

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Improving Places Select Commission – 24 October 2023

Report Title

Progress on the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2023- 2026

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Ian Spicer, Strategic Director of Adult Care, Housing and Public Health

Report Author(s)

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Ward(s) Affected.

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

A report detailing progress of the previous Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019 -2022 was noted by Improving Places Select Commission on 20 September 2022.

The new Homelessness Strategy for 2023-2026 was approved by Cabinet in March 2023. This report provides an update of progress and will give an overview of the local homelessness picture.

Progress in delivering the Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeper Strategy Action Plan is attached as Appendix 1.

Recommendations

1. That Improving Places Select Commission note the local picture and progress made to date in delivering the Action Plan within Appendix 1.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 - Action Plan - Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019-2022

Background Papers

Minutes - Improving Places Select Commission, 20 September 2022.

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

None

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Progress on the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2023 - 2026

Progress on the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2023- 2026

1. Background

1.1 The Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2023-26 was approved by Cabinet in March 2023 and published in April 2023. The vision is to:

- To work in partnership to end homelessness in Rotherham.
- Everyone has a secure affordable place to call home.
- The right support at the right time is in place at times to prevent homelessness and enable recovery.

1.2 The Strategy sets out six key aims:

1. Make homelessness a rare occurrence by focusing on prevention and early intervention.
2. Minimise the use and improve the quality of temporary accommodation and end the use of hotels.
3. Increase access to affordable housing options.
4. Improve access to housing support, employment, and health services.
5. Support people with complex needs.
6. End rough sleeping in Rotherham.

1.3 A report detailing progress of the previous Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019 -2022 was noted by Improving Places Select Commission on 20 September 2022. Feedback from Members included that early intervention activity to prevent homelessness be prioritised.

2 Key Issues

2.1 The Local Picture

2.1 Homelessness is worsening across the country, driven by cost-of-living pressures, unstable and expensive housing, and support needs. New government figures show 79,840 households faced homelessness in England between January and March 2023, the highest number on record, while during the same period 104,510 households were living in temporary accommodation, up 10% from last year. All South Yorkshire authorities are experiencing acute homelessness pressures.

2.2 In Rotherham, there has been a decrease year on year for the last three years. However, in line with national trends, applications have started to increase during 2022/2023. The number of new homelessness cases rose from 987 in 2021-2022 to 1,409 in 2022/2023. In a typical month around 130 homelessness cases are accepted.

2.3 This year, between April and September 2023, there have been 699 new homelessness presentations(see below), 396 of those have been placed into temporary accommodation. There are currently 470 open homelessness cases.

2.4

2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	April/Sep/23
1814	1458	987	1409	699

2.5 The table below shows the stages of the 470 live homelessness cases as at 30 September 2023:

Triage and Prevention	Prevention	Relief	Relief	Main	Main
176	37%	211	45%	83	18%

2.6 Homelessness Prevention Strategy – progress in year 1

The focus of the strategy is to continue strengthening our homelessness prevention approach so that we can help people to remain in their homes, or to find a new home without experiencing homelessness.

2.7 The best way to tackle homelessness is to stop it happening in the first place. The Council and partners are committed to homeless prevention and have been proactive in a range of prevention initiatives, some of which are detailed in the Action Plan update – Appendix 1. Prevention activity in year 1 has included:

- The refresh of the Council’s homeless webpage, providing a dedicated page on homeless prevention, which encourages people to seek help early.
- Homelessness outreach advice services continue to be delivered at Shiloh, a local homelessness charity, and work is also taking place to increase awareness and improve information to support those at risk of homelessness.

- A booklet called Helping Others Made Easy H.O.M.E has been produced in partnership with Shiloh and is currently being updated. The booklet provides a range of support and advice services to people who are either experiencing homelessness or worried about becoming homeless.
- The Council's Financial Inclusion team provides financial support to council tenants who may be struggling financially to maximise their income and prioritise their expenditure which includes rent and rent arrear payments.
- The Council has helped grant fund the development of a tenancy ready learning portal, led by Rush House, a local homelessness charity. The aim of this portal is to support people to greater independence to enable them to understand their rights and responsibilities to help them sustainment their long-term future housing.
- The Homelessness Team negotiates with landlords, aiming to find solutions to avoid tenancies ending. Where this is not possible a housing plan is developed to support a planned move. The emerging trends are being analysed and monitored through the Homelessness Strategic Board.
- A light touch review of the Housing Allocation Policy has been completed. A full review will commence in November 2023
- The Housing Related Support services have been reviewed to create one single pathway for homeless households.

