

Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 – 2029

Homeless



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Appendices are published separately on our website

- Appendix 1*
Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Review 2019 / 2020
- Appendix 2*
Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Review December 2020
Update 2023

Foreword

This strategy sets out the Council's vision for tackling homelessness and how it will work with partners to prevent homelessness, support those who experience it, ensure there is sufficient supply of suitable accommodation for those who do and minimise rough sleeping.

This strategy comes at a crucial period in time. A national shortage of housing supply to meet demand is placing increased pressure on homelessness services, whilst at the same time, the Covid 19 pandemic and cost of living crisis have impacted on many households' circumstances leaving them vulnerable to homelessness.

In Bedford, we have seen a steady increase in the numbers of households, particularly single people, presenting as homeless over the last three years. Homelessness undoubtedly has a negative impact on people's lives, well-being and opportunities as well as creating a significant financial challenge for the Council. Therefore, preventing homelessness by assisting people to remain in their homes and / or to swiftly access alternative suitable accommodation is a key objective of the Council's priority to support families and vulnerable residents.

Despite the challenges we have had to face over recent years, there have been a number of significant achievements. These include successful implementation of one of the most radical changes to homelessness legislation this century, responding to service continuity needs during the pandemic, implementing Rough Sleeper Initiatives which more than halved rough sleeping in two years, and maintaining very low numbers of rough sleeping far beyond the Covid-19 'Everyone In' commitment.

Using government funding to tackle rough sleeping, we have seen numbers reduce dramatically because of the support and assistance that we are providing. We are fortunate to work with local stakeholders who share our commitment to tackling homelessness and rough sleeping. I would like to extend my thanks to all of these colleagues, as we could not achieve the successes we have already, without them.

Over the next few years, we need to build on our successes and increase our focus on preventing all types of homelessness, including assisting less 'visible' groups, such as families and extend the scope of our partnership working. I am very pleased to endorse this strategy, knowing that it will deliver continuous improvements in how we tackle and prevent homelessness, and impact positively on people's lives.



Councillor Phillippa Martin-Moran-Bryant
Portfolio Holder for Housing & Regulatory Services

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Bedford Borough Council's (the Council) Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for 2024 - 2029 (the Strategy) has been developed during a period of unprecedented uncertainty. The currently known housing and homelessness influences will shape the detail of this Strategy, but at the same time it must be flexible, to allow the Council to respond to a challenging, unpredictable and constantly changing operating environment.
- 1.2 There have been significant changes in national policy since the publication of the last Homelessness Strategy 2016 – 2021. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 was introduced in April 2018, with the aim of offering more assistance to single people and to improve prevention of homelessness through placing this within a statutory framework which gives more focus and opportunity for families and individuals to be supported to remain in their homes. This change is one of the most significant in homelessness law in 40 years. At the same time, the Government announced a cross-departmental priority to focus on ending rough sleeping.
- 1.3 Our Strategy addresses all forms of homelessness including rough sleeping. It is important to ensure homelessness, in whatever form it presents itself is tackled in a holistic way by the actions set out in the Strategy.
- 1.4 More resources have been made available by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC) to support our work to prevent homelessness for families, single people and to end rough sleeping.
- 1.5 The Strategy aims to consolidate some of the positive progress the Council has made as well as focus on better meeting customer's needs and changing, where possible, what's not been working well. Regularly listening to customer feedback and those with lived experience of homelessness will be key to identifying and addressing barriers to continual improvement and this has been included in the action plan.
- 1.6 In line with the requirements of the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities, we will focus on the key themes of;
- Preventing homelessness with intervention at the earliest possible points
 - Ensuring sufficient supply of accommodation
 - Providing support and help to aid recovery for those that need it
- 1.7 The delivery of actions coming out of this Strategy will be set in the context of the resources available to the Council. It is also important to recognise that local authorities and Government cannot always fully understand or predict the medium and longer-term effects of global and financial impacts on housing and homelessness. We know that we need to ensure the Action Plan (at Section 8 of this Strategy), is continually reviewed and when needed, can be updated or changed in response to new trends or circumstances as a result of unforeseen emergencies and any major economic and policy drivers.

- 1.8 Effective partnership working lies at the heart of all successful homelessness prevention services. The vision set out in the Government report ‘Making Every Contact Count’ published back in 2012 sums up what is still the priority focus today:

“...the visions of this report is simple, but bold. There is no place for homelessness in the 21st century. The key to delivering that vision is prevention – agencies working together to support those at risk of homelessness”

Source; Department for Communities and Local Government Making every contact count - foreword from The Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP – Minister for Housing 2010 to 2012



- 1.9 In August 2018, the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government published the first ‘Rough Sleeper Strategy’, which highlighted a need for stronger accountability and consulted on the use of local ‘Homelessness Reduction Boards’. Homelessness Reduction Boards, if established, could be an opportunity to increase the commitment of a variety of public bodies to the review and delivery of a local homelessness strategy.
- 1.10 The more recent Government Strategy ‘Ending Rough Sleeping for Good’ published in September 2022 maintains this vision;

“By taking a holistic view of the problem, by focusing on prevention and by looking at the causes as well as the symptoms, it sets out how everyone – from central government, local leaders, rough sleeper coordinators, health workers, social workers, volunteers, prison workers and housing officers – can work together to not only get people off the streets, but stop them ending up there in the first place”

Source; Department of Levelling Up, Housing & Communities Ending Rough Sleeping for Good – foreword from Eddie Hughes MP – Minister for Rough Sleeping and Housing 2021 to 2022

- 1.11 The scope of the Strategy is therefore wider than the services delivered directly by the Council. It supports the delivery of services within other public services, including adult and children's social services, health and criminal justice agencies, Registered Providers (RPs also known as housing associations) and voluntary sector organisations.
- 1.12 The Council's Homelessness and Health – Executive Summary published in 2018 by the Director of Public Health set out an independent report focused on improving the health of the people of Bedford Borough and made recommendations to address the public health challenges of homelessness, in order to better prevent homelessness and improve the health of homeless people. The report highlights homeless people being more likely to have poor physical and mental health, and people with physical and mental health problems are more vulnerable to becoming homeless. The recommendations made in the report need to continue to be taken forward in the Strategy.
- 1.13 The Council has recently formed a new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Board whose work will be of significant importance in driving the Strategy Action Plan forward.
- 1.14 We have used local and national data, other information, and feedback to review homelessness in Bedford Borough.

