

ROTHERHAM'S HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION & ROUGH SLEEPER STRATEGY 2023-2026



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FOREWORD

I am pleased to introduce Rotherham's Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeper Strategy. The strategy sets out the key challenges, priorities and objectives for preventing and tackling homelessness across Rotherham over the next three years.

This strategy builds on our 2019-22 strategy. I am very grateful for the commitment and compassion of everyone who helped respond to homelessness over the last three years, particularly in response to the challenges during the Covid pandemic. We have seen some amazing work undertaken by partner organisations, Council teams and the community.

Over the past three years, Rotherham has experienced both an increase in homelessness, and an increase in the complexity of the needs homeless households face. As we move forward, we face challenges and opportunities. The challenges include the cost-of-living crisis and the fragile national economic picture, the lack of affordable decent housing and the continuous demand on council resources .

In order to successfully prevent homelessness, Rotherham will need to prepare those most vulnerable to homelessness and the services that support the strategy for the challenges that may lie ahead.

The Council recognises that partnership working is the key to tackling homelessness. Now more than ever we need to work together to respond to the challenges ahead and to be innovative in our thinking, finding lasting solutions to tackle homelessness and support our most vulnerable residents. We must build on our relationships with voluntary and statutory services, housing associations, private landlords, and those providing employment, welfare and financial inclusion services, all of whom will need to play a larger role in preventing homelessness.

Therefore, the strategy represents a partnership response to preventing and tackling homelessness. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to all of the individuals and organisations who have contributed to the development of the strategy.



Cllr. Amy Brookes,
Cabinet Member for Housing

INTRODUCTION

The vision for tackling homelessness in Rotherham

The Council has a duty under the Homelessness Act 2002 to review the nature and extent of homelessness at least every five years. This review has been used to develop this strategy, which sets out how the Council and partners will tackle homelessness issues in Rotherham.

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy sets out the Council's priorities for addressing all forms of homelessness in the Borough over the next three years. It will also contribute towards meeting the Government's pledge to end rough sleeping altogether by 2027.

Many people are already in crisis before they approach a homelessness service, therefore the strategy reflects the need to focus on prevention and early intervention. We want fewer people in Rotherham to experience the trauma of homelessness, and ensure that those who do can find a settled home quicker.

Tackling homelessness requires strong partnerships with neighbouring local authorities, housing associations, along with positive engagement with the private rented sector and voluntary sector agencies.

Our Vision

- 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 to prevent homelessness and enable recovery

We have developed six key priorities to enable us to achieve our vision. **The six key priorities for the 2023-26 period are:**

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

CONTEXT

Since the previous Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeper Strategy was developed in 2019, we have seen many changes, mostly due to the Covid 19 pandemic. In March 2020, the Government instructed all Councils to adopt the “Everyone In” approach to safeguard homeless people and those at risk of rough sleeping. The Council rose to the challenge by ensuring a swift and effective response to finding accommodation for rough sleepers or those most at risk of homelessness.

Working flexibly during the pandemic allowed homelessness services to continue to operate throughout lockdown, strengthening existing relationships and enabling new partnerships with community support groups to flourish. This strategy will continue to build on the lessons learned during lockdown.

Cost of Living Crisis

As we continue recovery following the pandemic, the increased cost of living brings a wave of new challenges. The number of people in Rotherham facing fuel poverty will likely increase as household bills rise, and more people will find themselves turning to the Council for housing support.

The housing market is also shifting. Increased house prices and rents are further limiting the housing options of people with low incomes, with much of the private sector out of reach for local people and interest rates and other household bills rising, causing concern for home owners too.



The Local Housing Allowance (LHA) has not kept pace with the market, resulting in an increasingly unaffordable private rented market for households on low incomes who are dependent either wholly or in part for assistance with their housing costs. There is a direct link between the LHA gap limiting access to housing and the increase in the number of homelessness applications resulting from a loss of accommodation within that sector.

Housing Supply

Addressing the housing market issues is a priority for the Housing Strategy. An historic lack of supply of affordable housing is now resulting in an imbalance, and people with lower incomes face limited choices. Mortgages are out of reach for many, private rents are increasingly unaffordable and social housing is in short supply. The Council will work alongside housing providers to increase the supply of affordable housing, to enable people to have a place to call home and offer long term stability. Where homelessness cannot be avoided it is important that we increase intervention activity to enable people back into settled housing accommodation quickly and sufficiently so that they do not fall back into homelessness.