2.8 Homelessness prevention is a KPI in the Council Plan. **The target is 85% for 2023/2024 and the outturn for Quarter 1 is showing an improving picture of 80.3%.**

KPI	Year 2021-22	2022/23	April to September 2023
The proportion of households prevented or relieved from homelessness	76%	78%	81%

2.9 Cases not prevented are due to various reasons, including loss of contact, case withdrawn at customers' request, refusal of suitable accommodation offer, customer making own arrangements or being placed in temporary accommodation.

2.10 Since the last update to Improving Places Select Commission, the homelessness service has experienced acute staffing shortages and has been operating a minimal service focused on meeting our statutory duties. The team is now fully staffed, and work is taking place to improve performance. New members of the team have received training on homelessness legislation and the Allocation Policy. The aim is to also strengthen case management processes and the roles within the homelessness service have been refocused on a strength-based approach, focussing on early intervention and prevention.

2.11 Reasons for Homelessness

For the Borough of Rotherham, the most prevalent reason that people become homeless is that their families or friends are 'no longer willing/able to accommodate'. This represents 27% of all cases received in 2021/22 and is a 5% increase on the previous year. Between April 2023 and September 2023, the position was 32% (221) cases with this reason.

2.12 As part of the ongoing work to support households where relations breakdown, housing options and advice is given at the earliest opportunity. For young people the Council's commissioned services support young people to build on family relationships where it is appropriate and helps them to address issues which may have contributed towards the family breakdown. Some young people return home where it is safe to do so.

2.13 Between April 2023 and September 2023, the second highest reason for homelessness is due to the end of a private tenancy at 13.1% of cases. 58 of these cases (equivalent to 8% of all cases) are due to the landlord selling their property. The Council encourages households to seek help and advice early. The Homelessness Team is proactive in negotiating with landlords, aiming to find solutions to avoid tenancies ending. Where this is not possible a housing plan is developed to support a planned move.

2.14 **The table below shows the number of households in hotels.**

Date	Hotels single	Hotel families	Total households in hotels
Baseline on 31 March 2022	80	16	96
End of 1 st quarter 2022	53	13	66
End of 1 st Quarter 2023	36	10	46
30 September 2023	51	10	61

2.15 As of 30 September 2023, the number of days of family placements in hotels was as follows:

Stay Up to 7 days	Up to 14 days	Up to 21 days	Up to 28 days	Up to 35 days	Up to 42 days	Total Families

5	2	3				10
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2.16 The table above shows that the Council prioritises the movement of family households from hotels to permanent settled or self-contained temporary accommodation. The length of stay of families within hotels is being monitored regularly by the Homelessness Service to ensure that legislation is complied with, and hotel stays for families are kept to a minimum.

2.17 **The table below shows the number of households in temporary accommodation:**

Date	RMBC Temp	Non RMBC Temp	Total households in temporary accommodation
Baseline on 31 March 23	10	90	100
End of 1 st Quarter 2023	11	95	106
30 September 2023	5	95	100

2.18 **Rough Sleeping**

The Council's Housing Options Service saw an increase in the complexity of demand for homelessness support during the pandemic, with families as well as couples and single people seeking support.

2.19 Annual Counts have seen a reduction of actual people sleeping rough from 10 rough sleepers in 2019/20 to 3 in 2021/23 to 0 rough sleepers in 2022/23. There are currently 21 former rough sleepers in hotels and 7 in the rough sleeper hostel.

The Outreach Team continues to be proactive and respond to new intelligence and carry out frequent checks. As at end September 2023 there are 5 people rough sleeping who are refusing to engage. The higher number is seasonal and is consistent with numbers in previous years.

2.20 **Move-On Options**

Between April 2023 and September 2023, 369 households were assisted to alternative accommodation.

Date	Council	Supported housing	RSLs	Private Rented	Total
April to 30 September 2023	179	24	44	122	369

2.21 The Housing Options Team continues to source private rented properties individually and is reliant upon the Council's relationship with agents and landlords to source these properties. However, due to a continuing increase of demand in the sector, the number of available properties is reducing. Homeless people often struggle to get access to homes let by private landlords as the upfront costs of private renting can be high because tenants are asked to pay a deposit and rent in advance and rents are unaffordable. Some landlords also think, wrongly, that it is too risky to let their property to people claiming housing benefit. This makes it even harder to find a property to rent privately.