The Aims of the Strategy

- 1.15 As a priority, our aim has to be to increase our focus on preventing homelessness occurring in the first place. This is the best outcome for people at risk of homelessness living in Bedford Borough. It also makes good financial sense for the Council and other public sector agencies locally to prevent homelessness, because the cost of homelessness and its wider impacts on other services is high. At present, our limited resources have been spent assisting people once the crisis of homelessness has already happened. For some single people, this can be at the point they are on the edge of, or are already, rough sleeping. Our objective is to turn that around and help people earlier by directing our focus on preventing homelessness.
- 1.16 It is also important to break the cycle of insecure housing and repeat homelessness and continue to assist those who do become homeless, so that they can find a home and, where needed, offer them support to make sure they do not experience homelessness again.



The Scope of the Strategy

1.17 The Strategy aims to ensure homelessness is addressed at whatever stage or circumstance people are in. It covers single people and couples without children, young people and families who:

- Want or need general advice about housing options.
- Are at risk of homelessness in the future.
- Are already homeless.
- Are currently rough sleeping.
- Are staying in temporary accommodation.

Other Strategies and Plans

1.18 Delivery of this Strategy relies on maintaining links and aligning action plans with other relevant Strategies, to ensure tackling homelessness is supported across the Council. By making the best use of available resources, we can avoid duplication, ensuring the efficient and effective delivery of services and streamlining the journey for residents who are homeless or at risk of homelessness now and in the future.

1.19 We are developing a stand-alone Domestic Abuse policy for Housing to support effective delivery of actions set out in this Strategy and the council's Strategy to Address and Reduce Domestic Abuse. This policy will support our commitment to achieving Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation.

[Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance \(dahalliance.org.uk\)](http://dahalliance.org.uk)



1.20 The table below lists the Council’s other strategies, policies and plans which are referenced in this Strategy and its Action Plan;

Title	Adopted	Due for review	Link
Housing Strategy 2021 – 2026	2021	2026	Housing Strategy 2021 - 2026
Housing Allocation Scheme	2021	2024	Allocations Scheme April 2021 (bedford.gov.uk)
Empty Homes Strategy 2019 – 2024	2019	2024	Empty Homes Strategy 2019 - 2024
Strategy to Address & Reduce Domestic Abuse 2021 – 2026	2021	2026	Bedford Borough Strategy to Address & Reduce Domestic Abuse 2021 - 2026
Local Plan 2030	2020	Review complete	Local Plan 2030
Emerging Local Plan 2040		Under Review	Local Plan 2040
Homelessness and Health; Director of Public Health Report 2018	2018	-	PUB011_18 Director of Public Health Summary BB DRAFT v3.pdf (bmksna.org)
Bedford Borough Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2024-2027	2024	-	https://www.bedford.gov.uk/your-council/about-council/key-plans-and-strategies
Temporary Accommodation Acquisition Strategy 2024 – 2027	2024	-	https://councillorsupport.bedford.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=116&MIId=6181



2. The Homelessness Review

- 2.1 In line with statutory requirements, this Strategy is based upon a review into homelessness and rough sleeping in Bedford Borough. The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review and its Update are at Appendix 1 and 2 (Appendices are published separately on our website).
- 2.2 Figures 1 – 3 below highlight key data from the Review which drives this Strategy:

Figure 1; Drivers & Influences for homelessness prevention actions in the Strategy

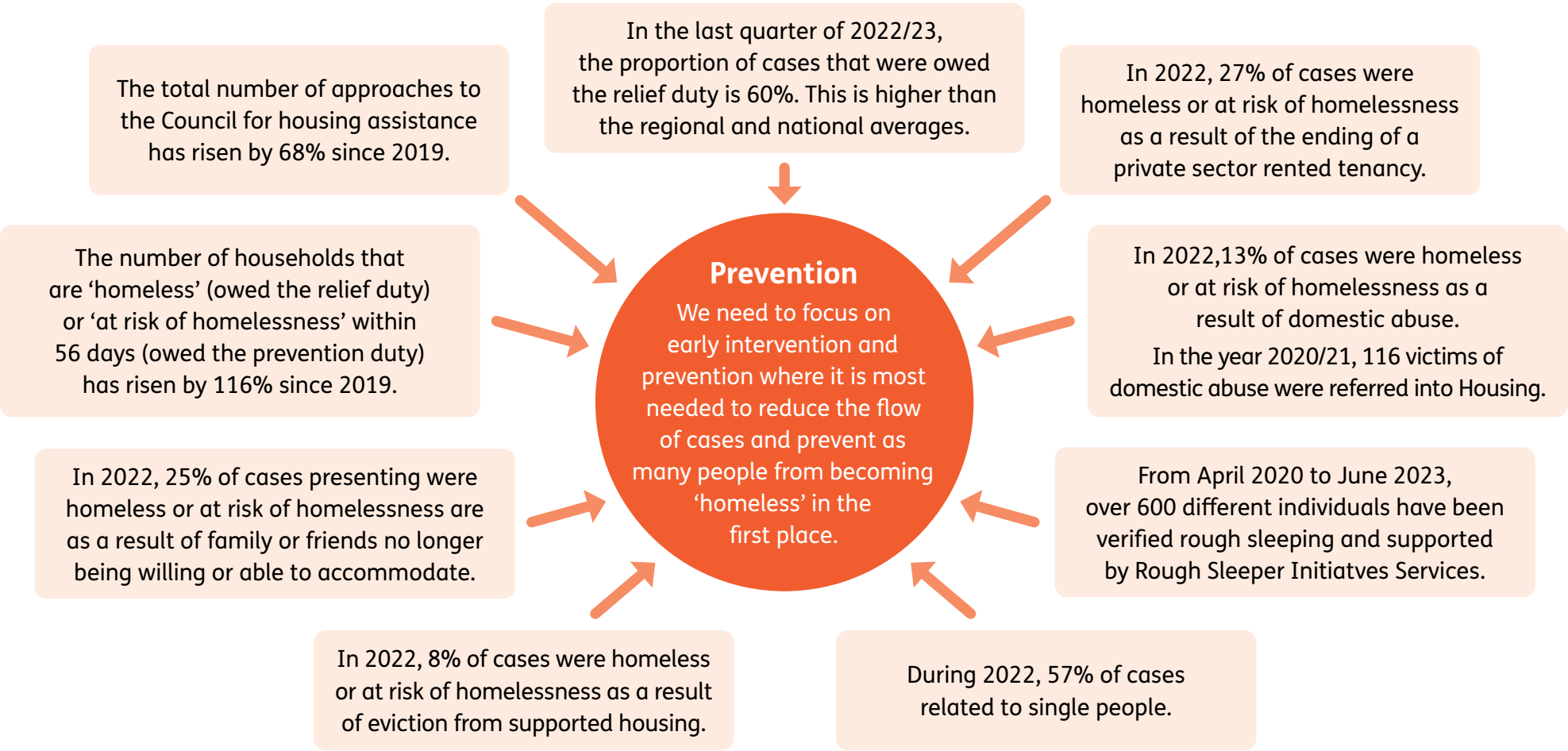


Figure 2; Drivers & Influences for supply of accommodation actions in the Strategy

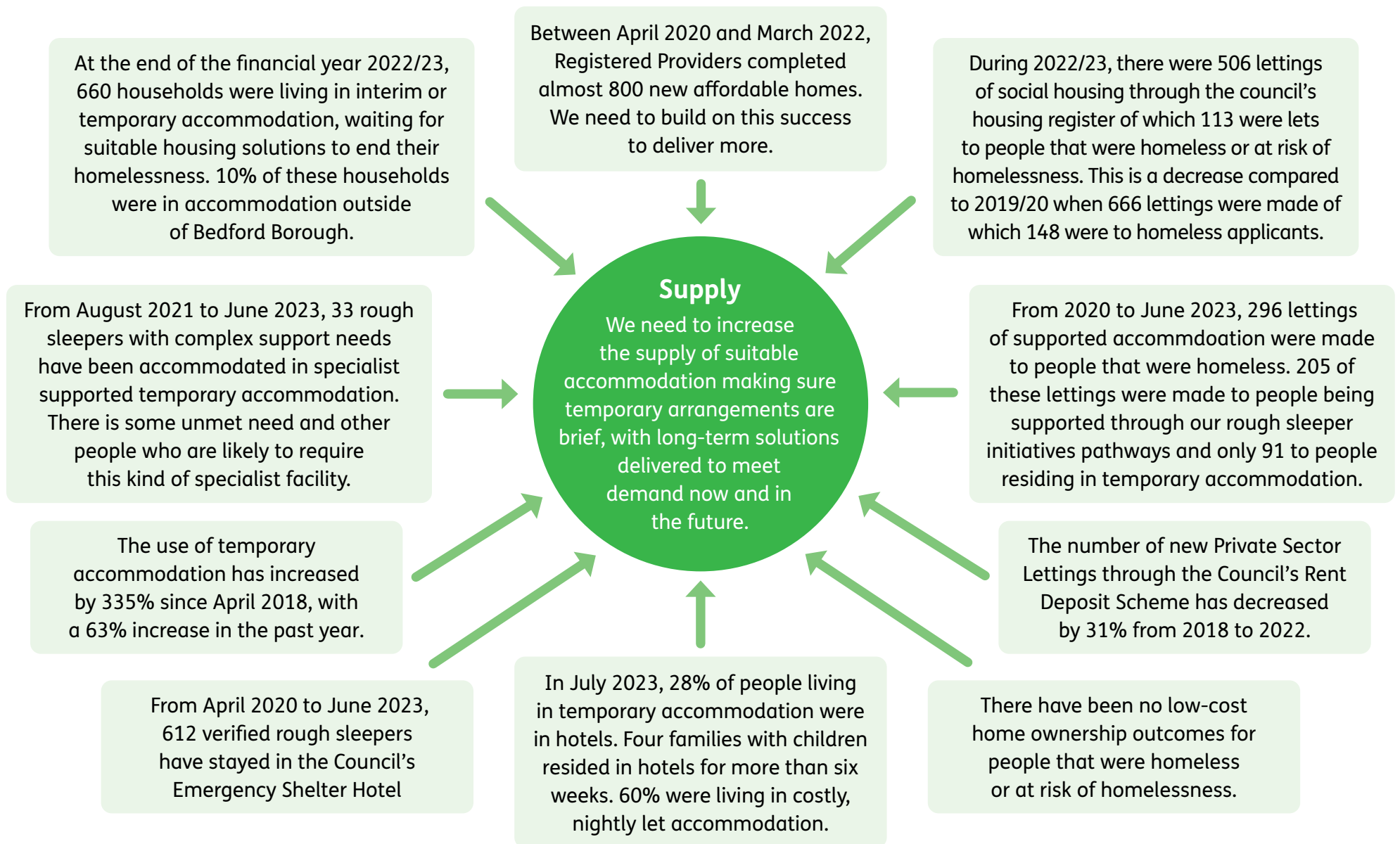
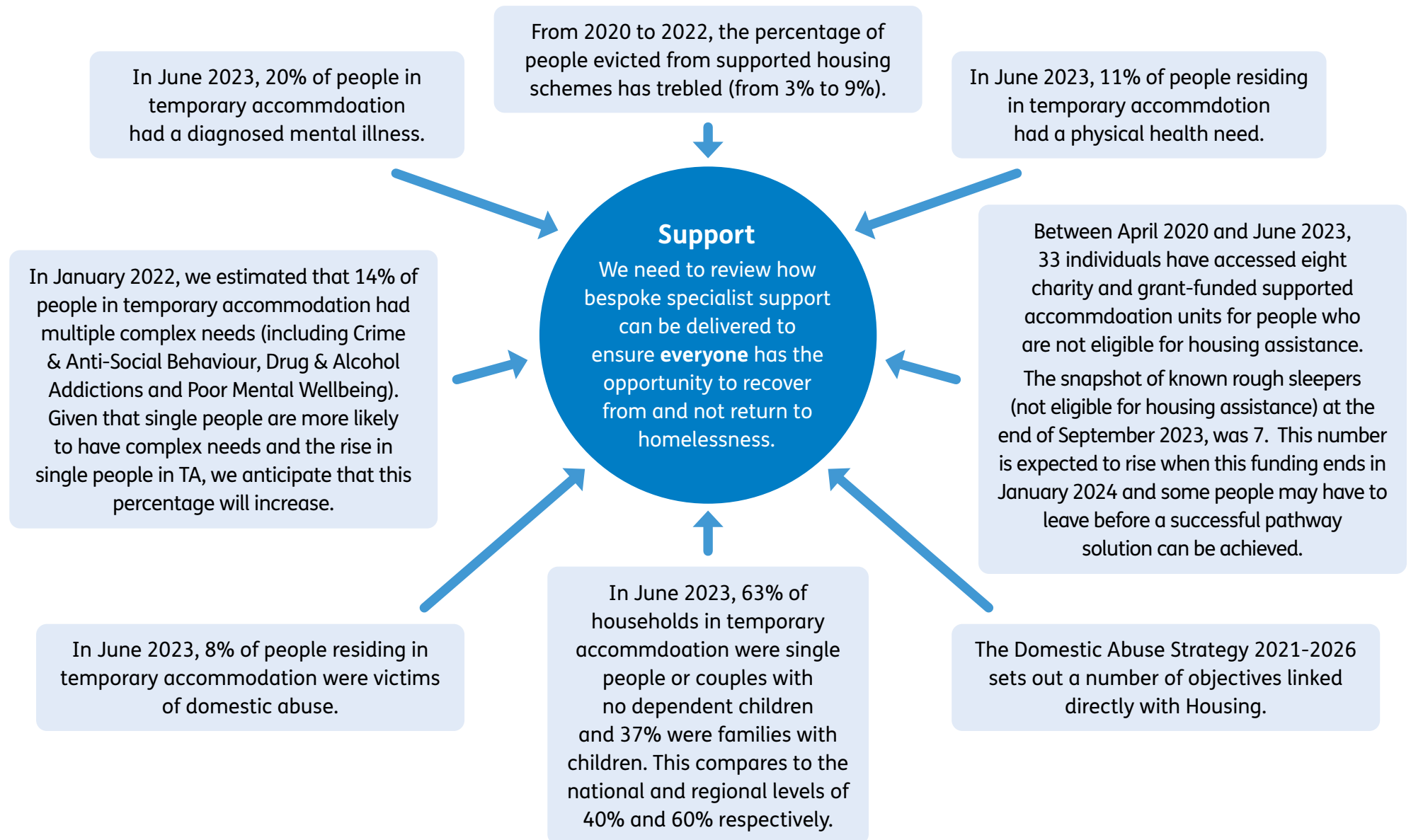


Figure 3; Drivers & Influences for prevention and recovery support actions in the Strategy



3. The Strategy

Our focus is to prevent homelessness occurring at the earliest opportunity through a range of initiatives, as well as tackling the wider causes of homelessness by strengthening partnerships with other agencies.

We will develop partnership-wide toolkits to ensure people who are at risk of homelessness can be efficiently and effectively supported to remain at home, or quickly be provided with a pathway to a place they can call home for good.

We will reduce the numbers of people that are already homeless and living in temporary housing by reviewing the supply of accommodation of all tenures; social housing, supported housing, private sector housing and low-cost home ownership.

The success of our Rough Sleeper Initiatives delivered since 2018, proves that co-ordinated partnership working lies at the heart of successfully preventing and relieving homelessness. We want to replicate this success by developing improved partnership working and suitable housing solutions for young people and families.

We know that the causes of homelessness are complex and cannot be tackled through the provision of housing alone. Preventing and reducing homelessness for people with multiple and complex needs continues to be our biggest challenge, particularly where some people's support needs, often borne from life trauma, have seemingly exhausted local options.

We will focus our actions on this vision over the next five years.

Vision



4. Theme One: Preventing Homelessness

- 4.1 Prevention of homelessness underpins the Vision of this Strategy. Dating back as far as 2002, when the Government's publication 'More than a roof' first began the refocus of homelessness services from process to prevention; there has been a consistent aim for the delivery of solution-based outcomes which, in many cases, avoid the need for households to make a homelessness application.
- 4.2 Today, statutory homelessness support is delivered through the most radical change to legislation this century implemented in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, which makes preventing homelessness a legal duty owed to anyone who is eligible that approaches the Council seeking help.
- 4.3 We need to identify and assist people at higher risk of homelessness much earlier than the statutory guideline, which is 56 days or less before homelessness is likely to occur. A strong partnership with other organisations is critical to reach more people where there are early signs of a housing problem and resolve these before homelessness becomes a real possibility.
- 4.4 We need to give people clear information, so that there is an increased understanding about the realities of housing options locally so that people can help themselves but also know where to go for advice when needed. Additional support and training for customers on how to maintain a property, manage and sustain a tenancy will be offered as well as skills, training, employment and careers advice through partnership working to enhance customers access to housing and long-term stability.
- 4.5 We need to make sure that other organisations and departments of the Council, including both adults' and children's services, health services, job centres, criminal justice services, voluntary agencies and housing providers have a good understanding of the warning signs of housing need and are equipped with the tools to encourage self-help, give basic early advice or easily signpost, refer and support people to contact the Housing Service. The Local Health and Wellbeing strategy 2024 – 2027 includes actions to support on various health issues such as addiction.



- 4.6 With partners we need to find ways to identify those at risk, promote advice and information and then work together with partners to develop creative polices and services, for example, for families, victims of domestic abuse, care leavers and people leaving hospital or mental health units. We will support people to easily help themselves at times of need but also ensure holistic safety nets are in place and robust enough to respond as needed to prevent homelessness wherever possible.
- 4.7 The Review Update (Appendix 2 para 4.2.2) confirms that, locally, the four main reasons that people become homeless or at risk of homelessness are; the ending of a private sector tenancy, family or friends no longer being willing or able to accommodate, being a victim of domestic abuse or eviction from supported housing. With the ending of private sector tenancies being the highest root cause of homelessness we need to consider and address the impact of no-fault evictions.
- 4.8 In line with Local Government Association best practice guidance the Council is establishing a Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Action Board. Actions will include development of sub-taskforce groups which will include statutory and non-statutory stakeholders both internal and external and people who use the service. Support will be given to facilitate attendance. These sub-taskforce groups will support development of particular prevention pathways.



In relation to Preventing Homelessness we will;

- Strengthen data recording and the use of data to improve our understanding and analysis of homelessness, including repeat homelessness, to enable better forecasts of future demand and the focused use of prevention toolkits.
- Review and improve information provided through the Council's website, and through partner organisations, to promote easy access to advice and self-serve help.
- Establish a Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Action Board to include a rolling programme of forums with local agencies to deliver briefings and training on homelessness services and to facilitate sharing of information and ideas.
- Provide social, private and supported housing providers with information on locally available services and promote the Council's role in negotiation, planning and averting homelessness.
- Review single homelessness accommodation pathways and protocols with local health professionals and probation services to encourage and promote improved referral pathways and support for people leaving either custody or hospital where mental health and / or addictions are an issue.
- Review and strengthen the 'toolkit' of homelessness prevention initiatives available for front line housing advisors and local agencies.
- Incorporate health and wider outcomes into the evaluation of homelessness prevention toolkits.
- Monitor the duty to refer protocol for effectiveness and adherence and establish closer working with agencies to improve referral processes where a person may be at risk of homelessness.
- Support the objectives set out in the Council's 'Strategy to Address & Reduce Domestic Abuse 2021 – 2026' to prevent homelessness where individuals want to remain in their own homes.
- Complete the operating model review of Housing Services and implement a restructure of staffing to enable effective delivery of homelessness prevention.



5. Theme Two: Supply of Accommodation

- 5.1 Homelessness is exacerbated by limited access to suitable, settled accommodation. We need to create more affordable housing options that are available before people are in crisis and to meet the need for temporary accommodation where this is required.
- 5.2 We need to reduce the number of households living with the insecurity of being at risk of homelessness, homeless and roofless, or in temporary accommodation, and instead provide options so that people can move in a planned way into accommodation that is suitable and available to them long-term.
- 5.3 Preventing homelessness and ensuring that when it does occur the journey for those affected is brief and non-recurrent relies on both helping as many people as possible to remain in their own homes, but also helping those who can't do so to access accommodation across all tenures. For those who have both a housing need and support needs too, they need an effective pathway to receive the support from other agencies and services, to achieve the end goal of homelessness never occurring again.

Affordable Housing

- 5.4 The needs of homeless people form part of the overall housing needs of the Borough. The level of Borough-wide need, the dwelling types required and the tenures that will best meet those needs up to 2040 were identified in the Local Housing Needs Assessment, which forms part of the evidence base for our Local Plan 2040.

- 5.5 The Housing Strategy 2021 – 2026 sets out the Council's approach to supporting the delivery of new housing, including the delivery of new affordable and supported housing. The Review (section 7.4) highlights the need for the Council and its partner organisations to continue to work together to maximise the supply of available housing in the Borough across all types and tenures.
- 5.6 The provision of housing, particularly affordable housing, is essential in helping to minimise homelessness. The Council's Housing Strategy Team works closely with the planning system, developers, RP's and Homes England to secure the delivery of new housing in the Borough. This partnership approach has facilitated the successful delivery of general needs affordable housing for rent, purchase and specialist supported housing.
- 5.7 Qualifying sites (those of ten dwellings or more) allocated for housing in Local Plan 2030 (Policy 58S) and the emerging Local Plan 2040 (Policy DM1S) are required to deliver 30% affordable housing, of which 78% should be for affordable or social rent. These properties are allocated in accordance with the Allocation Scheme and are available to meet the housing needs of those on our Housing Register, including those who are homeless.
- 5.8 In addition, we will work with RP partners to bring forward sites that deliver more than the 30% planning policy requirement for affordable housing. Opportunities include small sites already owned by RPs, sites purchased by RPs for 100% affordable housing schemes and, potentially, sites owned by the Council where, as landowner, we might require higher percentages of affordable housing.

Private Sector Housing

- 5.9 In recent years, increasing market rents have risen significantly above Local Housing Allowance rates putting them out of reach for those claiming benefits affecting the supply of private rented sector (PRS) properties available to low-income households and more recently led to people who are working and earning higher incomes being unable to afford to rent privately.
- 5.10 We have seen a significant decrease in the number of private sector properties being used to prevent and relieve homelessness due to landlords choosing to sell and at the same time the ending of private sector tenancies is one of the biggest causes of homelessness.
- 5.11 We need to complete a review of the Council's landlord incentive schemes to ensure they align to the current private sector market and give landlords confidence to let their properties to any tenants that we might put forward. The Council will conduct due diligence to ensure the scheme only works with reputable landlords and ensure we respond robustly to complaints about rogue landlords. We need to make sure a landlord offer is attractive, competitive but is also value for money in helping the Council meet the demand for accommodation. We will therefore re-introduce the previously successful partnerships and local forums for private sector landlords and owners of empty homes.

Supported Accommodation

- 5.12 The Housing Strategy 2021 – 2026 sets out the Council's approach to supporting the delivery of new housing, including settled supported housing, places people can call home, for specific vulnerable groups. Specific actions to increase the supply of accommodation that is let with support to meet the needs of single people who are threatened with homelessness or already homeless is delegated to this Strategy.
- 5.13 There is no statutory duty to provide supported accommodation and as a result careful review of funding allocations is necessary to ensure that commissioning is targeted at provisions that support our wider statutory agenda to prevent and relieve homelessness and deliver value for money. The Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023 is aimed at improving conditions in exempt supported accommodation.
- 5.14 It is essential that we maintain partnerships with providers of supported housing to ensure that information and needs data is shared and fed into a continuous review of services provided. This will ensure that they are shaped to meet local needs for preventing homelessness and supporting an effective supply of housing for people who are homeless.
- 5.15 There is a need to improve the allocation of supported housing units to ensure a fair system is operated across all providers, both commissioned and as many non-commissioned ones as we can to ensure offers of accommodation support the delivery of this Strategy.

5.16 In addition to approved allocation process, we also need to review and refresh pre-eviction and planned move protocols to reduce the number of people needing to approach the council for housing assistance because they are threatened with becoming homelessness from supported accommodation.

5.17 Furthermore, there is a need to increase move-on provision and floating support models, and to further develop models for addressing the multiple and complex needs of homeless people with substance misuse and/or mental health problems and domestic abuse refuge settings.

Temporary and Emergency Accommodation

5.18 In addition to homelessness prevention underpinning the Vision of the Strategy, the current unprecedented numbers of households residing in temporary accommodation (TA) must drive priority action to reduce its use. The more the council spends on crisis and the use of TA, the less there is for work on prevention.

5.19 We will examine our processes, models of best practice, frameworks, and the effect of other actions in this Strategy to reduce the use of temporary accommodation and ensure a supply of suitable accommodation that can be managed and maintained to support homeless households through their journey from crisis to finding long-term rehousing quickly and smoothly.

5.20 Our on-going property acquisition programme should consider our ambition to re-focus on prevention, reduce the high numbers of households in temporary accommodation, reduce the significant cost to the Council of nightly let and hotel type provision and improve the conditions for individuals and families who require temporary accommodation. The Council purchased 13 family units for temporary accommodation in March 2024 and is also developing 10 units to expand our rough sleeper provision with a view to accelerating the property procurement programme as set out in the Temporary Accommodation Acquisition Strategy 2024 – 2027 which has now been adopted.

5.21 It is important that the provision of temporary accommodation is affordable to the Council and is financially sustainable. Therefore, we will normally only provide temporary accommodation where we have a statutory duty to do so. Where we do not have a duty we will work together with partners to identify and implement opportunities to provide shelter for homeless people that are not entitled to temporary accommodation where the law allows.