The Changing Profile of Homelessness

The strategy acknowledges the necessity to respond to the increasing number of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness who have complex needs. Complex needs may include entrenched street homelessness, repeat service use or being otherwise vulnerably housed, mental, psychological, or emotional health needs, drug and/or alcohol dependency. Some individuals will have had contact with the criminal justice system, have physical health needs and have experience of domestic violence and abuse.

Rotherham has a proud history of welcoming those fleeing war and persecution, most recently through our residents stepping up to offer sanctuary to Ukrainians through the Homes for Ukraine scheme, but non-UK nationals seeking housing in Rotherham can lead to further pressures on stretched homelessness services. Our experience is that these households want to find stable housing as soon as possible and are strongly motivated to work if they are not already doing so, but some have specific needs including language barriers and experience of trauma, which can increase risk of homelessness.

Rough Sleeping

The number of people sleeping rough are at low levels compared to some boroughs and cities. In November 2022, the official Government rough sleeper count for Rotherham was zero, down from 16 in 2018/19. Much of this has been achieved through the work over the last three years of the Council's Rough Sleeper Initiative Team and excellent partnership working. The Council remains focused on ending rough sleeping and will concentrate on the prevention of rough sleeping and the coordination of the range of support provisions to help people with their recovery and transition into settled housing.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

At the core of this strategy there are a number of guiding principles that will underpin our approach to both the development and delivery of homelessness services throughout its lifespan.

These principles have been co-produced with the wider homelessness sector partners and Council colleagues.



Partnership Working

We will have a strong focus on partnership working, expanding upon the relationships developed to tackle the many challenges that exist around homelessness and inequalities.



Person Centred

We will work with people as individuals and support their unique situations, aspirations, strengths, and personal challenges.



Solution Focused

We will create, share, and replicate best practice and innovation to find lasting solutions in responses to homelessness and its prevention across Rotherham.



Responsive

We will respond quickly and effectively, ensuring we safeguard people and provide effective flexible services. Whilst we will focus our efforts on prevention, where homelessness does occur, we will make sure the experience is as brief as possible and not repeated.

UNDERSTANDING HOMELESSNESS

Individuals do not have to be living on the street to be homeless - even if they have a roof over their head they can still be without a home. Whilst rough sleeping is the most visible form of homelessness and will be perceived by many as representative of homelessness generally, it in fact represents one of the smallest percentages of homelessness in Rotherham. The following housing circumstances are examples of homelessness:

- Without a shelter of any kind (sleeping rough).
- With a place to sleep but temporary (in institutions or a shelter).
- Living in insecure housing (threatened with severe exclusion due to insecure tenancies, eviction, domestic violence, or staying with family and friends - 'sofa surfing').
- Living in inadequate housing (illegal campsites, in unfit housing, or in extreme overcrowding).

Local Authorities have a duty to take reasonable steps to help prevent homelessness up to 56 days before it happens.

People become homeless for lots of different reasons. There are social causes of homelessness, such as a lack of affordable housing, poverty and unemployment, and life events which push people into homelessness.

People are forced into homelessness when they leave prison, care or the armed forces with no home to go to. Many people experiencing homelessness have escaped a violent or abusive relationship. People also become homeless because they can no longer afford the rent or mortgage.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK NATIONAL CONTEXT

The Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeper Strategy has been developed in response to a number of legal duties and powers, and with regard to national and local policy.

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) is the Government department with responsibility for housing and homelessness.

Homelessness

While the Homelessness Act 2002 contains the strategic duties, the main operational legislation on homelessness is contained in the Housing Act 1996 ("the 1996 Act"). This includes a statutory definition of homelessness which broadly means that you may be legally homeless if:

- You have no legal right to live in accommodation anywhere in the world.
- You have a home but cannot get into it for some reason.
- It is not reasonable to stay in your home, for example because you are at risk of violence or abuse or because of affordability problems.
- You are forced to live apart from your family, or people you normally live with, because there is no suitable accommodation for you.
- You are living in very poor conditions, such as overcrowding.

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 This Act made sweeping changes to the 1996 Act demonstrating the direction of government policy: towards a more collaborative approach between the local housing authority and the customer and also between public bodies, with a focus upon preventing homelessness rather than tackling it once it has happened. The key changes were:

- **A prevention duty:** the Council must take reasonable steps to prevent homelessness for any eligible household at risk of homelessness within 56 days, regardless of priority need. This can involve assisting them to stay in their current accommodation or helping them to find a new place to live.
- **A relief duty:** the Council must take reasonable steps to help a household to secure suitable accommodation. