

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Cabinet – 11 May 2026

Report Title

Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2026–2031

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

Yes

Executive Director Approving Submission of the Report

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

Report Author(s)

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Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

This report presents the findings from the review of the Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2023–2026 and seeks Cabinet approval for the new Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2026–2031. It sets out the Council's statutory duties under the Homelessness Act 2002, which requires local authorities to carry out a homelessness review, to formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on that review, and to publish a new strategy at least once every five years. The report describes how these duties have been fulfilled through the completion of the latest review and the development of the new Strategy.

The report outlines the eight-week consultation and engagement process undertaken with residents, people with lived experience, officers, and key stakeholders. Feedback from this process, alongside national policy, local evidence, and wider housing and homelessness intelligence, has informed the development of the new Strategy.

The Strategy is structured around four strategic priorities and sets out the Council's approach to preventing homelessness and rough sleeping over the next five years. It highlights the key issues affecting households experiencing or at risk of homelessness in Rotherham, details how the Council will work collaboratively with partners to respond to these challenges and demonstrates alignment with wider Council strategies and plans.

Recommendations

That Cabinet:

1. Notes the Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeper Strategy consultation summary report.
2. Approves the Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2026-31.
3. Delegates authority to the Executive Director of Adult Care, Housing and Public Health to approve:
 - (a) Any minor data amendments to the Strategy prior to publication.
 - (b) The Action Plan, following its development, including any amendments arising from annual reviews.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 - The Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2026-2031

Appendix 2 - Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeper Strategy Consultation Summary Report

Appendix 3 - Equality Impact Assessment (Part A) and (Part B)

Appendix 4 - Climate Impact Assessment

Background Papers

[Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2023-2026](#)

[Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government- A National Plan to End Homelessness \(December 2025\)](#)

[Rotherham's Housing Strategy 2025-2030](#)

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

None

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2026–2031

1. Background

1.1 The current Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeper Strategy (2023–2026) has reached the end of its term, prompting a review. Under the Homelessness Act 2002, the Council must review homelessness in the borough and publish a new strategy at least every five years. The Homelessness Code of Guidance requires the review and strategy to:

- Assess current and future homelessness levels.
- Review trends and projections.
- Review existing activities and resources.
- Identify gaps and opportunities to prevent and resolve homelessness.
- Engage relevant agencies and consult the public, voluntary sector, and people with lived experience.
- Consider how all relevant agencies can contribute towards addressing identified needs to prevent and resolve homelessness.

1.2 Homelessness remains a significant challenge across the UK, with local authorities facing sustained increases in demand for support against the backdrop of rising housing costs, welfare reform, and ongoing cost of living pressures. Nationally, levels of homelessness continue to rise, with latest estimates (December 2025) reporting that 382,618 people in England are homeless, the highest figure recorded representing an 8% increase in just one year. These national pressures are reflected locally in Rotherham, where the number of people approaching the Council for homelessness assistance increased by 25.6% between 2023/24 and 2024/25, rising from 1,448 to 1,818.

1.3 The Council recognises that providing a home is only the first step in resolving homelessness, as many individuals face complex and overlapping issues that housing alone cannot address. The ongoing cost of living crisis continues to heighten vulnerability by widening the gap between income and essential living costs. The Strategy therefore aligns with the Council Plan, which prioritises helping residents to live safe, healthy, and independent lives, supported by significant investment in cost of living measures that reflect the crucial link between financial stability and sustaining a home.

1.4 In addition, the Council's wider focus on improving health and wellbeing, strengthening communities, and supporting vulnerable residents highlights the need for a whole-system, multi-agency response. This requires coordinated action across health, social care, community safety and voluntary sector partners to effectively prevent and relieve homelessness.

1.5 Rotherham's Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026–2031, attached at Appendix 1, places emphasis on strengthening multi-agency approaches to early intervention and prevention. This includes ensuring services are responsive to local needs, improving coordination and

timeliness of support, and enabling more sustainable, long-term solutions to reduce homelessness and rough sleeping across the borough.

1.6 To meet these aims the vision of the refreshed Strategy is:

“We will work in partnership to prevent homelessness wherever possible, because everyone deserves a safe, affordable home. Where prevention isn’t possible, homelessness will be rare, brief, and not repeated. With the right support at the right time, people can regain stability, rebuild and thrive.”

1.7 A comprehensive review of homelessness in Rotherham has been completed, and a new Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeper Strategy proposing a five-year plan has been developed following an eight-week public consultation.

1.8 The proposed Strategy provides both national and local context on homelessness, highlighting the key trends influencing demand and service pressures. It sets out a coordinated, compassionate, and proactive approach, with high-level aims and actions designed to improve outcomes for residents who are experiencing or are at risk of homelessness. It also defines four key priorities for delivery over the next five years.