5.22 We will seek Government funding, both capital and revenue funding, when opportunities arise and there is a robust and sustainable business case for use of the funding as set out in the Temporary Accommodation Acquisition Strategy 2024 – 2027 which has now been adopted.

In relation to Supply of Accommodation we will;

- Review existing offers to private sector landlords and launch new proactive and innovative approaches to accessing Private Rented Sector properties for preventing and relieving homelessness.
- By implementing the Housing Strategy 2021 – 2026 and supporting the delivery of sites allocated for housing in our Local Plan(s), continue to maximise the delivery of affordable housing and supported housing. As a minimum, we must meet the figure determined in the current Local Housing Needs Assessment or its successor documents.
- Work with Providers on schemes on local authority owned land
- Continue to work to reduce the number of long-term empty homes in the Borough by implementing the Empty Homes Strategy 2019 – 2024.
- Progress the acquisition of residential properties for use as temporary accommodation in order to reduce cost and improve control over the quality and location of properties.
- Deliver a programme of residential properties for refugees.
- Review, explore opportunities and develop new accommodation options, with bespoke support, specifically for people who have been or are at significant risk of rough sleeping based on our Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme-funded ‘Rogers Court’ model.
- Complete the review of supported housing and implement a commissioning programme which meets the aims of this strategy.
- Establish closer partnership working with local RPs to promote improved access to affordable and supported housing for single homeless people including people recovering from rough sleeping.
- Review the Housing Allocations Scheme to ensure it balances the housing needs of people that are at risk of homelessness to effectively support the overarching aim of preventing homelessness, with the housing needs of other applicants.



6. Theme Three: Providing Support

- 6.1 For many people, homelessness is symptomatic of other issues in their lives, mental or physical health problems, domestic abuse, drug or alcohol dependency, offending behaviour or fractured support networks.
- 6.2 Moving into temporary accommodation can be extremely disruptive and unsettling for individuals and families, and they are sometimes moved at short notice which presents challenges for adults who may be trying to hold down a job, or children who need to get to school. It is particularly difficult for individuals and families who are placed in hotels, sometimes a long way from amenities and often without basics like access to cooking and laundry facilities.
- 6.3 The recovery from homelessness requires strong partnership working with other statutory services, voluntary agencies and housing providers to strengthen the toolkit to include advice and assistance about accessing welfare support provisions to facilitate smooth transition into sustainable settled accommodation. We recognise that without an address it is harder to access employment and internet so partnership working is key to intervening with support.
- 6.4 A range of support options are needed to help people address the root causes of their homelessness, consolidate their initial recovery from homelessness and to sustain accommodation in the longer term.
- 6.5 Achieving our vision relies on effective assessment and support from other agencies running through the journey from beginning to end. We need work with partners to develop the toolkit required to help prevent homelessness occurring in the first place, ensure anyone who is homeless is helped to navigate the pathway from crisis to rehousing, and to support the continued prevention of homelessness by ensuring people don't have to endure it again.
- 6.6 We also need to work with partners and other suppliers of supported housing in the Borough to ensure that the accommodation and support is of good standard, meets the residents' need and meet any statutory requirements.
- 6.7 We will work with partners to ensure that supported housing models are financially sustainable, are not reliant on funding from the Council and, as far as is feasible, do not adversely affect the Council's finances (for example, through the unsubsidised cost of Housing Benefit).
- 6.8 We need to work with our partners to ensure our supply of all types of accommodation are delivered with the right levels of support to meet the needs of people who are homeless and that provision is in place to tailor support plans for those with both low to complex needs including those that are experiencing the impacts of trauma. The Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2024 – 2027 sets out wider aims to offer support in this respect.
- 6.9 Implementing a Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Action Board will give us the platform to share information about new and remodelling housing supply to open up discussion and action plans for delivering shared services support.

In relation to Providing Support we will;

- Strengthen data recording in order to deliver effective monitoring of support outcomes and identify gaps in service to feed into effective service commissioning and delivery. Improve the monitoring of commissioned housing-related support services to ensure we are delivering quality and value for money through an outcome-based approach.
- We will work with service users and collaborate with partners and stakeholders to make available a directory of support services for people who are experiencing or recovering from homelessness, including focus on support for victims of domestic abuse, care leavers, families with children with special needs and refugee families needing post trauma and resettlement support.
- Improve the conditions for individuals and families who are being accommodated in temporary accommodation, particularly hotels, by linking with Family Hubs and Health Services to provide compassionate wrap-around support to help people meet their basic needs.
- Improve the identification, assessment, recording and sharing of housing vulnerability, including little understood groups such as individuals who are 'sofa surfing' and leading complex lifestyles.
- Improve the understanding of the overlap between mental health and housing.
- Improve signposting and access to local services that can impact root causes of homelessness.
- Complete the review of supported housing to include assessment of the needs and options for supported housing for vulnerable single people and work with housing providers to identify and implement financially sustainable options to provide good quality accommodation and support.
- Include a review of current short term commissioned rough sleeper services within the review of supported housing to consider how specialist provisions may-be effectively delivered longer term.
- Improve the consistency of health care access for people who are homeless.
- Support the delivery of access to domestic abuse advocacy within the housing service.
- Work with our public health colleagues to review the effectiveness and value for money of the Rough Sleeper Drug and Alcohol Treatment Grant and contribute to future plans and funding bids.
- Build strong partnership working protocols to include training programmes with mental health services to improve two-way referrals based on a shared objective to identify homelessness risk, prevent homelessness and ensure anyone affected by homelessness receives the support needed to recover and resettle.

In relation to Providing Support we will (continued);

- Re-commission services where needed to ensure effective use of resources and achieve the best outcomes for everyone affected by or at risk of homelessness and rough sleeping.
- Review the delivery of Rough Sleeper Initiatives to ensure rapid and effective outreach support to keep rough sleeping brief and non-recurrent and ensure that the needs and options for rough sleepers that are not eligible are met.
- Reduce the time families spend in temporary accommodation by reviewing and improving our focus, targets and best practice for move-on work and ensure this aligns with effective support plans with identified support needs and relevant referrals.
- Link the recommendations made in the 'Homelessness and Health Report 2018' to the Strategy vision and development of improved protocols.