2.22 **Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme**

In September 2022, the Government announced over £200 million to be allocated to the Single Homeless Accommodation Programme (SHAP), to provide up to 2,400 units of accommodation with support, to address existing rough sleeping needs in local area's and help to prevent future rough sleeping.

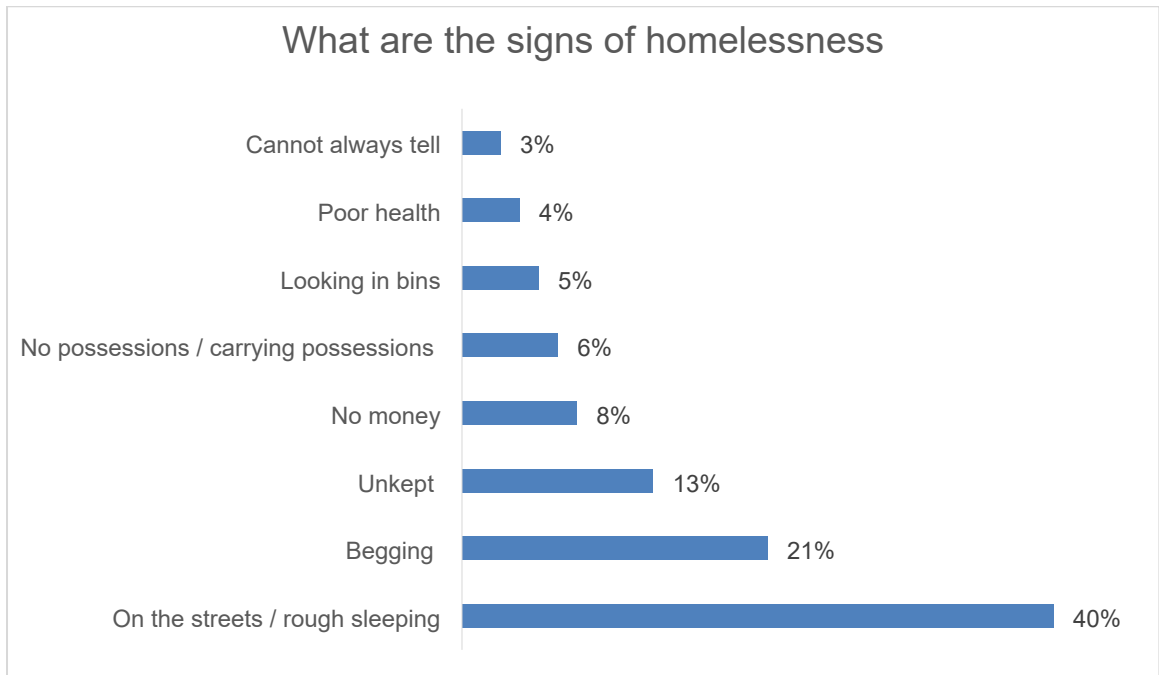
2.23 Rotherham was identified, through the data submissions the Council makes to central Government on homelessness applications, as a Local Authority having a need for further accommodation for vulnerable young people (aged 18-25) at risk of homelessness or rough sleeping.

2.24 Roundabout was successful. The funding will provide revenue funding direct to Roundabout for the financial year 2024/25, plus three years. The revenue funding will pay for the provision of support services for 4 assessment bedspaces, and 10 dispersed properties for tenants aged 18- to 25-year-old with high needs.