The proposed four key priorities are:

- Prevent homelessness through early, proactive intervention
- Increase the supply of and access to suitable, affordable housing
- Ensure support reaches those most in need at the right time
- Tackle rough sleeping through prevention and rapid response

1.9 It is proposed to move from a three year to a five year strategy. This enables the Council and partners to establish a longer term, more stable framework for planning, investment, and partnership working. This extended timeframe reflects the increasing complexity of homelessness pressures, the need for sustained prevention activity, and the importance of aligning with wider strategic plans and multi-year national policy commitments. A five year strategy therefore enables a more strategic, coordinated, and forward looking approach to tackling homelessness and rough sleeping.

1.10 The Strategy builds on the achievements of the previous three year Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2023-26, during which the Council and its partners delivered targeted interventions that helped prevent homelessness and supported individuals and families across the Borough. Initiatives such as early intervention, improved quality and quantity of council-owned temporary accommodation, and strengthened partnerships with community organisations have already made a measurable difference and provide a strong foundation for future delivery.

1.11 Summary of key achievements (2023–2026)

Over the lifetime of the previous strategy, significant progress has been made in preventing homelessness, improving service delivery, and expanding housing options. Key achievements include:

- Strengthened homelessness prevention, with a 65.4% increase in successful prevention outcomes within 56 days between 2022-23 and 2024-25.
- Completion and publication of the Housing Strategy 2025–2030, reaffirming the Council’s commitment to prevention and increasing access to affordable homes through new developments and acquisitions.
- Continued progress towards the Council’s target of 1,000 new council homes by summer 2027, with 791 delivered as of 20th April 2026 and with planning underway for the next programme cycle.
- Publication of an updated Housing Allocation Policy, improving fairness by refining eligibility and banding to prioritise those in greatest need.
- Expansion of temporary furnished homes from 127 to 173, improving quality and significantly reducing reliance on and cost of hotel accommodation.
- Strong employment support outcomes through the Council’s Employment Hub.

2. Key Issues

2.1 Consultation

Between July and September 2025, an eight-week consultation was undertaken, supported by a comprehensive programme of engagement. This included an online public survey and a series of in-person sessions. These involved focus groups and drop-in events, delivered across the borough to ensure wide representation. Engagement involved local residents, some of whom had lived experience of homelessness, Council staff, and partners, including health and voluntary sector organisations.

2.2 Partnership working was central to the consultation approach, with voluntary sector homelessness providers supporting engagement with service users and frontline staff. Partners also contributed through the Homelessness Forum, providing a structured opportunity for collaborative discussion, shared expertise, and insight.

2.3 The consultation process generated over 415 consultation interactions, including 203 responses to the public online survey. Notably, 47% of respondents reported having lived experience of homelessness, providing valuable contributions to inform the development of the Strategy.

2.4 Feedback from the consultation informed a refreshed shared vision to end homelessness, strengthened the Council's values-led approach, and shaped the key priorities within the proposed Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2026–31. A summary of the consultation is provided in Appendix 2, Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeper Strategy Consultation Summary Report.

2.5 The Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeper Strategy reflects the key challenges that have persisted or emerged since the previous strategy was published. These include rising demand for homelessness services, growing complexity of support needs among some households and individuals and limited access to suitable and affordable housing options. These pressures have been exacerbated by the ongoing cost of living crisis and wider financial pressures on households.

2.6 A summary of the four priorities is set out below.

2.7 **Priority 1 – Prevent homelessness through early, proactive intervention**

Homelessness is rising nationally due to the cost of living crisis, increasing rents, and a shortage of affordable homes, and Rotherham mirrors these trends. Households approaching the Council for homelessness assistance who were owed a prevention duty (where the Council is required to take reasonable steps to prevent homelessness) or relief duty (where the Council must take reasonable steps to help secure accommodation for households who are already homeless increased from 1,229 in 2022-2023 to 1,596 households in 2024-2025, an overall increase of 29.9% since 2022.

2.8 This priority aligns with the Government's National Plan to End Homelessness (December 2025), which places early intervention and prevention at the forefront of tackling homelessness. Early identification of risks such as financial pressure, relationship breakdown, or declining mental health enables the Council and partners to help residents remain safely housed and avoid crisis. The priority strengthens both universal and targeted prevention for groups including care leavers, survivors of domestic abuse, people leaving institutions, armed forces personnel, and those with multiple support needs. It also emphasises community-based support, ensuring residents receive timely advice, practical help and access to trusted local networks. By improving access to clear information and enhancing collaborative working across statutory and voluntary services, the Strategy promotes coordinated action well before anyone reaches a crisis point.