7. Delivery

- 7.1 Section 8 of this Strategy sets out the initial Action Plan through which we will deliver the Vision. The Action Plan will be driven by the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Action Board and its focus groups and will be reviewed and updated annually, although operational changes currently being implemented in the housing service may necessitate a review prior to the first anniversary of its adoption.
- 7.2 We will build on positive partnership work and establish the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Action group at which the Action Plan is a regular and standard agenda item. This will ensure that we listen to and consult with stakeholders both internally and outside of the Council on the progress against developing Action Plan targets.
- 7.3 It is designed to be flexible to enable us to respond to the on-going changes in the homelessness and rough sleeping environment.
- 7.4 The Housing Service will lead on the delivery of all actions, but where specialist provisions, outside of their remit, are needed in order to deliver the Strategy's Vision the Action Plan reflects the need for partnership working.
- 7.5 To deliver the Vision of this Strategy, we will continuously take into account the resources available to the Council and other partners, progress with the Action Plan and any new legislation and / or regulations, which impact homelessness; as well as market forces which affect the supply of accommodation, and local circumstances affecting need.
- 7.6 We will ensure there is a good understanding of the Strategy and our commitments amongst the Council's staff particularly those who work in housing and other services upon which delivery of those commitments depends, as well as amongst partners so that the Vision and the relevant actions needed to achieve change are embedded in daily work within services.



8. The Action Plan

- 8.1 This initial Action Plan has been developed to deliver the vision of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 – 2029. It will be monitored, reviewed and developed annually.
- 8.2 Operational changes in the delivery of the Housing Service currently being implemented mean that the Action Plan may be reviewed earlier than on its first anniversary to take account of them.
- 8.3 It is envisaged that individual SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound) targets to enable monitoring of progress against its objectives will be developed as part of the work of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Action Board. In advance of this, the Action Plan articulates what overall success will look like when the identified actions are achieved.
- 8.4 Increased prevention of homelessness, rapid homelessness relief where it cannot be prevented, a reduction in the use of temporary accommodation and reduced flow and numbers of rough sleepers will be successful outcomes from delivering the Action Plan across all of its Themes. The ‘What Success Looks Like’ measures detailed in the Action Plan below are those that are specific to each action.

Generic Actions				
Action	Timescale for Completion	What Success Looks Like	Resources & Partners	Responsible Lead
Increase the number cases prevented.	Ongoing	In line with contextual performance indicators set by the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Action Board, percentage of cases of homelessness prevented increased.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing staff resource. Commissioned systems partners. Internal Partners. 	Head of Housing, Homelessness and Customer Services
Maximise opportunities to prevent homelessness through monitor and review of turnaround time for assessment interviews and decisions.	Ongoing	In line with contextual performance indicators set by the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Action Board, percentage of cases of homelessness prevented increased.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing staff resource. Commissioned systems partners. Internal Partners. 	Head of Housing, Homelessness and Customer Services
Reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation through homeless prevention and resettlement.	Ongoing	In line with contextual performance indicators set by the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Action Board, number of households in temporary accommodation reduced.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing staff resource. Commissioned systems partners. Internal Partners. 	Head of Housing, Homelessness and Customer Services

Generic Actions				
Action	Timescale for Completion	What Success Looks Like	Resources & Partners	Responsible Lead
Reduce the number of people sleeping rough, aiming for zero rough sleepers.	Ongoing	In line with contextual performance indicators set by the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Action Board, number of people sleeping rough reduced. This includes monitoring both the numbers found rough sleeping per night and the inflow numbers of different individuals over time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing staff resource. Commissioned systems partners. Internal Partners. 	Head of Housing, Homelessness and Customer Services
Review and improve the consistency, quality & accuracy of data capture across the Housing Service.	October 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data collection process map published. Data recording guidance for staff published. Accurate statistics across all data capture and reporting platforms available. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing staff resource. Commissioned IT systems partners. Internal Partners. 	Manager for Housing
Improve data collection relating to homelessness risk, decisions and outcomes for protected groups including as part of the data committing to robust review of customer feedback to inform continued best practice, improvements and delivery.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data recording guidance for staff published. Confidence in accurate data for on-going service performance monitoring and delivery achieved. Informed recommendations for service improvements made. Fair and transparent homelessness service delivered. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing staff resource. Commissioned systems partners. Internal Partners. 	Manager for Housing
Design and implement a Bedford Borough Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Action Board to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drive this Strategy forward, Increase the commitment, at a strategic level, of a variety of public bodies in supporting homelessness prevention including regular liaison with neighbouring authorities Reducing the use of temporary accommodation, Improved quality of support for homeless individuals and families and Reduce the flow and numbers of rough sleepers and review the current service model to continually improve the offer. 	Operational by September 2024 and Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Named members on the board including representation from people with lived experience. Published terms of reference agreed. Action plan agreed and circulated. Specialist ‘taskforce’ groups identified and established. Creation of a forum for those with lived experience to explore opportunities to co-produce project plans. Customer satisfaction improved. Reduction in number of people sleeping rough. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing staff. Adult Social Care. Children’s Services. Registered providers of social housing. Police & Crime Commissioner and representatives from other emergency services as appropriate. Public Health. Supported Housing Providers. Department of Work and Pensions. Private Sector Landlords. Voluntary, Charity and Community Sector. Others the Board determines are useful to co-opt. 	Head of Housing, Homelessness and Customer Services

Generic Actions				
Action	Timescale for Completion	What Success Looks Like	Resources & Partners	Responsible Lead
Develop and Publish a Stand-alone Domestic Abuse and Housing Policy to support Council wide commitment to addressing and reducing domestic abuse.	Policy Published by September 2024 and DAHA Accreditation achieved by September 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Published stand-alone policy. Continuous progress towards DAHA accreditation. DAHA accreditation awarded. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing staff Internal Partners 	Head of Housing, Homelessness and Customer Services

Theme 1: Preventing Homelessness				
Action	Timescale for Completion	What Success Looks Like	Resources & Partners	Responsible Lead
Review and improve the consistency, quality & accuracy of data capture relating to identifying early homelessness intervention and prevention.	October 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommendations for service improvements agreed and implemented. Confidence in accurate data for on-going service performance monitoring and delivery achieved. Staff performance monitoring, training implemented, and development needs identified and addressed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing staff resource. Commissioned systems partners. Internal Partners. 	Manager for Housing
Identify early intervention opportunities, outside of the statutory 'prevention' duty, through improved staff training, initial assessment scripts and data capture.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People presenting to the council threatened with homelessness reduced. Numbers of 'prevention' duty ending with successful outcome increased. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing staff resource. Internal Partners. 	Manager for Housing
Design and implement a 'Homelessness Prevention Taskforce' focusing on development of a prevention toolkit, which reaches all causes of homelessness.	Establish taskforce by June 2024 Published toolkit by April 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevention toolkit guidance for staff developed and published. Local homelessness prevention training programme developed and delivered. Numbers of 'prevention' duty ending with successful outcome increased. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing staff resource. Internal partners. Members and delegates of the Homelessness & Rough Sleeper Action Board. 	Head of Housing, Homelessness and Customer Services

