

The **Public Sector Equality Duty** (Section 149 of the Equality Act) requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between different people carrying out their activities.

The Equality Duty supports good decision making – it encourages public bodies to be more efficient and effective by understanding how different people will be affected by their activities, so that their policies and services are appropriate and accessible to all and meet different people’s needs. The council’s Equality and Safety Impact Assessment (ESIA) includes an assessment of the community safety impact assessment to comply with Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act and will enable the council to better understand the potential impact of proposals and consider mitigating action.

Name or Brief Description of Proposal	Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029
Brief Service Profile (including number of customers)	
<p>The Homelessness Act 2002 gave all local authorities a responsibility to produce a 5-year strategy on homelessness for their area and renew the strategy at the end of the period. Southampton City Council’s current Homelessness Prevention Strategy covers the period 1st January 2018 to 31st December 2023.</p> <p>The findings from the Homelessness Review have been used to update the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029 and agree on the priorities for the council in relation to homelessness and homelessness prevention for the next five years.</p> <p>Southampton City Council Corporate Plan 2022/30 outlines our vision for Southampton as a ‘City of Opportunity’ over the next 8 years. This ambition applies to housing and homelessness as much as to all other areas of our work in Southampton.</p> <p>The vision of our new strategy is “A city where everyone has a safe place to call home”.</p> <p>The priorities of the strategy are:</p> <p>Priority 1: Prevention</p> <p>Move beyond a reactive response and focus on reducing individual and population-wide risks of homelessness across the city.</p> <p>Priority 2: Intervention</p> <p>Providing timely, appropriate and effective interventions to alleviate homelessness and help those sleeping rough.</p>	

Priority 3: Working Together

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

Priority 4: Housing Solutions

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

Summary of Impact and Issues

The previous Homelessness Prevention Strategy was reviewed as part of the process of drafting this strategy. As part of the review, we have considered current and future levels of homelessness in Southampton based on an analysis of:

- any planned legislation or local policy changes that are likely to impact on levels of homelessness for particular groups in the district;
- statutory homelessness applications and acceptance;
- demographic profile of those who are statutory homeless;
- reasons for statutory homelessness;
- accommodation outcomes;
- rough sleepers;
- wider determinants of homelessness – those factors which make individuals more likely to experience or be at risk of homelessness.

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 Homelessness Prevention Review 2023.

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 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 of rough sleeping on a single night in Southampton between 2010 and 2022 was 20.

Factors identified in increasing the risk of homelessness in Southampton include:

- **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.
 - Southampton Homelessness Strategic Review 2023 data highlights the large number of cases needing multiple support services presenting to homelessness teams. The top 5 support needs of households owed a duty (prevention or relief) in Southampton (66.3% of needs) are: history of health problems (21.4% of needs); history of repeat homelessness (12.5% of needs); drug dependency needs (11.8%); having a history of offending (11.1%) and having physically ill health or a disability (9.5%).

During the preparation and review of the strategy, we have undertaken internal and external focus groups with a wide range of partner organisations.

A public consultation was launched on the 10th July 2023 and closed on the 1st October 2023. The feedback has been carefully considered and some amendments have been made to the strategy.

Potential Positive Impacts

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy underpins the services and activities being delivered to tackle homelessness based on existing legislative requirements. Many of the activities are already being delivered. New actions are proposed that aim to reduce homelessness as soon as possible by enhancing existing services and housing provision.

Prevention and early intervention are an important part of the strategy. There are co-occurring reasons why people are at risk of homelessness or end up in homelessness.

The strategy has been designed to help shape the homelessness pathways in Southampton and prevent homelessness at the earliest opportunity in a time of challenging circumstances.

By collaborating with partners across the city, we hope to achieve the actions outlined in the strategy by making better use of our resources and by providing a variety of housing options, both in the private and social rented sectors, so that everyone has safe accommodation.

We will take proactive measures to prevent intergenerational homelessness and assist individuals in maintaining their tenancies. This includes ensuring that young people, care leavers, and those with additional needs and vulnerabilities have the support they need to secure and maintain tenancy.