2.9 Actions in the Strategy contribute to the above elements by:

- Increasing the rate of successful homelessness prevention and relief through timely, effective interventions, reducing the number of individuals who go on to require the main homelessness duty.
- Reducing repeat homelessness amongst homeless households.
- Reducing the number of homeless households requiring temporary accommodation.

- Increasing joint multi-agency working and earlier identification of risks of homelessness.

2.10 Priority 2 - Increase the supply of and access to suitable, affordable housing

Rotherham faces growing housing pressures that mirror national trends, including limited social housing, rising private rents, and the continued national freeze on Local Housing Allowance, which leaves many low income households unable to afford private rented homes. These challenges are compounded by the cost of living crisis.

2.11 This priority aligns strongly with the Council’s Housing Strategy 2025–2030, which places increasing the supply of affordable, high-quality homes at its core. The Council’s commitment to deliver 1,000 new homes by summer 2027, alongside strengthening partnerships with housing associations and private landlords, is central to increasing local housing capacity.

2.12 This priority aligns with and supports the Government’s National Plan to End Homelessness, which seeks to expand access to affordable housing, improve housing pathways, and eliminate the use of hotel accommodation, particularly for families with children. The Council already exceeds statutory expectations by ensuring families are not placed in hotel accommodation for longer than six weeks and, where temporary accommodation is required, prioritises the use of its own furnished temporary accommodation housing to better meet household needs. Through the new Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeper Strategy, the Council will further reduce the time households spend in all forms of temporary accommodation, enabling faster move-on into settled housing and contributing to more sustainable and stable housing outcomes in line with national ambitions.

2.13 Actions in the Strategy contribute to the above elements by:

- Increasing the number of council and affordable homes available, including through new build and acquisitions.
- Increasing the number of homeless households rehoused into settled affordable housing.
- Increasing the number of partnerships with private landlords.
- Reducing the number of households with children placed into temporary accommodation, particularly hotel or bed and breakfast placements.
- Reducing the average length of stay across all forms of temporary accommodation for all household types.

2.14 Priority 3 - Ensure support reaches those most in need at the right time

This priority recognises the growing number of people in Rotherham who are homeless or at risk, and the increasing complexity of the support they require. The rising number of households presenting with multiple disadvantages reflects both national trends and the urgent need for timely,

integrated support. Between 2022/23 and 2024/25, 4,254 households were owed a homelessness duty, with 587 households presenting with two support needs and 715 households presenting with three or more. Data shows the most common needs (mental health, physical disabilities, substance dependency, domestic abuse, and offending behaviours) highlighting the importance of trauma informed, person centred approaches that respond to multiple challenges simultaneously.

2.15 Ensuring residents can access the right support at the right time is central to preventing crisis. This priority strengthens pathways to advice, health services, financial support, employment, education, and training. By addressing gaps in provisions, the aim is to reduce repeat homelessness and support long-term stability and independence.

2.16 This approach aligns closely with the Government's *A National Plan to End Homelessness*, which places strong emphasis on coordinated public services, and earlier intervention. It also calls for person-centred models. By adopting these principles locally, the Strategy supports the shared ambition to make homelessness rare, brief, and not to be repeated, ensuring every individual receives timely and effective support.

2.17 Actions in the Strategy contribute to the above elements by:

- Increasing the number of people who are supported to access employment, training and education.
- Delivering successful outcomes at prevention or relief for households particularly those with multiple support needs.
- Decreasing the use of all forms of temporary accommodation, due to more households accessing support early and avoiding homelessness crisis.
- Increasing the number of households assisted to remain in their existing home.

2.18 **Priority 4 - Tackle rough sleeping through prevention and rapid response**

Rough sleeping is the most acute and visible form of homelessness, posing serious risks to rough sleepers' health, safety and wellbeing. Preventing people from reaching this point is essential to avoid these risk, and where rough sleeping does occur, rapid intervention is critical to safeguarding individuals and supporting recovery.

2.19 This priority recognises that many people who experience rough sleeping face significant challenges, including mental ill health, trauma and multiple disadvantages. Those experiencing long-term rough sleeping often have multiple support needs that require a trauma-informed, person-centred and coordinated approach. This priority focuses on preventing rough sleeping wherever possible, supported by assertive outreach, swift access to safe and suitable accommodation, and clear pathways into health, support and welfare services.

