



SOUTHAMPTON CITY COUNCIL
HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY
2024-2029

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Foreword

Southampton City Council believes everyone deserves a good quality of life, to be healthy and safe and have somewhere they can call home. Taking a multi-agency approach working alongside community partners, stakeholders and the wider public has helped us to develop our new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

We recognise that homelessness is broader than people rough sleeping and includes those living in insecure accommodation. We also understand homelessness is a complex problem that is difficult to describe and doesn't have a simple solution. Tackling this challenge requires fresh thinking and will need us to apply new approaches to old issues, as we work towards our aim of minimising repeat and long-term homelessness, supporting individuals and families to find sustainable long-term solutions, which focuses on their needs and aspirations.

The strategy is designed to tackle this challenging issue alongside the community and partners who will support us to deliver for those who use our services.

Critical to how we resolve this issue includes working with individuals who have lived experience or who have been disproportionately affected by homelessness to help shape our services so that they best meet the needs of those who access them.

We welcome your support.



Councillor Fielker - Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Housing



Claire Edgar - Executive Director for Wellbeing, Adults & Housing

Summary

“Not having a home as a stable and secure base can make it harder for people to find a job, stay healthy and maintain relationships. People often experience feelings of isolation, increasing their chances of taking drugs or experiencing mental health problems.” (Homeless Link, 2022)

We believe that everybody has the right to a safe, suitable, and stable home. Home gives stability, a sense of belonging, and keeps people safe, together, and protected from the outside elements. It is where we make memories with friends and families, and it helps us to build a strong foundation for our lives.

Yet sadly, figures from Shelter indicate that at least 271,000 people were recorded as homeless in England in January 2023 (123,000 being children). In Southampton, the rate of homelessness is significantly higher than the national average.¹

Homelessness and rough sleeping are not new problems. However, there has been a new national focus on rough sleeping since the Covid-19 pandemic with the Government’s new ‘Everyone In’ policy. This ensured that all people sleeping rough were housed in temporary accommodation to keep them safe during the pandemic. Nationally, this scheme supported 37,000 people. This policy enabled councils to build relationships with people who were homeless. This includes people who had not previously been known to local housing services. During the pandemic, the Government temporarily banned evictions. This meant that many people were able to remain in their homes, who may have otherwise become homeless.

These policies have since ended, but we want to build on this momentum to tackle homelessness and end rough sleeping. We have a lot of work to do, and we face the same funding and budget challenges as many local authorities.

We have analysed key information and data to understand the current needs in Southampton around homelessness. This strategy is our plan to address these needs and tackle homelessness and rough sleeping in Southampton over the next 5 years. The strategy will be accompanied by an action plan explaining in detail how we will achieve our aims.

¹ In Southampton (2021/2022) the rate was 10.4 per 1k households and the national average is 6.1 per 1k households.

Vision, goals, and values

Our vision:

- A city where everyone has a safe place to call home.

Our goals:

- Work proactively to ensure people receive the right support at the right time to help them find or remain in a stable home.
- Break the cycle of intergenerational homelessness. We want to support children and young people to build strong foundations for life.
- Listen to those we are trying to help and those with lived experience to understand their needs. Everybody's journey is different. We want to address the underlying factors that led them to become, or be at risk of becoming, homeless and to work with each person to reach the best housing solutions we can.
- End rough sleeping in Southampton.
- Deliver the right housing solutions.
- Improve resident experience and making every contact count.

Our values:

1. Trauma Informed. A trauma-informed, person-centred, and compassionate approach, showing empathy for the housing situation that people find themselves in.

2. Unconditional Positive Regard. Unconditional positive regard involves showing complete support and acceptance of a person no matter what that person says.

3. What works. Use a data-driven and evidence-informed approach and develop Best Practices across the council to improve interventions and outcomes.

4. Working Together. Collaborate with partners across the city to end homelessness.

5. Lived Experience. Listen to and learn from the voices of people with lived experience.

Defining Homelessness

We define “homelessness” and “threatened homelessness” using the definition in [Section 175 of the 1996 Housing Act](#).

Someone is homeless if:

- they have no accommodation they are legally entitled to occupy, either in the UK or overseas;
- they have accommodation but cannot secure entry to it;
- they have accommodation designed or adapted to be lived in that consists of a ‘moveable structure’ (such as a caravan, mobile home, or canal boat) but they have nowhere to put it;
- they have accommodation but it is not reasonable or suitable to continue living there.

Somebody is threatened with homelessness if:

- they are likely to become homeless within 28 days;
- they have been given a valid legal notice to leave the accommodation such as a notice to quit, Section 21 notice) verbal or written notice for excluded licences, and that notice will expire within 56 days.

Local authorities have legal responsibilities to support people who are threatened with homelessness or who are homeless. The legislation which set out the duties local authorities must follow is explained in more detail in Appendix 1.

To achieve our vision and tackle homelessness, we must first understand the context within which we are working.

Understanding homelessness nationally

Local authorities are working in an increasingly challenging environment. Since the previous Homelessness Prevention Strategy (2018-2023), we have faced the Covid-19 pandemic, the rising cost-of-living, and international events forcing people to flee to the UK for shelter. As a result, there is a rising demand on homelessness and housing services, with increasingly limited options to provide support and relief.

The [Government's Statutory Homeless Annual Report](#) outlines that in England alone, 278,110 households were assessed as either being at risk of homelessness or already homeless in April 2021 to March 2022.

