

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026 – 2030

“Reducing homelessness in partnership”

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Draft Foreword

I am pleased to introduce Cheshire East Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for 2026–2030. This strategy outlines our vision to reduce homelessness across the borough and sets out four key strategic commitments to guide our efforts.

We are launching this strategy at a time of national economic uncertainty, a challenging housing market, and unprecedented levels of homelessness—pressures that are being felt by many of our residents here in Cheshire East.

Our approach is ambitious and people-focused. We are placing a strong emphasis on preventing homelessness before it occurs, while also strengthening support for those who are already homeless. This includes developing tailored pathways for vulnerable groups and enhancing our partnerships to deliver accommodation-led solutions that meet individual needs.

A central aim of this strategy is to expand early intervention and prevention opportunities. We recognise the growing number of individuals facing complex and interconnected challenges that make it difficult to access temporary accommodation or sustain independent living. These challenges often have a profound impact on health and wellbeing. Through this strategy, we are committed to improving outcomes by addressing the health inequalities linked to homelessness and housing instability.

Rough sleeping remains the most visible and acute form of homelessness. Our strategy adopts a preventative, multi-disciplinary approach to break the cycle of chronic and repeat rough sleeping, with a focus on strengthening both in-reach and outreach services.

The pressures on the Council are increasing, but we remain steadfast in our commitment to ensuring that everyone in Cheshire East has access to the support they need, when they need it. Tackling homelessness is not something we can do alone. It requires strong collaboration across sectors and communities. This Strategy will help to enable prosperity and wellbeing for all in Cheshire East. We look forward to working together with our partners to prevent and relieve homelessness wherever it arises, helping to build a borough where everyone can thrive.

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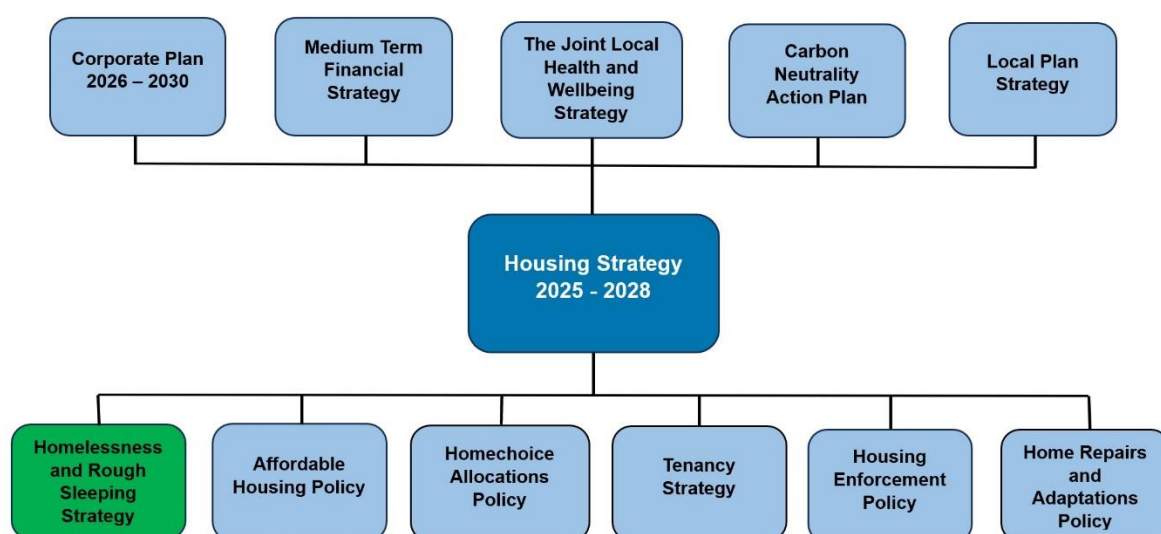
Introduction

Complementary strategies and policies

The Cheshire East Council Corporate Plan aspires to “enable prosperity and wellbeing for all in Cheshire East.” This Strategy directly supports **Corporate Plan Objective 2: Improving Health and Wellbeing**, particularly by:

- Promoting improved independence, health, and wellbeing through early intervention and prevention.
- Delivering lasting solutions through strong and committed partnerships.

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026-2030 will influence, and be influenced by, several Cheshire East Council Strategies and Policies:

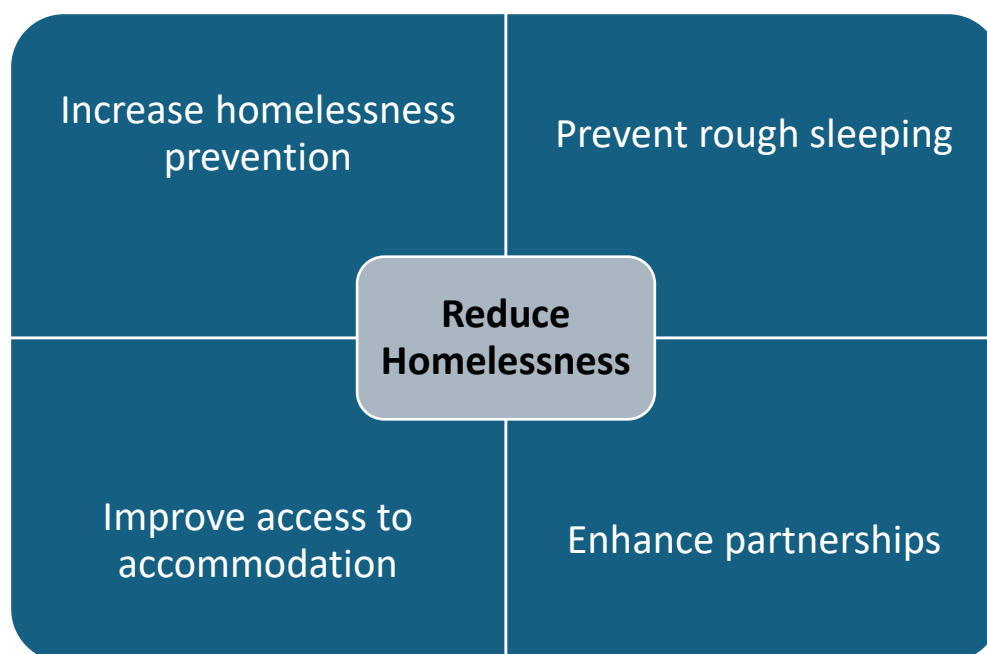


The **Cheshire East Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026–2030** has been developed with awareness of the significant and evolving challenges in the housing sector, including economic instability, the cost-of-living crisis, and reductions in public funding. It sets out our strategic vision and commitments, while remaining adaptable to emerging evidence and changing circumstances throughout its duration.