Theme 2: Supply of Accommodation				
Action	Timescale for Completion	What Success Looks Like	Resources & Partners	Responsible Lead
Design and implement a 'Social Housing Taskforce' focusing on reviewing demand and supply of affordable housing.	Establish taskforce by June 2024 and Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurate understanding of housing demand. • Internally agreed action plan for delivering the right housing to meet the objectives of the Strategy. • A platform for consulting with social housing providers on housing allocation scheme review established. • Pursuing opportunities to release empty council land for the purpose of increasing supply of affordable accommodation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing staff resource. • Internal partners. • Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Action Board. • Operational managers from all local social housing providers. 	Head of Housing, Homelessness and Customer Services
Review the Housing Allocation Scheme ensuring it aligns to the objectives of homelessness prevention, relief, suitability and long-term tenancy sustainment.	April 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of the Scheme completed and informed by accurate data and homelessness board & taskforce recommendations. • New Housing Allocation Scheme published. • Guidance and Training for staff on the new scheme implemented. • Early intervention and statutory homelessness prevention increased. • Homelessness relief increased. • Improved pathways into social housing solutions for rough sleepers identified and implemented. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing staff resource. 	Manager for Housing
Design and implement a 'Private Rented Sector Taskforce' focusing on development of initiatives to increase access to affordable private rented sector opportunities.	Establish taskforce by June 2024 and Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreed and published Terms of Reference for the group. • Publicity produced and published to reach out to the private sector. • Commitment confirmed from private sector representatives. • Redesigned and fit for purpose Rent Deposit Scheme implemented. • Number of empty homes bought back into use increased. • Positive feedback from private sector landlords received. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing staff resource. • Internal partners. • Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Action Board members and delegates. • Local PRS landlords and letting agents, property developers and empty property owners. • Department of Work and Pensions. 	Manager for Housing

Theme 2: Supply of Accommodation				
Action	Timescale for Completion	What Success Looks Like	Resources & Partners	Responsible Lead
Procure more Council owned temporary accommodation to reduce costs and improve quality subject to value for money assessment.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cost of delivering temporary accommodation reduced. Use of B&B and Nightly Let arrangements reduced. Supply of local accommodation to enable homeless households to remain local increased. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing staff resource. Internal partners. 	Head of Housing, Homelessness and Customer Services
Complete a review of commissioned supported housing schemes bringing forward recommendations for future commissioning to align services to meeting the Vision of the Strategy.	Review complete by April 2025 Delivery of new or renewed Services by April 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report on current supported housing outcomes and value for money produced and recommendations implemented. New or improved housing schemes brought forward. Procurement process and mobilisation of schemes undertaken. Number of people being evicted from supported housing reduced. Pathway solutions for rough sleepers improved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing staff resource. Internal partners inc. procurement. Current commissioned providers of supported housing. 	Manager for Housing

Theme 3: Providing Support				
Action	Timescale for Completion	What Success Looks Like	Resources & Partners	Responsible Lead
Review and improve the consistency, quality and accuracy of data capture relating to people's support needs to inform and focus partnership-working protocols.	October 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommendations for service improvements made and considered. Accurate data for service performance monitoring and delivery produced. Accurate data feeding into housing supply and supported housing taskforce action plans produced. Quality of personal housing plans improved. Suitability considered in all property offers. Tenancy sustainment and reduction in repeat homelessness improved. Accurate data and service gap analysis used to inform future grant funding bids. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing staff resource. Commissioned systems partners. Internal partners. 	Manager for Housing

Theme 3: Providing Support				
Action	Timescale for Completion	What Success Looks Like	Resources & Partners	Responsible Lead
Design and implement a 'Supported Housing Taskforce' focussing on developing best practice and protocols for making best use of all available bed spaces, tenancy sustainment and move-on options.	Establish taskforce by June 2024 Published protocols by October 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supported housing pathway agreed. Best practice protocols published. Local supported housing awareness programme implemented. Number of evictions reduced. Number of prevention and relief outcomes increased. A platform for consulting with supported housing providers on new commissioning proposals developed and implemented. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing staff. Internal partners. Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Action Board. Managers of local supported housing schemes. 	Manager for Housing
Review of floating support services, needs, gaps and recommendations.	Review completed by September 2024 Delivery of new or renewed Commissioned Services by April 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report on the current floating support outcomes and value for money produced. Recommendations for service improvements from the report implemented. New or improved schemes designed and brought forward. Procurement process completed and schemes mobilised. Sustainment of temporary accommodation licence agreements improved. Homelessness early intervention and prevention of repeat homelessness improved. Resettlement programme and tenancy sustainment improved. Repeat homelessness reduced. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing staff resource. Internal partners including procurement teams. Current commissioned providers of floating housing support services. 	Manager for Housing

Theme 3: Providing Support				
Action	Timescale for Completion	What Success Looks Like	Resources & Partners	Responsible Lead
Review support services in order to make decisions on any changes to the services for people who are rough sleeping.	Report recommendations and proposals to maintain RSI services to meet current demands by September 2024 Mobilise the new services and ways of working by April 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report on the ending of RSI 2022 – 2025 to include numbers supported, outcomes, flow of new and repeat rough sleeping published. Seamless transition from RSI grant funded specialist services to new ways of delivering rough sleeper initiatives delivered. Guidance and training to internal staff and agencies on rough sleeper interview skills and pathway options developed and delivered. Relief options for rough sleepers identified. Clear recovery and rehousing pathways for rough sleepers delivered. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing staff resource. Internal partners including adult safeguarding and public health. Rough Sleeper specialist external partners. 	Manager for Housing
Ensure delivery of the aims and objectives set out in the Domestic Abuse Strategy relating to housing needs and support for victims.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear links to Domestic Abuse Strategy in all action plans and recommendations from homelessness board and taskforce groups identified. Two-way guidance and training for all housing service staff and domestic abuse support agencies delivered. Customer journey for victims experiencing homelessness improved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing staff resource. Internal partners. Domestic Abuse specialist external partners. 	Manager for Housing

Finding out more

If you would like further copies, a large-print copy or information about us and our services, please telephone or write to us at our address below.

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