Covid-19, and a new national strategy

In 2020, during the Covid-19 pandemic, the Government implemented the 'Everyone In' policy. This policy equipped local authorities with the mandate and resource to provide temporary accommodation for all rough sleepers to keep them safe during the pandemic. Around 37,000 rough sleepers in England were housed in temporary accommodation. The policy enabled housing teams to help even the hardest-to-reach and street-attached rough sleepers.

However, [Shelter's 2021 'Everyone In: Where Are They Now?'](#) report estimated that more than 77% of those 37,000 rough sleepers that the policy helped, had not moved into settled accommodation. This policy was a short-term solution which successfully provided rough sleepers with temporary accommodation. Yet, it did not tackle the issue of limited affordable accommodation for people to move into. It also did not ensure that there was adequate support to help people maintain long-term tenancies.

Housing affordability and availability

There is a growing lack of affordable housing in the UK. Recent global factors, such as cost-of-living crisis, rising energy bills and inflation rising at unprecedented level, has made it much more challenging for residents to pay essential housing bills. As well as this, welfare support, such as Universal Credit and the Local Housing Allowance, have not increased in line with rising costs. Figures from [Shelter](#) indicate that the average home in 2000 cost 4 x the average salary. By 2021, this had risen to 8 x the average salary. The rise in interest rates between August 2022 and March 2023 has further impacted on the affordability of mortgages for homeowners and prospective buyers. Landlords are also impacted by the challenge in paying mortgages and as a result many increase their rental rates.

There is also a shortage of available accommodation. There has been a [decline of national housebuilding](#), halving in 50 years. This includes a drop in new social homes being built. Social houses are also being purchased under the Right to Buy schemes so, many are no longer available for renting. The pool of available rented accommodation is also reducing as many landlords are selling up and exiting the sector entirely. So, whilst residents are increasingly struggling to afford housing costs, there is a growing lack of available accommodation. Therefore, people are struggling to find affordable housing to buy or to rent, and there is an increasingly long waiting list in social housing. People face a lack of viable options if they do become homeless or are threatened with homelessness.

Local councils are having to use temporary accommodation in higher numbers and for longer periods to house people who are homeless. In England, the number of people living in temporary accommodation has risen by an alarming 74% in the last 10 years, according to [Shelter England](#). Figures in [Crisis' 2022 Homelessness Monitor Report](#) indicate that in England, over half of homelessness expenditure now goes on temporary accommodation, depleting spending from other vital interventions. This is largely due to a reduction in options of affordable accommodation for people to move into.

Refugees and EU Nationals

Local authorities have also faced additional demands on their housing during 2021 and 2022 with international developments resulting in UK policy changes. Local authorities have a duty to provide accommodation for people who have been evacuated from danger, under various schemes. This includes the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) and Afghanistan Citizens Resettlement Scheme, Ukrainian placement schemes, and the Hong Kong UK Welcome Programme. For example, Ukrainian nationals were hosted by UK families, but many placements have now ended. Therefore, local authorities have a responsibility to help them secure housing and avoid homelessness.

The impact of Brexit also means that there is a new sub-group of European nationals who no longer have the right to work in the UK. If they are homeless or sleeping rough, they no longer qualify for public funding and their housing options through local authorities are highly limited. This inevitably impacts local health services and frontline workers who face worsening health conditions for those people due to their unresolved housing situation.

Our strategy aims to provide support in this challenging environment. To meet the specific needs of our residents, it is important to understand the homelessness needs of our city.

Understanding homelessness locally

We have collated and analysed recent data around homelessness and housing in Southampton, including trends over the lifetime of the previous strategy, to understand the current need in our city. The full data analysis is available in our [2023 Southampton Homelessness Strategic Assessment](#).

This section provides a snapshot of the local needs in Southampton around homelessness.

Rate of homelessness

- In Southampton, the rate of households threatened with homelessness (5.3 per 1000 households) is similar to the national average (5.6 per 1000 households).
- The rate of homelessness (10.4 per 1000 households in 2021/22) is significantly higher than the national average (6.1 per 1000 households).

Number of rough sleepers

- The number of people rough sleeping on a single night in Southampton was three times higher in 2022 (27 people) compared to 2021 (9 people). The average number rough sleeping on a single night in Southampton between 2010 and 2022 was 20.
- In December 2022, the number of people sleeping rough over the course of a month in Southampton was 78, slightly lower than November (86) and October (95). Of the 78 in December 2022, around a third (26) were new to rough sleeping.

Factors increasing the risk of homelessness in Southampton.

- **Deprivation and Poverty** - a lack of income and resource can increase the likelihood of becoming homeless.
 - Southampton is ranked 55th most deprived of the 317 Local Authorities in England (IMD 2019).
 - Southampton is ranked 3rd worse in the country for crime deprivation.
 - Additionally, around 12% of Southampton's population live in neighbourhoods within the 10% most deprived nationally. This rises to 18% for the under 18 population, suggesting that deprivation disproportionately impacts upon young people in the city.
- **Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic** – more people are claiming benefits and on lower pay.