This Strategy outlines clear objectives and delivery options aimed at reducing homelessness and improving outcomes for our most vulnerable residents. It replaces the current strategy and aligns with the **Cheshire East Council Interim Housing Strategy 2025–2028**. It is designed to be both forward-looking and responsive to national and local developments in homelessness.

Our overarching strategic priority is to **reduce homelessness** - empowering residents to access and maintain suitable housing and enjoy an enhanced quality of life. This Strategy also emphasises inclusive collaboration, ensuring that all stakeholders are actively involved in shaping and reviewing our shared commitments.

Cheshire East Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026-2030 – Strategic Commitments



National strategic context

Homelessness in England has reached unprecedented levels, with current data indicating the highest figures since records began. Recent statistics¹ reveal:

- A continued rise in the number of households receiving homelessness support from local authorities.
- An increase in the number of households reaching the end of statutory homelessness duties.
- Minimal change in the number of households securing accommodation through these duties.
- A decline in the proportion of households successfully supported into accommodation.

Legal and policy framework

Under the **Housing Act 1996**, a person is considered homeless if they have no available accommodation or if it is unreasonable for them to continue occupying their current accommodation.

The **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government** holds primary responsibility for homelessness policy in England. It coordinates cross-government efforts and allocates funding to local authorities, who are legally obligated to support

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statutory-homelessness-in-england-financial-year-2023-24/statutory-homelessness-in-england-financial-year-2023-24#introduction>

individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Additional funding may also be provided by other departments, such as the **Department for Work and Pensions** and the **Home Office**.

Statutory homeless duties

Local authorities must fulfil four key duties:

- **Prevention Duty:** This applies when a household is at risk of homelessness within 56 days. Local authorities must take reasonable steps to prevent homelessness, which may include negotiating with landlords or family members, providing mediation, reducing rent arrears, or securing alternative accommodation. This duty can be extended if prevention efforts are ongoing.
- **Relief Duty:** This duty is triggered when a household is already homeless or becomes homeless after the prevention stage. Authorities must assist in securing suitable accommodation, which may involve private rentals, supported housing, or social housing applications.
- **Main Duty:** If a household remains homeless after the relief stage and is assessed as unintentionally homeless, eligible for assistance, and in priority need, the local authority must provide temporary accommodation until the duty is discharged through an offer of long-term accommodation.
- **Temporary Accommodation Duty** - Temporary accommodation refers to housing arranged by local authorities under their statutory homelessness responsibilities. Most households in temporary accommodation are placed under the **Main Duty**, although it may also be provided during the **Relief Duty** stage or on an interim basis while decisions or reviews are pending.

These are in addition to an overarching duty for the Local Authority to provide advice and information about homelessness and the prevention of homelessness and the rights of homeless people or those at risk of homelessness.

Changes to Government and housing policies

In July 2024, the Government launched the new Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, signalling its commitment to bold reforms aimed at increasing housing supply and addressing rising homelessness—key priorities for the current administration. A series of new measures have been introduced or are planned for implementation during this Parliament.

In January 2025, the Government launched a consultation as part of the first steps of a review of their approach to the Homelessness Prevention Grant, a key source of funding provided to all local authorities in England. The aim of the review was to develop a new formula to reflect relative demand and cost pressure. Cheshire East funding allocation could change, and this could impact on the delivery of this strategy.

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy is designed to be ambitious and forward thinking. With current service demands, pressures and resources the vision is achievable. The Housing Options Service will keep the performance under review

with the changing resources available to Councils and will ensure all actions are effective, efficient and represent good value for money before execution.

Renters' Rights Act

Introduced in the King's Speech in July 2024, this new legislation will strengthen tenant protections, including:

- The abolition of Section 21 'no-fault' evictions
- Enhanced rights for tenants; including the right to challenge rent increases.
- A ban on rental bidding wars, discrimination against households accessing benefits and households with children
- Easier processes for tenants to keep pets, subject to landlord approval and potential insurance requirements.
- Extension of the Decent Homes Standard to the private rented sector.

Research suggests that nearly 50% of Buy-to-Let landlords may raise rents in response to these changes, with properties in the Northwest expected to be particularly affected. This could place more financial pressure on already stretched households.

Social and supported housing reforms

- The **Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023** introduced significant changes to the regulation of social housing, including enhanced powers for the Housing Ombudsman and improved complaint investigation processes.
- The **Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023** established new regulatory frameworks for Supported Exempt Accommodation. A consultation on the Act took place in early 2025, and we will ensure local implementation of the Act's requirements.

Rough sleeping and domestic abuse

- The **National Rough Sleeping Strategy**, updated in September 2022, builds on the 2018 strategy and is structured around four key themes: Prevention, Intervention, Recovery, and a Transparent and Joined-Up System. It also introduced new duties for local authorities to prevent and relieve rough sleeping.
- The **Domestic Abuse Act 2021** broadened the definition of abuse to include not just physical violence but also financial, emotional, coercive or controlling behaviours. The Act mandated local authorities to provide appropriate support and safe accommodation for victims of domestic abuse and their children.

England's homeless children

- Following an inquiry into children in temporary accommodation, a series of **House of Commons** committee reports were published outlining the

detrimental impact of homelessness on children. The reports highlighted the impact on educational attainment, especially for children residing in temporary accommodation, demonstrating the importance of homelessness prevention.

Local strategic context

In response to national reforms, the **Cheshire East Interim Housing Strategy** outlines priorities for 2025–2028. This shorter-term strategy reflects the dynamic policy environment, and positions the Council to adapt to evolving responsibilities and policy changes.

The **Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026–2030** supports the delivery of the Interim Housing Strategy, particularly:

Strategic Priority 2: Meeting People’s Specialist Housing Needs.

Strategic Priority 3: Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping.

This strategy remains responsive to both national and local developments in homelessness.