2.20 Although rough sleeping levels in Rotherham have remained relatively low compared to some local authorities, recent increases highlight the need for continued efforts and strong multi-agency working. The Strategy strengthens collaboration with partners, enhances community outreach support and reinforces local safeguarding arrangements for vulnerable adults, and continues to explore new opportunities to provide evidence-based housing models such as the Rotherham Housing First model. These actions aim to ensure rough sleeping in Rotherham is prevented, or if it does occur it is rare, brief, and not repeated.

2.21 Actions in the Strategy contribute to the above elements by:

- Reducing the number of people sleeping rough long term.
- Reducing the number of new people sleeping rough.
- Reducing the number of people returning to rough sleeping.

2.22 **The homelessness prevention and rough sleeper action plan and publication**

A cross working action plan will be developed with key partners including health, social care, community safety and the voluntary sector, to monitor progress and delivery against the Strategy over the five year period. While the Council has a statutory obligation to lead on the development and publication of the Strategy, the action plan should be collectively owned by partners and stakeholders, reflecting that tackling homelessness is a shared responsibility across the whole system.

2.23 The action plan will set out the specific activities, milestones and performance measures. It will also be shaped in anticipation of the Government's forthcoming duty to collaborate, which will require public services to work together more closely to prevent homelessness. Embedding this duty into local partnership arrangements will strengthen shared accountability and ensure a coordinated, multi-agency approach to delivery.

2.24 Cabinet is asked to delegate approval of the action plan and any subsequent updates following its annual reviews to the relevant Executive Director. It is anticipated that minor data updates of the Strategy may be required prior to publication. Cabinet is therefore asked to delegate approval of any final amendments to the Executive Director of Adult Care, Housing and Public Health.

2.25 The Improving Places Select Commission will receive annual updates on delivery against the published action plan, providing scrutiny of progress and identifying any areas requiring further attention.

2.26 **Governance of the Delivery of the Strategy and the Action Plan**

In line with the new National Plan to End Homelessness, Rotherham's Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeper action plan will be published no later than Autumn 2026, with annual reviews and updates to maintain transparency.

- 2.27 While this report identifies key indicative measures associated with each priority, detailed and measurable performance indicators will be finalised through the action planning phase, ensuring a robust, outcome-focused framework, supported by clear governance and accountability.
- 2.28 Delivery will be monitored through a tiered governance structure to track progress, manage risks, and ensure continuous improvement. Monitoring will focus on:
- Progress against the action plan.
 - Key milestones.
 - Performance indicators.
 - Emerging risks and opportunities.
 - Feedback from people with lived experience, staff, and partners.

3. Options Considered and Recommended Proposal

3.1 Option 1: (This is the recommended option)

That Cabinet approves the Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2026–2031 and delegates authority to the Executive Director of Adult Care, Housing and Public Health to:

- Approve any minor data amendments to the strategy prior to publication.
- Approve the action plan, following its development, prior to publication.
- Approve any amendments in the action plan, arising from annual reviews.

3.2 Option 2:

That Cabinet does not approve the Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2026–2031

- 3.3 This option is not recommended, as it would prevent the Council from meeting its statutory duty under the Homelessness Act 2002 to review and publish a homelessness strategy at least every five years and would fail to address the issues identified in this report or respond to consultation findings.

4. Consultation on Proposal

- 4.1 As detailed in section 2.1 - 2.4 of this report and in **Appendix 2** - Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeper Strategy Consultation Summary Report.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 5.1 The Service Director of Housing has overall accountability for delivering the Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeper Strategy commitments.

5.2 The Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2026-2031 will be implemented in May 2026.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

6.1 The activity resulting from the implementation of the revised strategy will be managed within existing budgets and staffing resources. The General Fund Homelessness budgets have been strengthened in 2026/27 which has been partly supported by additional government grants.

6.2 There are key commitments in priority two that require resource, including council-provided temporary accommodation and increased supply of affordable housing.

6.3 There are adequate budgets and other resources in place within the General Fund in 2026-27 to manage and support the provision of 173 council temporary accommodation properties.

6.4 There are adequate resources within the Housing Revenue Account capital and revenue budgets to support the build or acquisition of additional properties from 2026-27 onwards. This will provide increased numbers of council homes available to rent.

6.5 There are no direct procurement implications arising from the recommendations detailed in this report. However, if third party suppliers are required to support in the delivery of the strategy, these must be procured in compliance with relevant procurement legislation (Procurement Act 2023 or the Public Contracts Regulations 2015), dependent on the route to market, as well as the Council's own Financial and Procurement Procedure Rules.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

7.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 [the Act] places a statutory duty upon the Council as a local housing authority to carry out a homelessness review and to formulate and publish a strategy based on the results of that review.

7.2 The Act states that the Council must ensure that a new homelessness strategy is published within the period of five years beginning with the day on which the last homelessness strategy was published.