- The number of adults in Southampton claiming out of work benefits more than doubled between March 2020 (6,550 claimants) and March 2021 (12,145). Whilst this claimant has been on a downward trend, it is yet to return to pre-pandemic levels.
- **Earnings in Southampton** – pay has declined so residents have tighter budgets and less income to spend on rent or mortgage rates.
 - Pay has declined in ‘real’ terms because of inflation.
 - Adjusted for inflation, weekly resident (-£21, -3.0%) and workplace (-£24, -3.1%) earnings for full time workers both declined between 2021 and 2022.
- **Affordability of housing** – there is a lack of affordable housing options for people.
 - This is measured by the Office of National Statistics through a ratio between yearly median house prices and median workplace earnings. Full-time employees in Southampton who wish to buy a home would have to spend around 7.4 times their annual earnings to buy a home (2022).
- **Social housing** – demand for social housing in the city far exceeds supply.
 - According to Census 2021 data, 21.9% (22,397) of households in Southampton live in socially rented accommodation. Demand for social housing in the city far exceeds supply, with 7,379 households on the social housing waiting list in Southampton at the end of March 2022.
- **A shortage of housing and limited land to build on** – lack of space to build affordable housing.
 - This requires innovative solutions to be explored. For example, repurposing vacant commercial buildings or redeveloping existing buildings to ‘build up’ where we do not have the space to ‘build out.’
- **Domestic Abuse** – domestic abuse can result in people fleeing their homes and becoming homeless. This is a leading cause of homelessness and largely for women.
 - 32.6% of all violent crimes in Southampton were flagged as domestic in 2021/22. 68.8% of domestic flagged crime victims in 2021/22 were female.
- **Substance Use** – substance use, with a lack of mental health support, can make it challenging to maintain a tenancy.
 - In addition, an estimated 5,355 people who live in Southampton are estimated to be alcohol dependent, and 1,200 local people use illicit opiates (heroin) or crack cocaine.
- **Complex cases** – this refers to people who have more needs than just housing support, such as mental health and substance use needs. These cases require more time-intensive, person-centred, and multi-agency solutions.
 - 76.6% of households threatened by homelessness or presented as homeless with homelessness duties accepted had additional needs.

Most frequent reasons for households being threatened with homelessness in Southampton (2021-2022), were:

- Family and friends unable/willing to accommodate people (37.8% compared to 25.5% nationally).
- End of the assured shorthold private rented tenancy (27.7%, compared to 33.1% nationally).
- Being evicted from supported housing (8.1% compared to 3.2% nationally).
- Social rented tenancy ending (7.4% compared to 5.7% nationally -not statistically significant).
- Domestic abuse (3.9% compared to 7.8% nationally).

Challenges with data collection

The data outlined above, and in more detail in the [2023 Southampton Homelessness Strategic Assessment](#), aims to present a clear picture of the complex issues in Southampton. However, it is difficult to present an accurate picture of homelessness due to limitations in recording and collecting data. Local authorities have a duty to collect data on households who approach them for assistance. Yet, there are “hidden” forms of homelessness. For example, people who sofa surf or live in severely overcrowded conditions do not always present themselves to local authorities so, are less likely to be recorded in official statistics.

Moreover, there can be anomalies within the data collected. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the “Everyone In” policy resulted in all rough sleepers being housed in temporary accommodation. Therefore, data reflected that there were virtually no rough sleepers during this period.

Data informed strategy.

Despite these challenges, using this data, we have developed an understand of what the key needs around homelessness are in Southampton. We have used this information to develop this strategy. We aim to use our resources effectively to tackle current issues and help achieve our overall aim to ensure everyone has a safe and secure home to live.

The strategy has been informed by a range of sources as well as the [2023 Southampton Homelessness Strategic Assessment](#). For example (non-exhaustive list):

- [Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities – Ending Rough Sleeping for Good \(2022\)](#).

- [Southampton Strategic Assessment – Homelessness Prevention Review \(2023\).](#)
- [Southampton Data Observatory.](#)
- [Southampton’s Strategy for the Provision of Support in Safe Accommodation \(2021-2024\).](#)
- [Crisis – The Plan to end homelessness.](#)
- [Office for National Statistics – “Hidden homelessness in the UK: evidence review” \(2023\).](#)
- Engagement with homelessness and housing, adult social care, children’s service, public health, homelessness service providers and other relevant teams.

Solutions

Homelessness and rough sleeping go beyond housing. They affect mental wellness, physical health, independence, self-esteem, and life choices. Without homes and the sense of community they can provide, it is easy to feel isolated and alone.

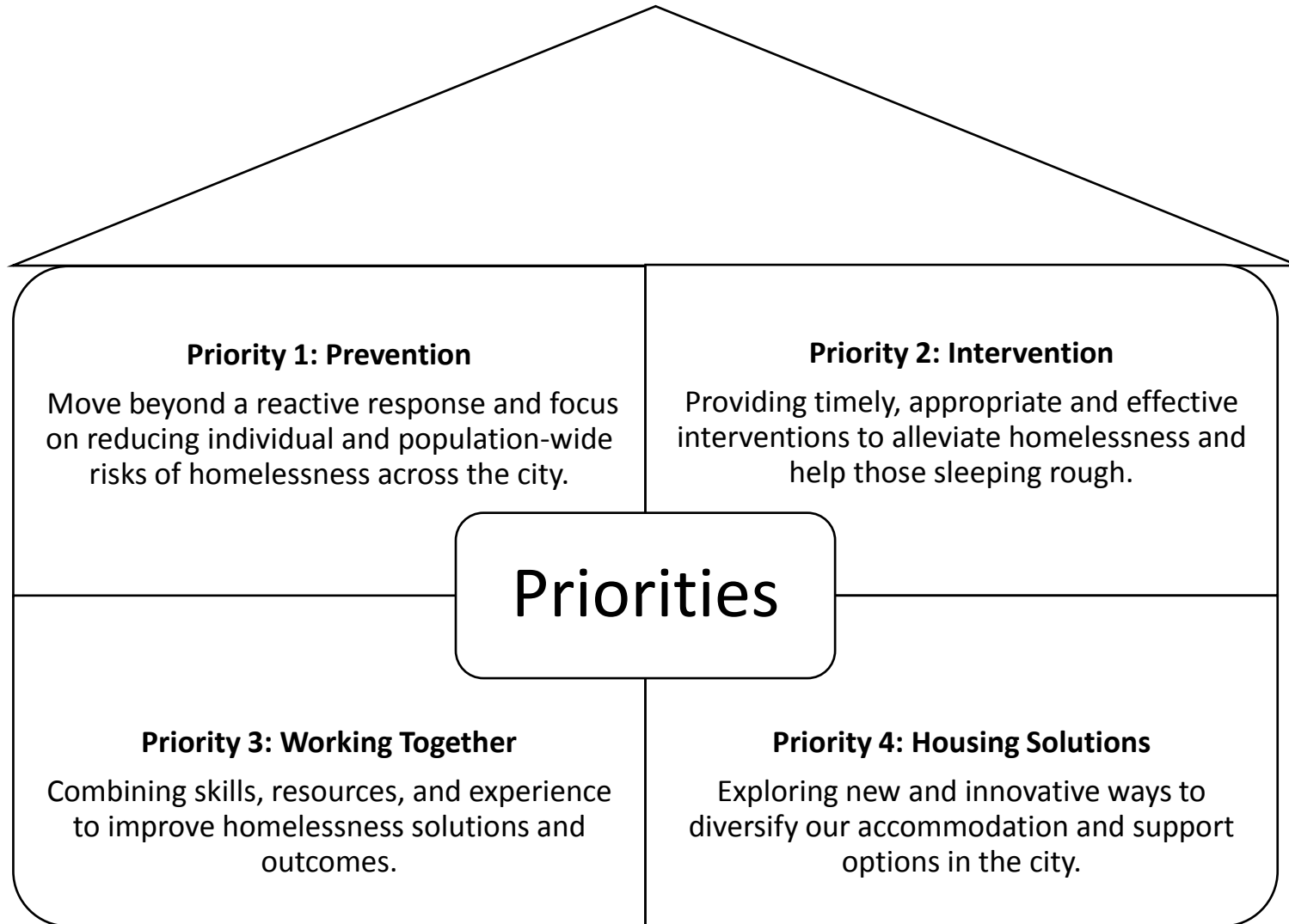
We realise how hard it is to ask for help, and how easy it can be to feel defined by the label of homeless or rough sleeping. This strategy is not about simply ticking boxes, assigning labels or making assumptions about why somebody needs our help. At its heart, it is about breaking stigmas to understand and support people out of homelessness. We will work hard to see the stories behind the situation people find themselves in.

Prevention and early intervention are an important part of this strategy. There are very real and co-occurring reasons why people are at risk of homelessness or end up homeless. The solution needs to be a cross-cutting, council-wide, collaborative approach. Some people also need more support than others to build skills and confidence to maintain a tenancy, so we want to make sure our housing pathways are simple, clear and effective. Whether you are a care leaver, somebody leaving an institution such as prison, a single person sleeping rough, or a family you should be able to find out, and have a voice in, your journey to a place you can call home.

Our strategy has been designed to align closely with the Government's current national rough sleeping strategy ['End Rough Sleeping For Good'](#). Published in September 2022, it outlines a 'four-pronged approach' to rough sleeping, revolving around Prevention, Intervention, Recovery, and A Joined-Up Transparent Approach.

Our 'Core Four' priorities

Our vision is for there to be a city where everyone has a safe place to call home. To achieve this, we have four priority areas, known as our 'Core Four':



Under each of the Core Four priorities, we have outlined a set of outcomes we want to achieve with a set of actions to achieve each one. These centre around some key overarching focuses and goals for the next five years, including to:

- ✓ Make better use of our resources to tackle homelessness across the city.
- ✓ Ensure people receive the right support at the right time to prevent and tackle homelessness.
- ✓ Offer a range of accommodation solutions both private and social rented sector, to deliver the right housing solutions for everyone.
- ✓ Work proactively to prevent intergenerational homelessness and to support people to maintain tenancies.
- ✓ Engage compassionately with rough sleepers to help them step into safe and suitable housing.
- ✓ Ensure support is in place for young people, care leavers, and those with additional needs and vulnerabilities to enable them to secure and maintain a tenancy.
- ✓ Reduce spend on, and time spent in, temporary accommodation and become more financially efficient.
- ✓ Create a new Homelessness Prevention Board, bringing key partners in the city together to tackle homelessness, to monitor and deliver this strategy over the next five years.

We have ensured that this strategy aligns closely with the council's following strategies, assessments, and policies (non-exhaustive list):

- [Southampton Homelessness Strategic Assessment 2023.](#)
- [Southampton City Council's Corporate Plan 2022-2030.](#)
- [Housing Strategy 2016-2025.](#)
- [Local Plan.](#)
- [Tenancy Strategy 2020-2025.](#)
- [Housing Asset Management Strategy 2022-2026.](#)
- Related housing policies, including the [Allocations Policy.](#)
- [Domestic Abuse Part IV Safe Accommodation Strategy 2021-2024.](#)
- [Domestic Abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy.](#)
- [Safe City Strategy 2022-2027.](#)
- [Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2016-2025.](#)
- [Tobacco, Alcohol and Drugs Strategy 2023-2028.](#)
- [Children and Young People's Strategy 2022-2027.](#)
- Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy (in development).

Priority 1 – PREVENTION

Move beyond a reactive response and focus on reducing individual and population-wide risks of homelessness across the city.

Losing a tenancy and or being unable to find suitable and safe accommodation can be a very frustrating and traumatic experience. So, it is important that we focus on preventing people who are at risk of homelessness from losing their homes. We also want to move beyond a reactive response. We will focus on reducing population-wide risks of homelessness by developing stable, supportive, and inclusive environments.

To try to prevent homelessness from occurring altogether, we will implement the following actions to achieve the outcomes:

| Outcome | What do we want to achieve? | How will we achieve this? |
|---|---|--|
| 1. A more integrated system to tackle homelessness. | Seamless service delivery that adopts a proactive strength-based approach to homelessness prevention. | Explore and develop integration of service delivery/location. |
| 2. Innovative solutions to identify and assist households at risk of homelessness at the earliest point possible. | A 'No wrong door' approach to those approaching the council where a housing support need is identified. | Review where people are approaching the council for help and support, and ensure the right training and resources are located there. |
| | Improved referrals systems and practices, which enable us to intervene before people are at crisis. | Improve how we record data internally to provide a more accurate picture of the needs in the city. |

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| | | <p>Ensure data sharing agreements to between agencies/services.</p> |
| <p>3. Clear and transparent pathways to housing for vulnerable groups.</p> | <p>A support system for vulnerable people including, young people, care leavers, institutional leavers, and those with additional needs which enables them to secure and maintain a tenancy.</p> | <p>Improve our website/self-service, and better signposting from and through other agencies, along with updated training on services and options (a 'Professionals' Hub').</p> <p>Undertake early preventative planning work for those potentially at higher risk of homelessness.</p> <p>Ensure the placements for vulnerable adults and young people are appropriate, such as endeavouring not to place those under 21 in adult accommodation.</p> <p>Review or create Service Level Agreements to harness housing solutions/ pathways for vulnerable people.</p> |

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| <p>4. Modern and developed approach to corporate parenting. Local authorities have a responsibility to the children they look after and their care leavers. In this context, they are referred to as the 'corporate parent' of these children and young people.</p> | <p>A care leaver corporate offer that is clear, accessible, and fit for purpose.</p> | <p>Revise how we educate and support care leavers on a pathway to independence and create a new 'Care Leavers Corporate Service Offer' outlining clear housing pathways.</p> |
| | | <p>Ensure that there are clear pathways for care leavers to access housing and all options are explored to prevent evictions.</p> |
| | <p>Improved joint working protocols, ensuring we provide choice and control to care leavers within the constraints of our resources.</p> | <p>Train Personal Advisors for Care Leavers on correct housing procedures/advice so they can offer additional support.</p> |
| <p>5. An end to cycles of homelessness through proactive education and supporting people to maintain tenancies.</p> | <p>Prevention (and educate against) intergenerational homelessness.</p> | <p>Provide/support in psychoeducation for households where parent/parents are homeless.</p> |
| | <p>Available specialised education and support for maintaining a tenancy. In particular, support for people who have lost a tenancy.</p> | <p>Expand educational programmes such as No Limits tenancy skills for young people.</p> |

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| | | <p>Explore the option of a tenancy academy/tenancy-ready course to upskill people who have not had a tenancy before or who have previously lost one. Include topics such as budgeting, paying bills, getting set up with suppliers when you move in, etc. This could include a certification on completion that can be used to evidence new skills and make renters more attractive to landlords.</p> |
| | <p>Improved education, employment opportunities and life-skills to help sustain life off the streets for good.</p> | <p>Work with internal council services and partners to improve life-skills, employment skills and opportunities.</p> |

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| <p>6. Effective use of adaptability tools, including the Disabled Facilities Grant enabling people with particular physical needs to stay in their own homes for longer if this is an option.</p> | <p>Keep people living in their own homes if it is feasible to do so.</p> | <p>Ensure that Disability Adaptations Grants are processed quickly and used as fully as possible for necessary adaptations to private and council properties.</p> |
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Priority 2 – INTERVENTION

Providing timely, appropriate, and effective interventions to alleviate homelessness and help those sleeping rough.

The longer someone is homeless, the greater the risk of worsening physical and mental health problems. It is crucial that we intervene as early as possible to provide support and work quickly to help people find a suitable home. It is also important that when we intervene, the support we provide ensures long-term solutions and reduces the risk of repeat homelessness.

To ensure we intervene early and with the right support, we will implement the actions below to achieve the following outcomes:

| Outcome | What do we want to achieve? | How will we achieve this? |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Timely and effective interventions to those threatened with homelessness, using temporary accommodation where necessary but avoiding it where there are other opportunities to relieve homelessness. | Positive interventions which prevent homelessness. | Provide incentives to Landlords to try to prevent evictions and keep people in tenancies. |
| | A reduction in the number of approaches at the relief stage and reduce the number of main duties owed (definitions can be found in Appendix 1). | Strengthen our prevention and early intervention work to try to avoid cases reaching the relief stage. This includes support where needed on managing budgets, financial advice, and benefits guidance. |
| | An increase in the number of relief duties ending with a positive outcome. | |

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| | <p>A reduction in the number of interim/ temporary accommodation stays (and the average length of these stays).</p> | <p>Revise our current temporary accommodation (TA) offer to meet the current demand while supporting people to move on.</p> |
| <p>A system where our temporary accommodation is offered strategically as a tool to alleviate homelessness and as a steppingstone to long-term sustainable accommodation.</p> | | |

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| 2. High-quality and up-to-date advice, information, and guidance to help resolve instances of homelessness, and ensuring residents have the information they need. | Provide more useful information to enable residents to self-serve. | Continue to provide in-person, telephone, and online advice services/options to those at risk of homelessness. |
| | | Modernise our website so that people know early on what support is available and what their options are. This expansion of self-serve will help reduce inquiry numbers and ensure officers have sufficient time for more cases with people needing multiple support services and high-needs cases. |
| | An offer of high-quality, compassionate, and judgment-free housing advice service, that is easily accessible for those who need them. | Improve education internally and externally so that partners, service providers, and staff such as support workers and personal advisors, know what to advise. |

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| | | Review the front door offer and make sure support services are easily accessible. |
| | | Provide clear information for people who have Restricted Eligibility on the support that is available to them if they become homeless or are threatened by homelessness. |
| | A workforce which has effective and regular training and is able to work with current challenges, manage expectations, and | Explore locality models for housing options services to enable more localised provision within communities. |

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| | provide the best services with the resources available. | Ensure our staffing levels are making the best use of resources, and that vacancies are filled. |
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| <p>3. Supported accommodation that meets changing needs in the city, with the flexibility to respond to local pressures.</p> | <p>Flexibility in our supported accommodation offer and pathways, with clear next steps and move-on opportunities identified.</p> | <p>Review our existing supported accommodation offer.</p> <p>Ensure we have a range of appropriate options in place for those needing supported accommodation, suitable for individual and complex needs.</p> <p>Ensure we have a balance of proactive and reactive homelessness work in the city.</p> |

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| <p>4. Solutions and choices for people to help resolve their homelessness.</p> | <p>Pathways for people to access the private rented sector (PRS).</p> | <p>Understand the barriers to accessing the private rented sector (PRS) and take steps to help those that can and should enter the PRS to do so.</p> |
| | | <p>Continue using and expanding on innovative schemes to help more people access affordable properties, such as landlord incentives, the affordable housing framework, and rent guarantor options.</p> |
| | | <p>Encourage staff to suggest new ideas and think creatively to solve housing challenges.</p> |
| | | <p>Consider a council-run private-sector leasing scheme. This could be used as a tool to prevent and relieve homelessness.</p> |
| <p>5. A workforce which uses sensitive, compassionate and trauma-informed approaches when working with people who have experienced homelessness (including rough sleepers, and survivors/victims of domestic abuse).</p> | <p>The identification, intervention of and compassionate response to people who become homeless across Southampton.</p> | <p>Strengthen training, workforce development, policies, and procedures to make improvements to our service. This includes creating service user-led groups to develop the pathway with lived experience input.</p> |
| | | <p>Train staff in Trauma Informed Practice approach using the Trauma Informed Practice Concordat Delivery Framework.</p> |

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| | | Communicate regularly with service users to keep them update on their stage in the process and their options. This includes people in temporary accommodation. |
| | An offer of safe accommodation and support for people who are homeless, including domestic abuse survivors/victims. | Work closely with the Domestic Abuse coordinator and Whole Housing Approach coordinator to establish safe accommodation and support for survivors/victims of domestic abuse. |
| | | Train relevant housing teams on how to identify and support people who have experienced domestic abuse. |
| | Effective engagement with complex people in our society who fall through the gaps, ensuring their healthcare needs are met, to break cycles of homelessness. | Consider piloting new schemes to find innovative and suitable accommodation options. |
| | A reduction in the numbers of people sleeping rough in the city using our Rough Sleepers Initiative (RSI) funding, in line with government targets. | Continue commissioning and operating rough sleeper healthcare services, such as the Homeless Health Service. |

Priority 3 – WORKING TOGETHER (PARTNERSHIPS/SYSTEMS)

Combining skills, resources, and experience to improve homelessness solutions and outcomes.

The needs of people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, often stretch across different services, including the housing services, mental health services and children’s services. We want to work with our partners to pull together our knowledge, skills, and resources, to improve prevention methods and provide effective support.

Below outlines how will work better together with our partners, across Southampton to improve homelessness solutions:

| Outcome | What do we want to achieve? | How will we achieve this? |
|---|--|---|
| <p>1. Strong partnerships which work together to tackle homelessness.</p> | <p>A partnership that prevents people in crisis from losing their homes. This partnership will also aim to deliver new accommodation and support people experiencing homelessness.</p> | <p>Create a new Homelessness Prevention Board to regularly bring partners together to discuss the newest homelessness trends and find solutions. This Board will also have overall responsibility for overseeing the implementation of this strategy, tracking successes, and holding partners to account for delivery.</p> |
| | | <p>Continue working with existing local forums, such as the Street Support Homelessness Conference, to raise the profile of homelessness and to work together on shared goals and initiatives.</p> |

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| | | <p>Work closely with Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder services to identify people at risk of homelessness and work to reduce the risks. Also, to help people experiencing homelessness and support them to acquire and sustain a home.</p> |
| | | <p>Use the data that we are gathering from referrals from other public bodies to understand the trends and focus in the right places.</p> |
| <p>2. A developed peer support network and effective engagement with service users in the city.</p> | <p>A strong and experience-led peer support network to further enhance support for rough sleepers.</p> | <p>Ensure that there is a representative of people with lived experience contributing to the Board's discussions and activities. Consider having a representative of people with lived experience as a member of the new Homelessness Prevention Board when created.</p> |
| <p>3. A multi-agency panel which considers ways to prevent evictions from social housing and support those who have been evicted.</p> | <p>More joined up working with us to reduce homelessness in the city.</p> | <p>Instigate regular meetings (at least every 6 months) between Registered Providers and housing leads to discuss the most pressing housing issues in the city (and with their tenants), to explore ways to work together to find solutions.</p> <p>Invite Registered Providers to form part of our new Homelessness Prevention Board.</p> |

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| <p>4. Cross council working which helps to reduce the number of service users that lose their accommodation due to complex needs.</p> | <p>Effective joint working and multi-agency responses to reduce evictions and sustain accommodation.</p> | <p>To review whether a multi-disciplinary team is required. This team would review long-term challenging cases, work collaboratively to wrap services around the most vulnerable clients and find person-centred solutions for some of the most complex situations. This would be across services and would enable teams working with an individual to spot difficulties in advance. It would ensure teams work proactively to prevent evictions and homelessness, using best practices, such as the 'Making Every Adult Matter' (MEAM) Approach.</p> |
| <p>5. An improved internal collaboration within the council, sharing knowledge and experience, and working together to find the best solutions for those experiencing (or threatened with) homelessness.</p> | <p>A joined up, 'one council' approach to homelessness.</p> | <p>Work with teams to establish new Service Level Agreements (SLA) where needed to establish better joint working practices.</p> |
| | | <p>Scrutinise processes for referrals between service areas, to ensure that a 'no wrong door' approach can be upheld in practice.</p> |
| | | <p>Improve the transparency of the council's housing offer so services and partners understand the council's housing processes, options and limitations.</p> |
| <p>6. Effective working between the Housing team and Adult Social Care teams to understand the housing needs and best multi-agency housing solutions for adults and elders.</p> | <p>Housing services which link in with our wider council aims. For example, on living and ageing well and our health in all policies approach. This includes keeping people at</p> | <p>Develop an independent living strategy/action plan with Adult Social Care, with a focus on how we can help people to maintain living independently for longer. This plan will enable better joined up working</p> |

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| | home for longer if this is the best option for them. | with Adult Social Care teams, to ensure we are thinking strategically about using residential care when it is appropriate to free up homes, but also trying to maintain care at home as long as this is possible and beneficial. |
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Priority 4 – HOUSING SOLUTIONS

Exploring new and innovative ways to diversify our accommodation and support options in the city.

The reasons why people become homeless or are threatened by homelessness, vary and can be complex. By diversifying and enhancing the current housing options, we can provide better, tailored, and long-term solutions for individuals.

Below outlines how we will diversify our accommodation and provide more housing options in the city:

| Outcome | What do we want to achieve? | How will we achieve this? |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Efficient use of our resources to tackle homelessness across the city. | A variety of accommodation options and tenures across the city, to ensure residents have access to appropriate housing options. | Review our resources and service user needs to identify gaps to ensure we direct future resource/service planning towards those areas. |
| | | Continue our work to reduce voids in the city. |
| 2. The most in need are prioritised for social housing. | A fair, easy-to-understand and flexible Allocations Policy that ensures access to social housing is available for those who need it the most. | Review and update our Allocations Policy. |
| 3. Improved move-on options and a reduced spend on, and time spent in, temporary accommodation wherever possible. | Increased housing options for all to reduce the reliance on emergency and temporary accommodation. | Some of this will be achieved by key early intervention and prevention work as set out in Priorities 1 and 2. However, we will also explore our temporary and supported accommodation offers, and our move-on options to ensure we have a diverse range of pathways out of temporary accommodation. |

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| <p>4. Improved relationships, and engagement, with Private Rented Sector (PRS) housing providers/ landlords.</p> | <p>A better understanding of the current challenges in the PRS and an increased availability for residents to access the PRS where possible.</p> | <p>Ensure that where we can, we offer support for residents to access private rented accommodation.</p> <p>Work both proactively and reactively with landlords to incentivise, and support, them to provide appropriate and high-quality housing for residents.</p> <p>Explore options for ensuring local housing availability and quality for tenants.</p> |
| <p>5. New temporary and permanent accommodation options across the city.</p> | <p>A mix of tenure that meets needs.</p> | <p>Work collaboratively to look at options to diversify housing options. For example, explore modular temporary accommodation units, repurposing empty homes and commercial units, and container units.</p> |
| <p>6. Appropriate housing options for people with complex needs.</p> | <p>An improvement to our specialised housing schemes, such as Supported Lettings and Housing First.</p> | <p>Ensure that we have a supply of Housing First homes that are appropriate and fit for purpose, to enable more people to benefit from the scheme.</p> |

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| | | Expand our Supported Lettings Scheme from 20 to 30 properties and aim to expand further in future where resources allow. |
| 7. Better housing options for people who have pets and are experiencing homelessness or are threatened by it. | Improved housing options for people with pets who experience homelessness or are threatened by homelessness. We recognise that pets provide companionship and at times may restrict access to services, including accommodation. | We will work to explore housing solutions in temporary and supported accommodation for people who are threatened by homelessness or experiencing homelessness and have pets. |

Engaging, Developing and Consulting on this strategy

Engagement

During the development of this strategy, we engaged with key services and partners in the city. They provided useful insight into the major successes and challenges around homelessness in Southampton. We engaged with (non-exhaustive list):

- Relevant services within the council, such as the adults' and children's social care service. This includes staff working with care leavers.
- Staff working with people in institutions, such as hospital, prison, and probation with a need for a safe housing option.
- Southampton's Housing Officers, and frontline staff working directly with people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.
- Staff and partners working with people with No Recourse to Public Funds and refugees.
- Social housing, registered providers and supported accommodation providers in the city. This includes services providing temporary accommodation.
- External partners such as Citizen Advice Southampton, Society of St James, and Scratch Charity.