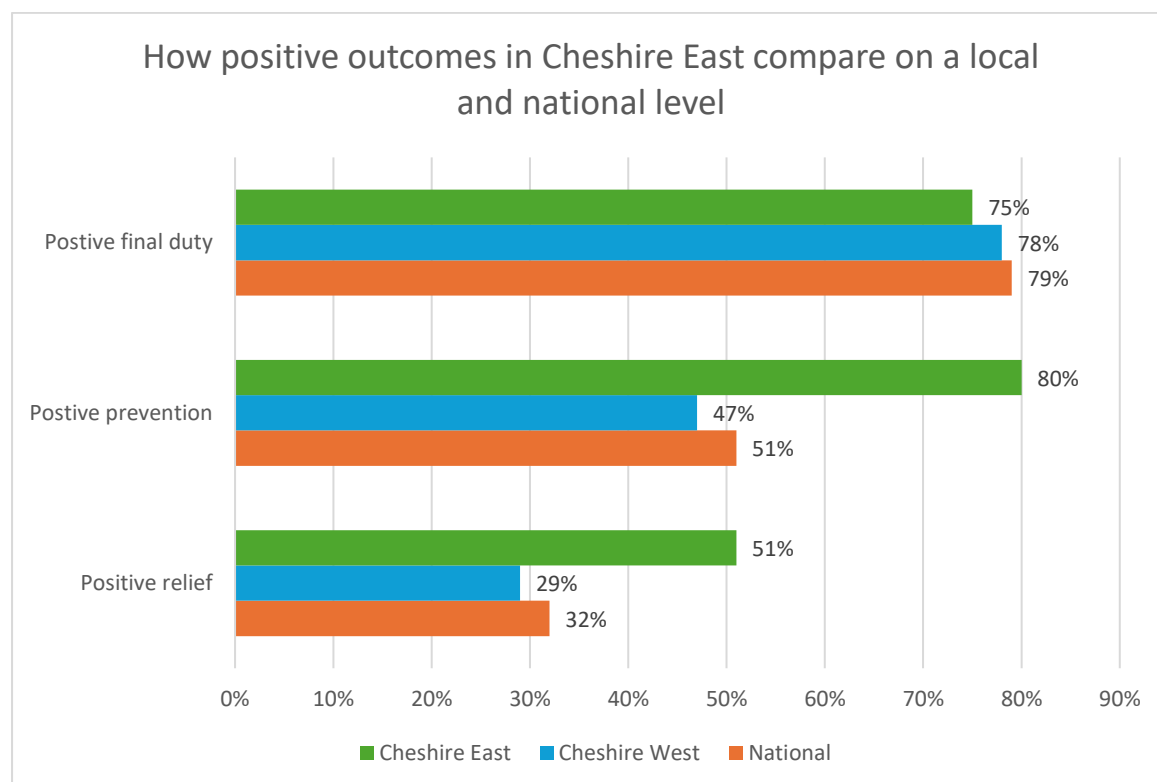
Service demand and outcomes

- The Housing Options Service recorded contact from **4,980 households** seeking advice or assistance relating to homelessness, during 2023–2024, an increase of 126 from the previous year and an increase from 3,593 (1,387 additional households) in 2022.
- **Table 1** illustrates a total of over **8,000 households** since 2020/2021, with a **44.5% increase** in prevention and relief cases over that period.

Table 1: Cheshire East homelessness prevention and relief (2020–2024)

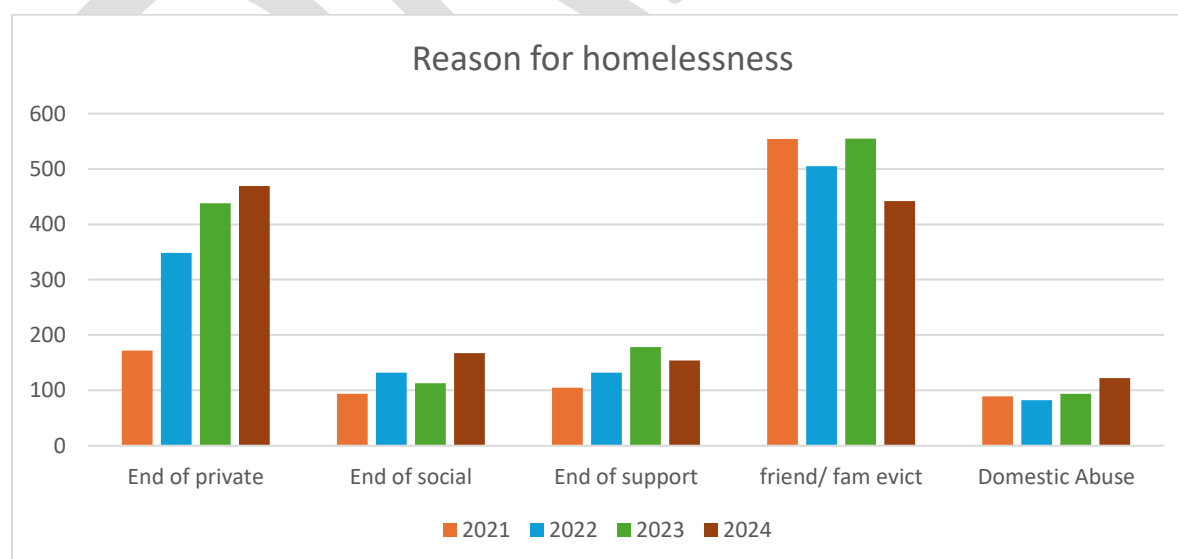
Year	Prevention	Relief	Total
2020–2021	744	608	1,352
2021–2022	953	624	1,577
2022–2023	958	680	1,638
2023–2024	1,147	695	1,842
2042-25	1,170	783	1,953
Total	4,972	3,390	8,362

Chart 1: Positive outcomes in Cheshire East compared regionally and nationally (23/24)



Note: Chart 1 indicates that Cheshire East consistently achieves higher average positive prevention and relief outcomes compared to regional and national averages, with slightly lower final duty cases.

Chart 2: Main reasons for homelessness in Cheshire East over the 5-year strategy



Note: Chart 2 indicates the key areas for preventative focus.

Homelessness Strategy review

Overview

A comprehensive review of Cheshire East's 2021-25 Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy was conducted in 2024. The findings highlighted several areas of ongoing concern, including unexpected data spikes, service gaps, and insufficient multi-agency collaboration for certain client groups.

Key findings

- **Multiple Disadvantages and Complex Needs:** There has been a notable increase in individuals experiencing multiple, interconnected needs that hinder access to temporary accommodation and independent living. These overlapping issues often fall below the threshold for statutory homelessness assistance but present challenges when households are placed in mainstream supported accommodation.
- **Repeat Service Users:** A subset of clients with multiple disadvantages frequently re-engage with services, indicating a need for more tailored and sustained support.
- **Vulnerable Groups:** Specific attention is required for individuals affected by:
 - Private rent evictions
 - Refugee status
 - Domestic abuse
 - Discharges from prison and hospital settings
- There is a lack of public awareness of the Housing Options Service and how to access it.
- Referral pathways are unclear, and many residents struggle to find suitable, affordable, and settled accommodation.
- Performance of a new Housing Related Support contract which aims to enhance transitions through supported housing is being monitored.
- A shortage of appropriate 'move-on' accommodation is causing delays, leaving individuals in unsuitable housing for extended periods.
- Access to the private rented sector remains limited due to rising rents, despite increases in the Local Housing Allowance. Collaborative efforts with private landlords and partner agencies are essential to address this gap.