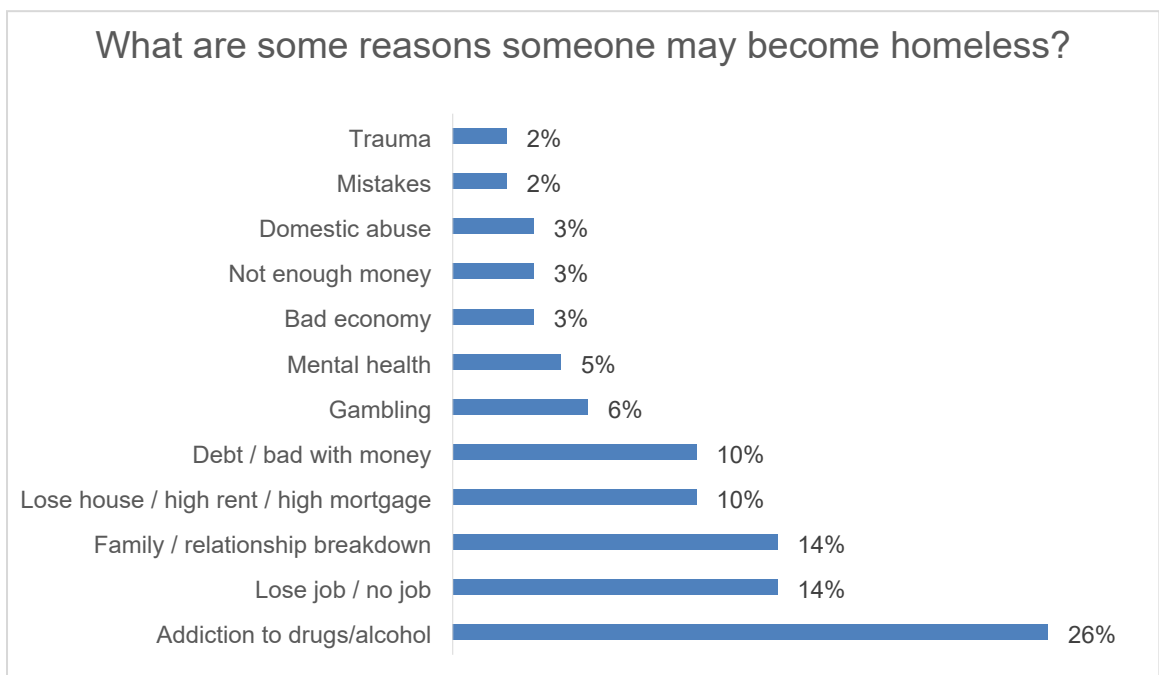
2.25 **Raising awareness of homelessness**

2.26 The Rotherham Show provided a great opportunity to raise awareness of homelessness prevention and to find out resident's views about homelessness and determine if they are aware of where to get help. Over the two show days we consulted with 73 people. The survey results are detailed in the charts below:

