

Summary Findings

The findings set out in needs assessment are based upon datasets drawn from several different primary and secondary sources using approaches tested in assessments of need referenced in Part 1 of the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities' (DLUHC), National Statement of Expectation (NSE) good practice guide for Supported Housing¹. The publication of the NSE for Supported Housing Good Practice guide also coincided with funding of pilot areas – Birmingham, Hull, Blackpool, Bristol and Blackburn to carefully test different approaches to bring about greater oversight of the sector and how higher standards could be enforced, which have been preceded by piecemeal system of regulation and governance and a variety of different ways of assessing need working at local authority levels.

In the absence of consistently applied, agreed national standards of practice and routinely published data, the NSE Good Practice Guide references a range of different approaches to assessing supported housing needs. These approaches have been applied produce estimates of local needs for supported housing.

Each dataset selected and utilised in this assessment has its own level of utility, robustness and reliability and have applied to inform estimates of local needs for supported housing in Birmingham. Key housing demand drivers in this assessment include population and support needs projections that are captured through a combination of national statistics on population and data indicating local needs, encompassing a broad range of housing, health and social care related service provision.

Birmingham is the UK's second largest growing city, with one of the largest populations of any local authority area in Europe. Serving the accommodation needs of people with support needs also occurs within the context of the overall housing market and significant demand for housing across all sizes and types of provision, particularly affordable housing for general needs occupation.

At the turn of the century (2001-2011) the number of households in Birmingham increased by 9.9%. Since 2011 the population has been projected to have grown by a further 4% or 84,800 people, with a total population of 1,152,800 people in 2018. Demand for housing across the city continues to vastly exceed supply with some significant long-term shortfalls of future overall housing requirements that will need to be partially met from neighbouring local authority areas. Indicators of Birmingham's local housing pressures includes larger average household sizes and higher proportions of overcrowded households when

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supported-housing-national-statement-of-expectations/supported-housing-national-statement-of-expectations#part-1-assessing-local-need-and-planning-effectively-to-meet-demand>

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compared with the national average. Birmingham ranks as the most deprived city nationally for numbers of people who are income or employment deprived which is reflected in the acute shortages of affordable housing in the city.

Supported housing provision in Birmingham has increased at a much faster rate of +83% in three years (2018 to 2021) indicating factors beyond local population related housing needs are driving growth. At a regional level Birmingham serves as the main destination hub of the West Midlands for groups with support needs such as care leavers and those leaving custodial setting requiring somewhere affordable to live. The city is also amongst the highest levels of comparable housing need in terms of temporary accommodation usage and statutory homelessness within region, experiencing similar issues to many larger London boroughs. This suggests the city is meeting needs for supported housing from neighbouring areas and other parts of the region and country and filling gaps in relation to affordable rented housing.

High Level Local Need Estimates in Birmingham, by support group clusters.

Of the 9,255 people potentially in need of a supported housing identified in this assessment of local need, figures expressed are currently set out in the form of estimate range. The estimated figure also has an upper end range of 11,255 units, which accounts for 49% of the current supported housing footprint in Birmingham. This additional need however requires further investigation before being substantiated through dynamic process of engagement, needs assessment practitioners and refinement. Based on a figure of 9255, local per capita needs for supported housing equates to 10.83 units for every thousand adults in the city.

In terms of specific groups of vulnerable communities that may require supported housing, this assessment also considers an additional category of provision not referenced in the NSE Good Practice Guide namely “Refugees in vulnerable person resettlement schemes”.

Groups excluded from the local estimates includes supported housing for older people (65 year and over). Supported housing encompasses the housing, health and social care sectors assessing needs for all groups is a large undertaking. With regards to people with autism, an area of provision which is difficult to assess, figures have been not been included due to a number of constraints and gaps in local knowledge being addressed outside of the work in this assessment.

▪ **Individuals at risk of or who have experienced homelessness**

The single largest client group cluster 22% of local need currently relates to homeless people with low level support needs. Need estimates for this cohort have been primarily based upon local authority Homelessness Case Level Information Collection (HCLIC) data captured from 2018 onwards. Representing a total equivalent of 1407 units of accommodation. This figure of local need could increase however scaling up this estimate would need further evidence as not all single homeless households with

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support needs necessarily require supported housing to meet their accommodation and support needs.

- **People with ill Mental Need**

The second largest group 17.5% are estimated to be people with mental health related support needs. This is a very broad group of people including individuals with more than one support need e.g., support, misuse, safety and security needs, other needs etc. Given this a client group has multiple support needs, further work is recommended with NHS Community Mental Health commissioners to substantiate and refine this estimate of local need.

- **Young People (16-25 years of age) including care experienced citizens**

Young people represent the third largest group at 16.3% of supported housing need at around 1,535 supported housing places. Of this share it is estimated that care experienced segment accounts for around 5% of this cluster. Birmingham is regarded regionally as the destination for young people leaving care and receives a number of out-of-area placements of care experienced young people. This could potentially increase the estimate for this group by a further 300 units of provision.

To account for flows of care experienced young people placed into the city from outside of Birmingham further insights is required with Birmingham Children's Trust and other commissioners of accommodation that have accommodation and support duties for young people leaving care which can continue until the age of 21 in many cases.