Partnership and innovation

- Improved partnership working—particularly with mental health services, probation, and social care—is critical. As Government remodels funding there is a risk of reduced resources; innovation and the adoption of best practices will be essential to avoid duplication and deliver efficient, impactful services.

Our Challenges

To address these challenges, the strategy outlines the following focus areas for action:

1. Universal Prevention: Strengthen protective factors such as stable income, secure housing, good health, and mitigate the impacts of ongoing welfare reform
2. Holistic Support for Single Homeless Individuals: Enhance advice and support services tailored to single people.
3. Offender Support: Improve collaboration with the Probation Service to support individuals transitioning from the criminal justice system.
4. Hospital Discharges: Strengthen discharge planning from both general and mental health hospitals.
5. Social Landlord Engagement: Address homelessness arising from social housing tenancies.
6. Relationship Breakdown: Continue to respond to this persistent cause of homelessness.
7. Repeat Presenters: Develop targeted interventions for individuals with recurring homelessness episodes.
8. Move-On Accommodation: Increase the availability and suitability of move-on options to reduce service blockages.
9. Affordable Housing: Expand access to affordable housing, particularly for:
 - Single individuals
 - People under 35
 - Low-income or unemployed residents
 - Those affected by welfare changes and poverty

Adoption of national good practice in homelessness prevention

Cheshire East Council is committed to adopting national good practice² in homelessness prevention, as identified by organisations such as Shelter, Crisis, and others. These practices will be integrated into our strategy where appropriate and as resources permit.

² <https://homeless.org.uk/news/prevention-the-golden-thread-in-a-national-homelessness-strategy/>

National good practice

Upstream prevention

Implementing strategies that target the underlying factors contributing to homelessness, rather than merely responding to crises, include:

- Early identification and support for vulnerable individuals and families at risk of homelessness.
- Development of upstream funding opportunities to support early intervention.
- Innovation in preventative services, including piloting and evaluating new approaches.

Downstream prevention

Implementing strategies to enable a rapid response where crisis is imminent but there remains a short window of opportunity before existing accommodation is lost include:

- Creative and flexible approaches to working within existing constraints to prevent homelessness.
- Implementation of specialist measures for groups including:
 - Non-UK nationals
 - People with complex support needs
 - Survivors of domestic abuse
 - Single people

Partnership and collaboration:

- Strengthening partnerships with internal services, statutory agencies, housing providers, support services, third-sector organisations, and charities.
- Engaging individuals with lived experience of homelessness to inform service design and delivery.

Building partnerships and working together

Tackling homelessness requires a collaborative, multi-agency approach. The Housing Options Service recognises that sustainable solutions depend on strong partnerships across sectors. Our aim is to address the root causes of homelessness and support long-term housing stability by building resilience within affected households.

Systemic change in homelessness prevention

Research and national good practice highlight the importance of systemic change in locally led homelessness prevention efforts. One such initiative is **Making Every**

Adult Matter (MEAM), a national charity supporting systemic transformation through collaboration with practitioners, policymakers, and individuals with lived experience.

What is systemic Change?

Systemic change is:

- Beneficial and impactful
- Sustainable and resilient to future challenges
- Transformational in organisational policies, culture, and practices

Benefits of systemic change:

1. **Enhanced joint working:**
Promotes collaboration across services to drive effective change.
2. **Embedded systems thinking:**
Encourages adoption of evidence-based approaches and continuous learning.
3. **Workforce development:**
Emphasises trauma-informed and strengths-based practices.
4. **Improved access to services:**
Facilitates better integration with mental health and other essential services.
5. **Smoother service transitions:**
Supports individuals transitioning from hospital or prison into stable housing.

Our commitment

As we implement this strategy, we will deepen our understanding of current system challenges and co-develop a clear vision for change with our partners, such as support providers, Social Services, Probation, Police, and health. We will explore the principles of systemic change and apply them to improve outcomes for individuals and communities affected by homelessness.

Early intervention and prevention

Prioritising upstream homelessness prevention enables earlier identification and intervention for households at risk of eviction. By focusing on sustaining tenancies through tailored advice and support, we aim to help residents maintain stable housing and reduce the incidence of homelessness.

Equality and inclusion

Cheshire East Council recognises its responsibility under the Public Sector Equality Duty to assess the impact of policies and decisions on individuals with protected characteristics. This includes considering how factors such as sex, gender identity, age, race, and culture influence engagement with services and the type of support required. These considerations are further explored in the accompanying Equality Impact Assessment.

Trauma-informed and psychologically informed approaches

Understanding the role of trauma is essential in supporting individuals experiencing homelessness—particularly veterans and those fleeing domestic abuse. A trauma-informed approach ensures that services are sensitive to the effects of trauma, while psychologically informed environments foster supportive settings that prioritise health, well-being, and recovery. This approach to support and service delivery will also account for reasonable adjustment to account for neurodiversity.

Measuring impact and enhancing support pathways

The effectiveness of this strategy will be evaluated by ensuring that vulnerable groups have access to clear pathways and tailored support. Data collection from partner agency referrals will be instrumental in identifying key trigger points and informing early interventions. This evidence base will enhance our understanding of effective prevention strategies and support continuous improvement.

Data-driven insights and personal experience

Building a repository of lived experiences will strengthen our upstream prevention efforts. Timely, accurate, and relevant information is critical to identifying primary causes of homelessness and implementing effective responses. By recording *trigger points*, such as family or relationship breakdown, *welfare needs*, such as mental health or substance misuse, and the influence of *protective factors*, such as family networks or education we can build our understanding of cases and map how we might introduce effective interventions or evaluate the efficacy of existing interventions.

Risk Group Classification for Early-Stage Homelessness Prevention

High-Risk Groups

Early-stage (upstream) homelessness prevention efforts will focus on individuals or households at significant risk of homelessness, particularly those currently within institutional settings or facing imminent housing instability. These include:

- Young people leaving care
- Individuals in hospitals, including mental health institutions
- People exiting the prison system
- Individuals experiencing rent or tenancy issues (in both social and private housing) prior to the issue of an eviction notice
- Victims of domestic violence and abuse

Note: Effective upstream intervention requires that individuals are already in contact with, or known to, relevant support services. For example, someone at risk of eviction due to neighbour complaints may already be engaged with mental health or substance misuse services.