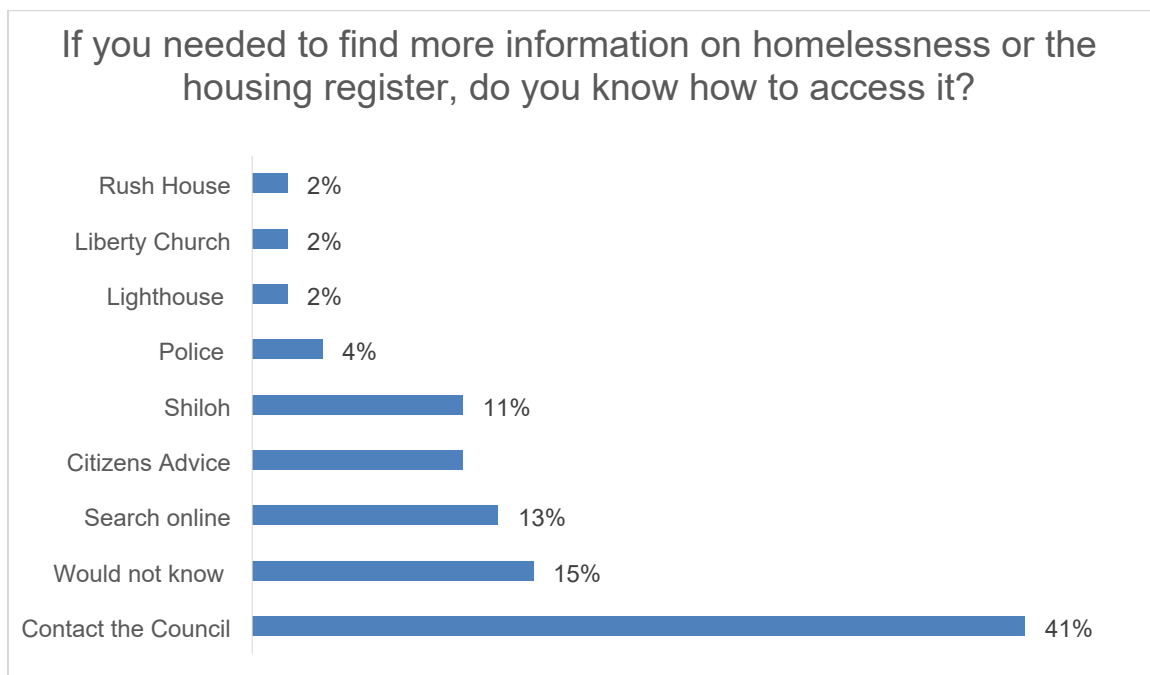
2.27



2.28



2.29




2.30 The Homelessness Strategy Impact Measures

2.31 Effective performance monitoring regimes are in place which gives a much clearer picture about the demand and effectiveness of the Homelessness Service. The impact measures are aligned with the overall Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2023-26 vision.

2.33 The impact measures provide an understanding of emerging changes to local trends, enabling the homelessness service to respond effectively.

Measure	March 2022/ April 2023	April 2023 to September 2023	Direction of travel
Increase the proportion of homelessness cases open and resolved within 56 days	78%	81% update	▲ Improved Overall preventions has increased
Increase the number of households rehoused into settled accommodation	791	369 update	= comparable with previous year
Increased proportion of homeless households successfully	17 starts on the project, with 12 into employment/training = 70%	As at 30 September - 4 homelessness starts on the project with 2 into	= comparable with previous year

connected to employment of training.		employment/training = 50%	
Reduce the number of evictions for rent arrears	18	13	 Increase in evictions compared to previous year.
There are no rough sleepers in Rotherham	4	3	 Improved Slightly lower than the previous year
All rough sleepers are accommodated of the streets	9	29	 Improved All rough sleepers offered accommodation

3. Options Considered and Recommended Proposal

- 3.1 Progress in delivering the actions from the Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2023 – 2026 are detailed within the action plan at Appendix 1.

4. Consultation on Proposal

- 4.1 The strategy was developed in consultation with a wide range of partners and stakeholders. To help shape the strategy the Council held forums, worked with members, staff and volunteers from a range of local organisations, as well as seeking the input from officers across all Council directorates. One of the main themes arising from the consultation was for the Council to end rough sleeping and begging.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision.

- 5.1 Delivery against the recommendations in the action plan is being monitored by the Strategic Homelessness Board and the Strategic Housing Forum
- 5.2 The overall accountable officer is James Clark, Assistant Director for Housing.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the progress report.

6.2 There are no direct procurement implications arising from this progress report.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

7.1 None arising from this report

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

8.1 None arising from progress report.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

9.1 None arising from progress report.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

10.1 Ensuring that the customer voice is heard is instrumental in how the Council develops and delivers its services and is of paramount importance. The Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2023-2026 was developed in consultation with people who had lived experience of homelessness. The progress of the strategy's action plan supports the continued journey of improvement for customers. The service aims to offer a high quality and accessible service to all customers, ensuring that our residents are safe, healthy and live well with dignity and independence.

11. Implications for CO₂ Emissions and Climate Change

11.1 There are digital service improvement actions that are being implemented and these will contribute to the Council's ambition to become carbon neutral by 2030. The improvements include virtual viewings and electronic signing of occupancy agreements. The website is also being updated to improve customer access and self-service opportunities. This will reduce the potential number of physical visits Council officers will make to complete all paperwork and assessments, by offering this digital solution. The creation of this digital service will reduce paper and printing requirements of the service as well as reducing multiple visits to customers where possible, reducing the services carbon emissions through reduced car usage.

12. Implications for Partners

12.1 The Homelessness Service will continue to work with partners towards delivering the recommendations in the action plan. Delivery of these recommendations will involve collaboration across relevant Council services and with key delivery partners.

13. Risks and Mitigation

None arising from this report.

14. Accountable Officer(s)

Sandra Tolley, Head of Housing Options
Kim Firth, Homelessness Manager

Approvals obtained on behalf of:

	Name	Date
Chief Executive		Click here to enter a date.
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Named officer	Click here to enter a date.
Assistant Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Named officer	Click here to enter a date.
Assistant Director of Human Resources (if appropriate)		Click here to enter a date.
Head of Human Resources (if appropriate)	Claire Cox	10/10/23
The Strategic Director with responsibility for this report	Ian Spicer, Strategic Director of Adult Care, Housing and Public Health	Click here to enter a date.
Consultation undertaken with the relevant Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Housing - Councillor Sheppard	10/10/23

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This report is published on the Council's [website](#).