During this engagement period, we gathered invaluable information about the current needs in our city. Combined with the needs assessment, this information has enabled us to develop the four key priorities and strategic actions to tackle homelessness in Southampton.

Listening to what you have to say

We conducted a consultation to enable members of the public, including residents and businesses, to share their views of and suggestions for our new strategy. This was a 12-week public consultation, which ran from 10 July 2023 until 1 October 2023. We received valuable feedback from 315 respondents. We heard from a range of people including, residents of Southampton, charities and volunteer organisations who work in the sector, and people who have experienced homelessness or have been threatened by it. We carefully considered this feedback and used it to inform and improve our final strategy.

Delivering our strategy

Homelessness Prevention Board

Tackling homelessness is complex and can require several organisations to pull their knowledge, skills, and resources together to find solution. We will create a new Homelessness Prevention Board to bring together all the key partners in Southampton to enable us to work together to find solution to help tackle homelessness in our city. We understand that listening to people with lived experience is invaluable in understanding how to compassionately identify and respond to homelessness. Therefore, representatives of people with lived experiences will be included in this Board. The Homelessness Prevention Board will oversee, implement, and monitor the progress of the actions.

Measuring successes (KPIs)

An action plan will be developed which will provide detailed actions on how to deliver outcomes, outline who is accountable for the delivery of each action and timelines for implementation. This action plan will be reviewed annually ensuring we remain on track to achieve our aims over the next 5 years. The Homelessness Prevention Board will oversee the implementation of the action plan and agree the Key Performance Indicators. Our high level KPIs are outlined below. These are updated quarterly:

Metrics

- Total No: of assessments made - Households initially assessed as threatened with homelessness (prevention) or homeless (relief) during the quarter.
- Total No: of households successfully prevented from being homeless.
- Total No: of households successfully relieved from being homeless.
- No: of Rough Sleepers (single night count).
- No: of Households on the Housing waiting list.
- No: of properties let.
- Total no: of households in temporary Accommodation (TA).
- No: of households with Children accommodated in TA.
- No: of children accommodated in TA.
- No: of care leavers accommodated in TA.
- No: of households with children accommodated in BnB.
- No: of households with children accommodated in BnB over 6 weeks.

Funding

- The actions to achieve the strategy outcomes will be funded from various sources, such as the council's own budget. It will also be funded by Government grants, such as the Homelessness Prevention Grant.

Final thanks

Thank you to everyone who took part in the development of this strategy.

The contributions and feedback have been invaluable in drafting and revising our strategy.

We will work hard to deliver this strategy and achieve our vision of creating a city where everyone has a safe place to call home.



Appendix 1: Legislation

Statutory Requirements for Local Authorities

When a Local Authority carries out any function including formulating policies and strategies it must have due regard to the Equality Act 2010 (EA 2010) and the Human Rights Act 1998. In particular it must have due regard to its Public Sector Equality Duty under S149 EA 2010.

Legislation setting out the rights of people who are experiencing homelessness and duties local authorities must follow, first came into force with the introduction of the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1997, then with further amendments made by the Housing Act 1985, the Housing Act 1996.

The Homelessness Act 2002 places a statutory duty on all local authorities to carry out a homelessness review for their area, in consultation with local partners and stakeholders, formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on the results of that review, at least every five years.

All local authorities have a duty to ensure advice and information are available to any household, about preventing homelessness, finding a home, rights when homeless and help available locally.

During the lifetime of the council's previous Homelessness Prevention Strategy (2018 – 2023), new legislation was implemented.

1. **Homelessness Reduction Act 2017** – In April 2018 this Act was introduced and brought new duties (prevention duty and relief duty) on local authorities to focus on prevention of homelessness. These have informed the development of the new strategy.

2. **Homelessness duties:**

- Prevention Duty: A local authority must take reasonable steps to help the applicant secure accommodation and ensure it does not cease to be available for their occupation.
- Relief duty: A local authority must take reasonable steps to help the applicant secure accommodation which becomes available for at least six months.

- Main duty: A local authority must take reasonable steps to provide accommodation for a household that has not received secure accommodation under the relief duty and has a priority need. If a household is unintentionally homeless and categorised as *vulnerable*, they will have a priority need for emergency housing.

3. Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

This Act requires local authorities to provide safe accommodation options for victims/ survivors of domestic abuse. Domestic abuse is a leading cause of homelessness. Local authorities also have a duty to carry out a safe accommodation needs assessment and publish a strategy for safe accommodation provision and support. Local authorities must also give people who become homeless because of domestic abuse priority need for safe accommodation.

Our Domestic Abuse prevention strategies:

- [Strategy for the Provision of Support in Safe Accommodation 2021-2024 \(southampton.gov.uk\)](https://www.southampton.gov.uk/docs/default-source/strategy-for-the-provision-of-support-in-safe-accommodation-2021-2024.pdf).
- [Domestic Abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls 2023-2028 Strategy \(southampton.gov.uk\)](https://www.southampton.gov.uk/docs/default-source/domestic-abuse-and-violence-against-women-and-girls-2023-2028-strategy.pdf).

4. Armed Forces Act 2021 (in force from November 2022).

This Act introduced a new requirement for some public bodies, including local authorities, to pay due regard to the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant when carrying out specific public functions in the areas of housing, healthcare, and education. This Act places a legal duty on local authorities to give priority for social housing to serving members of the Armed Forces, former Service personnel and their family members.

[END]