Medium-Risk Groups

This category includes individuals who may not be in immediate danger of homelessness but are experiencing significant challenges that could escalate without support. These include:

- Individuals with mental or physical health conditions
- People with substance dependencies
- Individuals with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)
- People seeking support from Jobcentre Plus due to a reduction in household income

Low-Risk Groups

These individuals may face vulnerabilities that could contribute to future housing instability, though they are not currently at immediate risk. This group includes:

- Survivors of modern slavery or gang-related violence
- Individuals experiencing relationship breakdown
- Vulnerable children and young people in educational settings
- LGBTQ+ individuals
- People from ethnic minority backgrounds

All these groups are identified as at risk and will receive specific focus throughout the life of the strategy.

Strategic vision and commitments

Our vision

To reduce homelessness in Cheshire East through strong partnerships and shared experience.

Our commitments

1. **Increase homelessness prevention** - To deliver rapid, early help and intervention to stop homelessness before it occurs.
2. **Prevent rough sleeping** - To ensure rough sleeping is rare, brief, and non-recurring.
3. **Improve access to accommodation** - To strengthen accommodation-led partnerships to secure appropriate housing solutions.
4. **Enhance partnerships** - To improve health and wellbeing outcomes for people experiencing homelessness.

Delivering on the strategic commitments

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy has been developed amid significant challenges, including economic instability and the ongoing cost-of-living crisis. It is designed to be responsive to change and focused on achieving positive prevention and relief outcomes.

In 2024-25, The Housing Options Service received nearly 5,000 approaches from households who required homelessness advice. Of these, 1,953 households were accepted as homeless or at risk of homelessness within 56 days and successfully prevented from becoming homeless. The provision of free, impartial advice remains a cornerstone of our prevention efforts.

Strategic commitment 1: Increase homelessness prevention

Objective: To deliver rapid, early help and intervention to stop homelessness before it occurs.

Prevention is critically important for households because it protects their stability, health and future opportunities. It represents the most cost-effective way of tackling homelessness and demonstrates high value for money to Cheshire East Council.

Key Focus Areas:

Embed protective factors in communities

Working in partnership Cheshire East Council will ensure that protective factors are embedded into communities to reduce the risk of homelessness, this will include:

- Decent homes
- Secure homes
- Good health
- Financial resilience
- Education and skills
- Awareness of support and interventions

The Housing Options Service will contribute to this community resilience.

Upstream prevention and early identification

Preventing homelessness requires early identification and support for at-risk individuals. The Homelessness Reduction Act's 56-day duty is a key trigger for intervention, but our interventions and prevention activities do not have to wait for this trigger. The Housing Options Service will seek to develop innovative initiatives with partners and other agencies to prevent homelessness at the earliest opportunity and embed resilience into communities.

Relief and downstream prevention

While early intervention is ideal, many households approach services at a point of crisis. In such cases, efforts to relieve homelessness are prioritised. Common causes of sudden homelessness include:

- Eviction by family or friends
- Domestic abuse
- Unlawful eviction

The Housing Options Service will work together with strategic partners to be creative where the opportunity to act early has been missed and work to stabilise households in crisis through negotiations, support, and financial initiatives.

Addressing non-priority single homelessness

Whilst legislation states that Local Authorities must focus on households with defined vulnerabilities, Cheshire East Council recognises that single households without enduring vulnerabilities also need support. To provide early intervention and homelessness prevention support represents a cost-effective way of mitigating rough sleeping.

Single people often face multiple challenges, including health issues and service access barriers.

We aim to improve support for underrepresented groups, such as:

- female prison leavers and young women
- non-UK nationals and refugees
- prison leavers
- young people under 25
- people leaving hospital following a protracted stay
- people experiencing multiple and complex needs

Systemic change and early intervention

We aim to develop a shared understanding of current system challenges and a clear vision for change. In collaboration with partners, we will explore systemic improvements to enhance service delivery.

Empowering informed decision-making

The Housing Options Service will seek ways to further support residents to make the right decisions through tailored assessments, mediation, financial assistance, and proactive advice. This includes guidance on welfare entitlements and advocacy to help individuals sustain or secure housing.

Tenancy readiness programme

To promote long-term housing stability, The Housing Options Service will work with partners to develop tailored tenancy readiness programmes which will provide young people and people with limited good quality tenancy experience, including those in supported accommodation, with essential life skills and tenancy sustainment training. This initiative aims to:

- Equip people with practical skills for independent living.

- Strengthen tenancy success rates for those transitioning from supported accommodation.
- Reduce instances of repeat homelessness due to tenancy breakdowns.

By investing in tenancy readiness, we aim to empower our residents to maintain stable, secure housing and build positive futures.

Strategic Commitment 1: What will we do to increase the prevention of homelessness?

Task	What will be the outcome?
Develop universal prevention by ensuring 'protective factors' that can reduce homelessness across the whole population, such as decent incomes, secure homes, good health, money management, and income maximisation.	Increased levels of applicants supported to retain their current home.
Raise awareness of support services, to ensure that people know that their best outcomes come from early intervention.	A reduction in the use of B&B for reasons where prevention could have occurred, such as private landlord eviction.
Prioritise upstream prevention by early identification of, and support for, vulnerable and at-risk groups.	There are less homeless tonight presentations from at-risk groups.
Develop upstream funding opportunities enabling the development and evaluation of new, expanded and innovative preventative services.	Innovative approaches to the prevention of homelessness are developed and their efficacy monitored.
Improve downstream prevention, developing strategies to ensure that if people approach the service late in their homelessness journey, opportunities are sought to avoid the use of temporary accommodation.	Reduction in B&B emergency placements as a proportion of placements.
Develop robust and clear pathways to assist individuals at risk of becoming homeless after being discharged from hospital.	Decrease in emergency presentations following hospital discharge and more people assisted through discharge planning.
Develop robust and clear pathways to assist individuals at risk of becoming homeless after leaving prison.	Decrease in emergency presentations following prison release and more people assisted through planned release.