7.3 Section 3 of the Act sets out the meaning of a homelessness strategy as being a strategy formulated by the local housing authority for:

- (a) preventing homelessness in their district;
- (b) securing that sufficient accommodation is and will be available for people in their district who are or may become homeless;
- (c) securing the satisfactory provision of support for people in their district—
 - (i) who are or may become homeless; or
 - (ii) who have been homeless and need support to prevent them becoming homeless again.

- 7.4 The Council shall also keep their homelessness strategy under review and may modify it from time to time. This report sets out the proposal for such decisions to be made and requests that authority is delegated to the relevant Executive Director.
- 7.5 It is a statutory requirement under the Act to consult before adopting or modifying a homelessness strategy. Consultation is to take place with the public, local authorities, voluntary organisations or other persons considered to be appropriate.
- 7.6 A copy of the homelessness strategy published is to be made available at the Council's principal office for inspection by members of the public or by providing a copy if requested.
- 7.7 The Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities, published in February 2018 and updated in December 2025, provides detailed guidance around homelessness reviews and strategies.
- 7.8 There is no statutory timeframe for the consultation but the 8-week consultation which has taken place and the way in which the consultation has taken place is sufficient.
- 7.9 Adopting option 1 will ensure that the Council remains compliant with its statutory duties and significantly reduces the risk of legal challenge.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

- 8.1 There are no HR implications associated with this report.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- 9.1 The Children and Young People's and Adult Care Services have been consulted and contributed to the development of the strategy. The Strategy aligns with key priorities across both areas, including early intervention, safeguarding, and supporting vulnerable residents to live independently. Strengthened collaborative working through clearer joint pathways, improved information-sharing, and coordinated support planning will ensure children, young people, care leavers, and adults with complex needs receive timely, integrated support and assistance.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

- 10.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) attached at Appendix 3, has been completed in accordance with the Council's procedures. No additional Equalities or Human Rights implications have been identified beyond those set out in the analysis.
- 10.2 The Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeper Strategy is designed to be inclusive of all protected characteristics. Its central aim is to improve outcomes for all households in Rotherham affected by homelessness,

ensuring that support is accessible, fair, and responsive to the diverse needs of the local population.

- 10.3 By focusing on removing barriers, improving access to support, and ensuring timely intervention for those at risk of or experiencing homelessness, the strategy is expected to have a positive impact on communities across the borough. This includes strengthened support for groups who may be disproportionately affected, ensuring that the Council continues to meet its equalities duties while improving fairness in service delivery.

11. Implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change

- 11.1 Climate change poses a significant threat to environments, individuals, communities, and economies on a local, national, and international scale. In recognition of this the Council has aimed to be net carbon neutral as an organisation by 2030, and for Rotherham as a whole to achieve the same position by 2040.
- 11.2 Anticipated implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change are detailed in the Carbon Impact Assessment attached at Appendix 4.

12. Implications for Partners

- 12.1 The aims set out in the Strategy will only be achieved through strong partnership working across local and regional systems. The Council works strategically with partners through the Rotherham Homelessness Strategic Board and collaborates closely with a wide range of stakeholders, including statutory agencies, Housing Associations, Private Rented Sector and voluntary and community sector organisations, to meet the diverse housing and support needs across the borough.
- 12.2 The Council is also committed to working with the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority to maximise regional opportunities, including securing funding, aligning with wider housing and inclusion priorities, and developing a consistent regional approach to preventing and reducing homelessness. Strengthening these partnerships ensures that collective resources, expertise and influence are used effectively to improve outcomes for residents and support sustainable, long-term solutions.

13. Risks and Mitigation

- 13.1 The main risk in adopting the new Strategy is the potential failure to deliver its commitments. This will be mitigated through a detailed action plan, supported by strong partnership working, clear processes, and regular performance monitoring, including annual reporting through the agreed governance framework.
- 13.2 There is also a risk that the Strategy becomes outdated due to changing national policy or local needs. This will be addressed through routine management reviews, data analysis, and regular engagement with the

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) regional advisers.

- 13.3 A further risk is misalignment across the wider system, including statutory and voluntary partners. This is mitigated through established partnership governance arrangements, including the Rotherham Homelessness Strategic Board, and ongoing collaboration with the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority to support coordinated delivery and maximise access to regional funding opportunities.

14. Accountable Officers

Sarah Clyde, Service Director of Housing

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers: -

	Named Officer	Date
Chief Executive	John Edwards	22/04/26
Executive Director of Corporate Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	13/04/26
Service Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Phil Horsfield	13/04/26

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