <https://www.homeless.org.uk/search-homelessness-services>.

Tel: 020 7840 4430

Email: info@homelesslink.org.uk

www.homeless.org.uk

SHELTER

Shelter helps millions of people every year struggling with bad housing or homelessness through advice, support and legal services. They campaign to make sure that, one day, no one will have to turn to them for help.

Tel: 0344 515 2000

Email: info@shelter.org.uk

www.shelter.org.uk

STREETLINK

StreetLink exists to help end rough sleeping by enabling members of the public to connect

people sleeping rough with the local services that can support them. Members of the public can use the service to alert local authorities and homelessness organisations to people sleeping rough in their area.

Tel: 0300 500 0914

www.streetlink.org.uk



The Prince's
Responsible
Business Network



Business in the Community

137 Shepherdess Walk
London N17RQ

www.bitc.org.uk

Chairman: Jeremy Darroch

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