Increase tenancy-ready households.	Households receiving tenancy-ready support are sustaining tenancies and we see less early tenancy failure in these groups.
Work with housing providers in shaping move-on accommodation, with continued measured support to ensure sustainable outcomes.	A reduction in unplanned outcomes from supported accommodation, with more people moving successfully into appropriate long-term placements.
Ensure that Refugees and people who have experienced modern slavery are referred to specialist support services.	Reduced emergency (relief stage) homelessness for refugee households.
Implement specialist prevention measures for groups such as non-UK nationals, people with multiple disadvantages, survivors of domestic abuse, and single people not legally considered as a priority for housing.	Enhanced housing offers reducing homelessness and rough sleeping.
Work to address the accommodation needs of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller, and Showpeople communities through referrals to the transit site for short-stay accommodation providing security to travelling households as their needs are addressed.	A reduction in the number of unauthorised encampments and homelessness
Ensure re-settlement and tenancy sustainment by working with registered providers in supporting them to ensure that interventions are lasting, to avoid repeat homelessness.	Repeat homelessness is avoided.
Support the development of a Leaving Care Accommodation Pathway to independence.	Reduced homelessness for care experienced young people and increased prevention outcomes for all young people.
Evaluate and develop our in-house temporary accommodation provision.	Reduced number of nights that households spend in hotel or bed and breakfast accommodation.
Develop relationships with non-commissioned support providers and private landlords to deliver housing options for those people with low support needs.	An increase in upstream prevention for non-priority single homeless applicants, and the needs of people at risk of homelessness are met through a variety of housing solutions, lessening demand for temporary and social housing.

Work together with support agencies and housing providers to improve tenancy skills in those without good quality tenancy experience.	Less households made homeless due to tenancy failure
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Strategic Commitment 2: Prevent rough sleeping

Objective: To ensure rough sleeping is rare, brief, and non-recurring

This strategic commitment focuses on reducing homelessness by preventing and reducing rough sleeping across Cheshire East.

Local authorities submit rough sleeping data to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, which aims to achieve the following outcomes:

- Fewer individuals sleeping rough, as measured by nightly and monthly data
- Shorter durations of rough sleeping
- Reduced recurrence of rough sleeping

Cheshire East Council will adopt a preventative approach to disrupt cycles of chronic and repeat rough sleeping. We will commission services and develop partnerships, working closely with local charities and organisations to support people with experience of rough sleeping to access accommodation and build resilience.

Key focus areas:

Referral and notification process

Referrals and notifications will serve as key triggers for intervention although these will not replace regular outreach sweeps of towns and to seek people out in remote locations. The Senior Rough Sleeping Officer will act as the central point of contact for receiving and disseminating this information. The team will ensure there are well publicised methods of reporting rough sleepers and that they work in partnership with all agencies such as the Police, street cleaning services, and park maintenance services, in addition to working with charitable services, local businesses and the public to encourage prompt reporting. A clear and efficient procedure will be established to ensure timely communication with the Outreach Team.

Addressing multiple disadvantages

Many individuals' experiencing homelessness face multiple and complex needs, including mental health challenges, substance misuse, or institutional backgrounds (e.g., Armed Forces, hospital admissions or prison). In the past year, 1,194 households presented with support needs:

- 437 with one support need
- 292 with two support needs

- 465 with three or more support needs

Frontline service providers play a critical role in identifying and referring individuals to the Rough Sleeping Outreach Team. Their expertise and local knowledge are essential to early intervention efforts.

Prevention and early intervention

Preventing rough sleeping involves supporting individuals to remain in their current accommodation or facilitating a smooth transition during times of crisis or change. When prevention is not possible, data from partner agency referrals will be used to identify causes and inform early interventions. This data will also enhance our understanding of the primary causes of homelessness and support the development of upstream solutions.

Building a repository of lived experiences will further inform strategic planning and improve the effectiveness of interventions. Timely, accurate, and up-to-date information is essential for this work.

Monitoring and strategic oversight

Cheshire East Council will monitor the pathways into rough sleeping to identify patterns and underlying causes. This intelligence will guide targeted prevention strategies.

Members of the Cheshire East Council Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Steering Group will contribute by:

- Referring individuals to the Outreach Service
- Promoting awareness of referral pathways among partners and colleagues
- Developing protocols and ensuring the delivery of the strategic commitments
- The continued promotion and support of the Outreach Service.

Our Commitment

By prioritising homelessness relief, we aim to:

- Reduce the number of individuals sleeping rough
- Minimise the duration of rough sleeping experiences
- Prevent repeat instances of rough sleeping

Strategic Commitment 2: What will we do to prevent rough sleeping?

Task	What will be the outcome?
Enhance our multi-disciplinary approach to in-reach and outreach services.	Reduction in rough sleeping through a range of interventions and provision of temporary and longer-term housing solutions.

Develop robust partnerships with accommodation providers to ensure pathways to settled accommodation for all.	There is a wide range of accommodation partners engaged with the service and an understanding of our accommodation gaps.
Refine our work with Justice Services to manage prison releases and to prioritise public safety.	A leaving prison pathway is in place and the use of temporary accommodation for people leaving prison is reduced.
Work with providers to speed up move on from hostels, whilst at the same time reviewing how evictions and abandonments can be reduced.	A reduction in unplanned outcomes from supported accommodation, with more people moving successfully into appropriate long-term placements.
Consider the effectiveness of housing-led and 'Housing First' services	More planned move-on outcomes from housing-led accommodation and sufficient units are available to meet needs.
Look for other innovative ways to provide accommodation to prevent and relieve single homelessness.	Good practice will be explored and used to deliver more effective interventions.
Ensure there are a range of housing options available to people with multiple disadvantages.	Less refusals / rejections from support providers.
Evaluate the Rough Sleeping Prevention service and seek to ensure "No Further Night Out" principles are being met.	Reduction in unplanned ends to accommodation.

Strategic Commitment 3: Improve access to accommodation

Objective: To strengthen accommodation-led partnerships to secure appropriate housing solutions.

With increasing demand and limited housing supply, it is essential to broaden the range of housing options available to individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. This includes expanding beyond social housing to improve access to other tenures and housing types. We will continue to build partnerships with housing providers across all sectors.

We aim to address barriers to long-term accommodation through supported and medium-term housing solutions. Access to safe, decent, accessible, and affordable accommodation—both temporary and permanent—will be measured through prevention and relief outcomes, as these directly contribute to ending homelessness.

Key Focus Areas:

Reducing reliance on Cheshire Homechoice

Cheshire East Council does not own council housing. Instead, it partners with Registered Providers of Social Housing through Cheshire Homechoice and a Common Allocations Policy. However, demand far exceeds supply, with over 12,000 applicants and on average only 1,300 properties available annually.