Responsible Service Manager	Maria Byrne, Service Lead Housing Needs and Welfare
Date	November 2023
Approved by Senior Manager	Jamie Brenchley, Director of Housing
Date	November 2023

Potential Impact

Impact Assessment	Details of Impact	Possible Solutions & Mitigating Actions
Age (Young people)	<p>Children: depending on legislation, households with children facing homelessness have a priority and the strategy sets out a range of activities to help households prevent their homelessness, options to secure alternative accommodation and a range of support services for families with additional needs.</p> <p>Young people: The strategy identifies young people as a specific group with support needs, recognises the vulnerability of care leavers, and identifies joint working with partners to help young people who face financial and</p>	<p>The strategy does not discriminate or disadvantage anyone due to their age.</p> <p>A household/person is able to approach homelessness services for help and guidance.</p> <p>The new strategy focuses on practicing 'a no wrong door' approach to those approaching the council where a housing support need is identified.</p> <p>This will be done by strengthening referral systems and practices to enable us to intervene</p>

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	other barriers to secure settled housing and access support.	before people are in crisis. We will also review when people are approaching for help so we can identify further preventive measures and to ensure our service is accessible for all.
Disability	It is not restrictive but recognises those households with physical, emotional and mental health disabilities as groups who require tailored responses to tackle homelessness more effectively.	Trauma informed training to improve staff's understanding of aspects such as Post Traumatic Stress. Ensure we utilise all funding options available to keep people living in their homes if it is feasible to do so.
Gender Reassignment	No negative impact identified.	All households approaching the council with a housing issue are given advice and information and according to their situation and the legislative framework may be assisted into accommodation.
Marriage and Civil Partnership	No negative impact identified.	All households approaching the council with a housing issue are given advice and information and according to their situation and the legislative framework may be assisted into accommodation.
Pregnancy and Maternity	Pregnancy and maternity may have a negative impact on household income.	Homelessness legislation, which underpins the strategy, identifies this group as a priority. This means if a homelessness duty is accepted because homelessness could not be prevented, accommodation will be

Impact Assessment	Details of Impact	Possible Solutions & Mitigating Actions
		<p>provided.</p> <p>The strategy is clear that all homelessness is serious and seeks to support any household to prevent homelessness. The public law duty in relation to the use of bed and breakfast for households with pregnant women or children is limited to 6 weeks.</p>
Race	No negative impact identified.	<p>All households approaching the council with a housing issue are given advice and information and according to their situation and the legislative framework may be assisted into accommodation.</p> <p>Ensure organisations working with residents from ethnic minorities are aware of homelessness services and can support with making referrals as needed.</p>
Religion or Belief	Some people might find it difficult to cope in supported housing environments due to their religion or beliefs.	All households approaching the council with a housing issue are given advice and information and according to their situation and the legislative framework may be assisted into accommodation.
Sex	Men and women might have similar needs and issues which they need support with, however, homeless men and women can choose different ways to cope. In general, men are more likely to	<p>The strategy is clear that all homelessness is serious and seeks to support any household to prevent homelessness.</p> <p>The public law duty in</p>

Impact Assessment	Details of Impact	Possible Solutions & Mitigating Actions
	become homeless, but women are more vulnerable while living on the streets than men.	relation to the use of bed and breakfast for households with pregnant women or children is limited to 6 weeks. Actions include a review of challenges and support available to households with protected characteristics.
Sexual Orientation	Some people might find it difficult to cope with certain housing environments due to their sexual orientation.	All households approaching the council with a housing issue are given advice and information and according to their situation and the legislative framework may be assisted into accommodation.
Community Safety	Lack of appropriate housing options and no access to benefits may increase the risk of rough sleeping.	Improving access to housing options for all to reduce the risk of some households rough sleeping or sofa surfing.
Poverty	The impact of social and economic deprivation is recognised as a factor in causing homelessness.	All households approaching the council with a housing issue are given advice and information and according to their situation and the legislative framework may be assisted into accommodation.
Health & Wellbeing	The 'cost of living' crisis may squeeze household budgets, and therefore, affect the health and wellbeing of families and individuals.	Reaching and working with the most complex people in our society who fall through the gaps, ensuring healthcare needs are met, to break cycles of homelessness. Continue commissioning and operating rough

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		sleeper healthcare services, such as the Homeless Health Service.
Other Significant Impacts	None identified.	