

Frequently Asked Questions

Why do we need more supported accommodation in Cheshire West?

We are committed to ending rough sleeping in Cheshire West and Chester.

During the coronavirus pandemic, the Government's 'Everybody In' policy meant those who were sleeping rough were placed in hotel accommodation. When the Government's policy ended, Cheshire West and Chester Council made the decision that it would continue to offer a bed for everybody who needed one.

There are currently around 140 individuals and families staying in hotels in Cheshire West and Chester. Last year this cost £3.3 million.

People sleeping either on the streets or spending prolonged periods of time confined to a single room in a hotel is not an adequate response for people in difficult circumstances, and not one that we would want for our family or friends.

That's why we're looking at developing more accommodation like this to ensure that people at risk of homelessness can access suitable, supported accommodation while they seek a more permanent long-term home.

How many people will live there?

We will be refurbishing the property to provide 36 private rooms for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

Who is it for and how long will people stay?

When the supported accommodation is ready to open, we'll review those currently living in hotel and other emergency accommodation and offer them a chance to move into the new accommodation.

The people requiring support from the Council do so for a wide variety of reasons, and rarely conform to stereotypes. Homelessness or sleeping rough can happen to anyone, and the current cost of living crisis means that we need to be prepared to support more people at this difficult time.

The people moving in will be single people or couples who have a connection to the local area or need to live here. They will receive a wide range of support services, so they are ready for a fresh start.

We will provide individual support to the people living there to help them move on to permanent homes and live independently.

It will give people somewhere to stay until they move into long-term accommodation, so they don't have to sleep rough on the streets or stay in hotels. How long people stay will vary depending on their individual circumstances, but we expect most to stay on average six months.

Why are you opening the building again after you closed the care home?

In 2021, the Council agreed a new model for delivering short term respite care across the borough. As part of this we closed a number of buildings, including this one. This was a strategic decision on how we should provide these services to local people, and not linked to the building itself.

We have been considering options for how to make best use of the building since then.

We feel the building represents a unique opportunity to give people the best possible chance at a new start.

Homes like this make a massive difference to people's lives and are an important part of our community. They keep people and families from being forced into a life on the streets and in the current climate where more people are struggling to deal with the cost of living, they are more important than ever.

Will this accommodation be like Richmond Court that closed?

No. Richmond Court was a completely different type of project. Richmond Court provided 'safe seats' (emergency accommodation) to rough sleepers who often queued outside whilst waiting to be offered a bed for the night. This will not happen here, it is not a hostel, or a night hub or night shelter. This accommodation will be people's home for up to six months whilst more permanent housing can be identified.

Will people be hanging around outside?

No, this will be people's home so, whilst they will need to come and go as part of their everyday lives, there will be no need to hang around outside for any reason. There is a lovely garden at the rear of the building where residents can meet and socialise.

As with all supported accommodations, there will be expectations around behaviour and residents will be required to adhere to this. If there is any anti-social behaviour, then it will be dealt with.

Who will pay for the accommodation and do residents work?

Residents are charged rent and a service charge. If they are not in employment, they can claim benefits towards their rent, but they do have to pay towards the heating and lighting of the property. Residents are encouraged and supported to access employment, education, or voluntary work if appropriate.

Who will manage the property, and will there be staff on site?

The Council intends to work with its commissioned partner forfutures which has significant experience of managing supported housing across the borough. There will also be staff on site 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

What is forfutures?

Forfutures work with people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Its staff provide support and help people into safe, secure housing and provide them with opportunities to build a more positive and sustainable future. Forfutures is

delivered by ForHousing, which is a strategic partner of the Council. It also manages 5,500 Council-owned homes across Ellesmere Port, Neston and Winsford.

Who can I contact if there are problems?

Residents will be encouraged to play a positive part in contributing to their local area. The staff on site will be in contact with neighbours living nearby, so that any concerns people may have can be raised directly with the team on site. There will also be a 24-hour number that residents can ring to report issues or concerns.

Contact details will be shared when the accommodation is near to opening.

Is planning permission required for this to go ahead?

No. The scheme does not need a new planning permission as it will operate in the same way as it has done previously. However, we are still keen to speak to local people to make sure they are aware of our plans.

How will you be letting people know about what's happening?

We've written to local residents, businesses and other stakeholders and will be holding an open day so people can look at the building and ask any questions.

We'll also be speaking to Sanctuary Housing about engaging with residents living nearby.

We want to ensure everyone has the opportunity to ask questions or raise any concerns.

When will the building work be done?

The Council will be refurbishing the building with contractors expected to start on site early next year. It is expected to take six months to complete.