- **Domestic Abuse – people requiring refuge accommodation** are estimated to represent around 14.4% local supported housing need (1,355). As part of new duties local authority duties established by the Domestic Abuse Act (2021), a specific DA Needs Assessment is required to identify and plan for the commissioning of safe accommodation. This client group cluster will however need to consider people outside of city, accessing a safety net of supported accommodation usually refuge accommodation nationally, based on safety and availability. Compared to many other parts of the country Birmingham has a relatively larger number of refuge spaces than other local authority areas. However, to fully substantiate this position a refined estimate will need to be aligned, with work being led by Birmingham DA Local Strategic Partnership which is undertaking a strategic needs assessment on the provision of safe accommodation.

- **Supported housing for former offenders**

Leaving custodial services is an area within which criminal justice institutions commission accommodation provision on a sub-regional basis and in some cases nationally. Current estimates of local need indicate in the region of 805 people per year

leaving custodial services, with a local connection to Birmingham requiring short-term supported housing.

Although clients from this cluster group are part of a much larger flow up to 3,800 people according to regional criminal justice services who require, reliance upon supported housing appears to accommodate this group appear to be strongly influenced by critical shortages of affordable housing available to this group, at the point of returning to the community. This bigger volume of need is not reflected in Homelessness Reduction Act Duty Refer figures or in homeless presentations.

At the time of estimating this figure Ministry of Justice was reorganising services with former Community Rehabilitation Companies being brought back into the control and direction of a single organisation called, “The Probation Service” in 2021. It is recommended that further review of local demand is required with probation commissioners and accommodation and support providers to fully understand, flow, demand and support needs profiles of this overall cluster group.

- **Refugees in Vulnerable Person Resettlement (VPR) schemes**

Although not specifically referenced in the NSE Good Practice Guide on assessing needs as a distinct cluster group, many local authorities which carried out needs assessments considered the needs of migrant communities with specific support needs. As Birmingham is participating in VPR schemes involving refugees resettled by the Home Office an estimate of 750 persons per year has been identified, representing 8% of overall supported housing needs. This is largely based upon Syrian programme, which is a rolling programme running into 2026. The most recent VPR scheme involving Afghan resettlement was only official launched by the Government in January 2022 so this figure will need to be revised to reflect people resettled by the Home Office as a result of the 2021 Afghanistan crisis.

- **Physical Disabilities**

530 units of provision have been identified from reviewing data available on working age households with severe disabilities representing 5.6% of overall supported housing needs. When available additional information should be used to update this figure to include Birmingham private rented sector stock condition survey later in Spring of 2022 alongside targeted resident survey on independent living.

- **Substance Misuse and Alcohol Dependency**

Data reviewed for the client group produced very wide-ranging estimates, with potential double counting issues in relation to people with mental ill health dual diagnosis conditions linked to substance misuse. A provisional estimate of 330 units 3.5% is based upon a review of multiple data sources. That said many supported

housing schemes across the cluster groups working closely with substance misuse service providers so the estimate of 330 is likely to be lower. Further work and an investigation of evidence held by Public Health, NHS Clinical Commissioners and Substance Misuse service providers and commissioners is required to understand demand for specific residential drug and alcohol treatment service needs.

- **Learning Disabilities**

The council is currently in the process of re-commissioning services for communities with Learning Disabilities and currently provides provision for 199 places of supported housing each year. The needs estimates which involved a reviewing projected demographic data for working age households from this group, and provider survey returns indicates an estimated 275 units of supported accommodation provision. This equates to 2.9% of overall local supported housing needs.

Recommendations on Assessing Local Supported Housing Needs

Objectively assessing supported housing needs is a complex undertaking involving services which span the housing, health and social care sectors in their broadest terms. Whilst funding is administered locally through 1996 Housing Benefit regulations, this safety net of accommodation based support services spans a diverse sector and needs to be underpinned by efforts to continuously improve information on the sector as well as local needs. To this end six recommendations have emerged through learning gained from developing and testing the work which are summarised below: -

1. Improve local data capture: Where possible in RBIS data records, capture information on client groups provided for as part of administrative process when claim information is gathered e.g., Young Persons, DA Refuge,
2. Regional & local supported housing commissioners: There is a need to identify referrals & levels of need into Birmingham from other LA's (WMCA) & non-council commissioners. Birmingham is a regional hub for many different types of supported housing such as provision for care leavers and women and children fleeing domestic abuse. This provision will inevitably result in referrals being made into Birmingham where those needs cannot be met locally elsewhere. In addition to Domestic Abuse key client groups that need to be considered include Care Leavers, people with Mental Health supported needs and Offenders
3. Update estimate figures - with other local assessments for groups that use and require supported housing – e.g., January 2022 Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment, Autism, Learning Disabilities
4. Align the levels of estimated need with wider strategic housing strategies work & housing intelligence – e.g. Private Sector Stock Condition & Private Rented Housing Strategy, Birmingham Housing Strategy
5. Address gaps in service user perspectives of views and experiences of supported housing for all groups through targeted survey work aimed at people with lived experience to gather their view on what kind of support they need with their housing and wellbeing, particularly their views on accommodation-based provision.
6. Improve benchmarking – work with DWP, DLHUC to publish high level numbers on supported housing claims and units that provide a centralised resource for annual statistics for local authority level data.