The **Common Allocations Policy**, co-produced between Cheshire East Council and our Registered Provider partners, prioritises those in urgent need while promoting sustainable communities. Despite this, many applicants face long waits or may never secure housing through Homechoice.

The **Tenancy Strategy** expects that the best use is made of Cheshire East's affordable housing stock to meet local housing need to benefit vulnerable households, contribute to strengthened communities, and enable households to make realistic choices based on their own circumstances.

With reducing supply and increasing demand for social housing, the Housing Options Service will look to explore alternatives to moving home altogether, how we might secure existing tenancies, and maintain accommodation for people in the longer term. In addition, we will look to strengthen partnerships with private landlords, seeking opportunities that the Renters' Rights Act will bring.

Partnership development

While effective protocols exist for care experienced young people and individuals discharged from hospitals or prisons, further enhancement is needed. Multi-agency panels such as the **Ignition Panel** (for young people) and the **Multi-Disciplinary Accommodation Panel** (for individuals with complex needs) are in place to support those facing multiple disadvantages. Enhancing the role of these panels in preventing homelessness and sustaining existing accommodation will reduce the pressure on other housing resources. Also, we intend to explore the need for more protocols, such as a Cuckooing Protocol to improve tenancy sustainability (where criminals take over the home of a vulnerable person).

Downsizing initiatives

We are developing a downsizing scheme in collaboration with Registered Providers to release under-occupied larger homes and homes in which adaptations for people with disabilities are no longer needed. This will support larger families, households with physical mobility needs, and older residents or smaller households requiring more manageable accommodation. This initiative aligns with the **Tenancy Strategy** and addresses financial hardship caused by under-occupancy penalties in welfare benefits.

Private rented sector engagement

To mitigate the pressure on social housing, we are working to strengthen relationships with private landlords to provide housing for individuals with low support needs. With forthcoming reforms to the private rented sector and increased tenant protections, we are proactively engaging landlords and sharing best practices with other local authorities.

The **Renters' Rights Act** provides opportunities to engage with private sector landlords to ensure that they are supported within the new legislation to sustain good quality housing for residents.

Supported Accommodation (Regulatory) Act 2025

This legislation will regulate supported exempt accommodation, which is not subject to standard housing benefit caps. Cheshire East Council will conduct a review and publish a **Supported Housing Strategy**. National standards will be introduced for accommodation quality and the provision of care and support. Importantly, intentional homelessness will not apply where supported accommodation fails to meet these new standards.

Housing Related Support

Housing Related Support Services provide short-term accommodation and in-home support designed to help individuals to identify and overcome barriers to access or maintain independent living. These services aim to preserve clients' support networks and promote autonomy wherever possible and appropriate.

To ensure the sustainability of Housing Related Support Services, a comprehensive re-modelling of services was undertaken. The updated service model launched in April 2024, with a strong focus on tenancy sustainment as a key strategy for preventing homelessness. This approach is expected to significantly reduce instances of repeat homelessness. The Single Point of Access system facilitates referrals for housing-related support, though service suitability remains a challenge.

Housing Related Support Services operate across Cheshire East, divided into North and South regions. The provision includes:

Accommodation-Based Services:

Service	Units
Rough Sleeping Prevention (South)	60
Complex Needs (North)	32
Emergency Accommodation (North)	8

Service	Units
Housing-Led Support	9
General Needs Supported (North & South)	26 / 16
Single Homeless Accommodation Programme (SHAP)	4
Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme (Next Steps)	6
Fresh Start	9
Total Accommodation Units	170

Floating Support Services:

Service	Units
Floating Support (South)	52
Floating Support (North)	40
Total Floating Support Units	92

During 2024 / 2025, accommodation-based Housing Related Support Services supported a total of 460 households through its 161 accommodation units. The outcomes were as follows:

- 266 households achieved a positive long-term move-on.
- 118 households exited the service without securing a positive outcome.
- 76 households remained in the service at the end of the reporting period.

Ongoing monitoring will track the sustainability of accommodation six months post-exit. This data will be instrumental in demonstrating the effectiveness of Housing Related Support Services in reducing homelessness across Cheshire East.

To reduce reliance on Bed and Breakfast accommodation we will continue to develop the Housing Related Support offer to develop a robust floating and accommodation-based support offer to meet the changing needs of the residents of Cheshire East.

Temporary accommodation provision

Cheshire East Council currently manages 16 units of temporary accommodation, including a main hostel in Macclesfield and dispersed properties across the borough. We aim to expand this provision to reduce reliance on hotels and Bed and Breakfast, and to better support individuals with complex needs.

Current provision:

Location	Type of accommodation
Macclesfield	9-unit hostel (various sizes), 4-bed house, 2-bed bungalow, 2-bed house
Congleton	3-bed house
Crewe	3-bed house, 2-bed bungalow
Handforth	3-bed house

Young people (18–25 Offer)

A new accommodation offer for 18–25-year-olds is being developed in partnership with Children's Services and housing providers. This includes a **Tenancy Sustainment and Independence Pack** and the creation of more semi-independent housing options with appropriate oversight and support.

Strategic Commitment 3: What will we do to improve access to accommodation?

Task	What will be the outcome?
Support with the delivery and re-procurement of a pathways for domestic abuse survivors and perpetrators.	Increased positive prevention and relief outcomes for households experiencing domestic abuse.
Pilot and explore the benefits of a downsizing project with social housing providers to free up larger family homes to support the prevention and relief of homelessness.	More effective use of social housing with less homeless families.
Seize opportunities through the Renters' Rights Act to develop relationships with private landlords to increase access to affordable private rented accommodation.	Private landlords collaborating in accommodating more households in the sector.

Understand how the Supported Accommodation (Regulatory) Act can improve outcomes for people in supported accommodation to build in stability and good quality accommodation.	An improvement seen in property and support standards across Cheshire East.
Develop services to support people to retain their current home where there is a risk of homelessness.	The efficacy of floating support services is maximised, and alternative support services are mapped.
Develop specialist pathways for groups such as young people, homeless women, domestic abuse survivors and perpetrators, veterans, and single people.	Use of upstreaming has identified households at risk.
Explore the development of a Cuckooing protocol with safeguarding colleagues, police, landlords and mental health services.	Tenancy sustainment outcomes for people who are experiencing cuckooing are improved.

Strategic Commitment 4: Enhance partnerships

Objective: To improve health and wellbeing outcomes for people experiencing homelessness

This strategic commitment aims to reduce the negative health impacts associated with homelessness and housing instability. By strengthening partnerships across sectors, we seek to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for individuals who are homeless, at risk of homelessness, or experiencing rough sleeping.

Strategic alignment

This work aligns with the vision of the **Cheshire East Council Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2023–2028**, which aspires to enable residents to live longer, healthier lives with good mental and physical wellbeing, independence, and a strong connection to their communities.

The **Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy** contributes to positive health and wellbeing outcomes by offering tailored accommodation and support options, alongside interventions such as step-down provision from supported accommodation. Partnerships with non-commissioned providers will be developed to increase access to housing for individuals with low or no support needs

Key focus areas:

Domestic abuse and housing

Domestic abuse affects individuals across all demographics and includes physical, emotional, coercive and controlling behaviours, and economic abuse. Children are now explicitly recognised as victims if they witness or experience abuse.

Cheshire East Council has adopted the **Whole Housing Approach** and achieved **Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) Platinum Accreditation**, demonstrating our commitment to supporting survivors. This includes:

- Early identification and intervention
- Reducing homelessness due to domestic abuse
- Supporting survivors to remain safely in their homes or retain tenancy status when re-locating
- Providing housing options for both victims and perpetrators, with a focus on accountability and behavioural change
- Continued dedicated support of the **Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)** process to ensure appropriate housing interventions

Cared for and care experienced young people

The Housing Options Service is committed to supporting Cared for Children and care experienced young people. Following a 2024 Ofsted inspection, we are addressing identified areas for improvement through enhanced collaboration between Housing and Children's Services.

Young people leaving care are eligible for priority housing status until age 25. A dedicated Homeless Prevention Officer serves as their first point of contact, and tenancy-readiness programs are in place to support their transition to independent living.

Throughout the strategy we will be seeking innovative approaches to working with our care experienced young people to secure a pathway of accommodation and support, that leads to long-term settled accommodation which meets their needs and which is safe.

Support for veterans

Cheshire East Council has a proud history of supporting the Armed Forces community through the **Armed Forces Covenant**. While many veterans transition successfully to civilian life, some face challenges including homelessness. Following a needs assessment and based on individual choice, veterans will be supported through:

- Access to supported housing.
- Tenancy sustainment services.
- Referrals to specialist services such as **Op Fortitude** (housing support) and **Op Courage** (mental health support).

Trauma-informed and psychologically informed care

Trauma-informed approaches will be embedded in services, particularly for veterans and survivors of domestic abuse. Health and social care partners will lead efforts to improve health outcomes and reduce demand on health services. Accommodation providers will be encouraged to create **Psychologically Informed Environments**, including thoughtful design elements like lighting and colour schemes, in collaboration with service users and therapy services. This may be helpful for those experiencing neurodivergent difficulties.

Companion animal support

Recognising the therapeutic value of companion animals, we will explore ways to accommodate individuals and their pets. We will explore partnerships with organisations offering veterinary care, foster services, and pet-friendly housing will be pursued to reduce barriers to accessing support.

People with mobility needs

Access to suitable and accessible housing is an important protective factor in preventing and reducing homelessness. As the needs of a household changes or as our population ages, ensuring a strong relationship with our Housing Standards Team and our Occupational Therapy teams will ensure that housing is suitable and sustainable. This will be achieved by exploring better use of property adaptations and improving the allocation of already adapted homes.

Health service engagement

Housing—whether temporary, supported, or permanent—must be safe, accessible, affordable, and suitable. We will assess and mitigate health risks associated with poor-quality or insecure housing in collaboration with the Housing Standards Team and environmental health teams. Regular inspections will ensure housing meets health and safety standards. Support will be provided to help people in temporary accommodation to access healthcare, including assistance with registering with GPs and attending appointments.

Community-centred and peer-led approaches

We will explore peer-led models to improve health engagement among homeless individuals. Health peer advocates will help people understand their rights and navigate access to healthcare services.

Strategic Commitment 4: What will we do to enhance partnerships to improve health and wellbeing outcomes?

Task

Develop a strong and mutually beneficial relationship with charities and “By and For” organisations.

What will be the outcome?

People receive support from specialist charities which address their needs

Ensure our Domestic Abuse approach continues to meet national recognised standards and involves work with victims and perpetrators through the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance	People experiencing domestic abuse receive the support they need when the need it
Map local health services and establish strong links to manage hospital discharges to lift pressures on health services.	Decreased homelessness after hospital discharge through discharge planning.
Deliver services through a person-centred approach to ensure that we are addressing the root cause of homelessness where needs are complex.	Case studies and audits provide information allowing new approaches to homelessness
Explore the provision of psychologically informed environments.	Physical environment and social spaces are adapted to improve the space available to engage and support people in the service leading to continuing service engagement
Explore the provision of trauma informed care as it contributes to homelessness or is made worse by the experience of homelessness.	Trauma informed approaches are embedded in practice with Council Teams and contracted providers.
Work with providers to include provision for companion animals.	Mental health improvements, less street homelessness with people not having to choose between their pet and a bed for the night.
Services working with people at risk of becoming homeless or people experiencing homelessness consider the risks to health of poor quality, unsuitable, insecure and unaffordable accommodation.	Accommodation provides a healthy environment in which to thrive.
Households placed in temporary or supported accommodation are supported to access health care provision.	Temporary and commissioned supported accommodation meet relevant standards and residents connect with health care provision
Work with our partners to help improve the health and wellbeing of homeless people and identify those who are at risk of becoming homeless.	Personalised pathways are in place to enable access to tailored support and settled accommodation to break the link between homelessness and ill health.

Adapted properties and the need for adaptations are mapped and reviewed to enable better access to suitable and sustainable accommodation for people with mobility needs.

There is a reviewed process for the adaptation of homes to sustain accommodation, and the allocation of adapted properties is improved.

Governance of the strategy

The level of success will be assessed through action plans which will measure progress, which will show us the improved outcomes of the strategy

Consultation will take place with Housing Options officers, Steering Group members partners, stakeholders, residents and service users to ensure the strategic commitments are robust. Thorough action plan reviews will be held bi-annually by the Homelessness Strategy Steering Group.

The success of the Strategy will be measured using the following key performance indicators (KPIs):

- More positive homelessness prevention outcomes
- More positive relief outcomes
- Less people sleeping outside, measuring monthly and single night trends
- A reduction in the time people spend sleeping outside
- Reduced instances of repeat rough sleeping
- Less reliance on Bed and Breakfast accommodation as Temporary Accommodation: measured as a ratio of those in Bed and Breakfast compared with supported / temporary accommodations

Appendices

Homeless data – to follow

Equality Impact Assessment – to follow

Health Impact Assessment – to follow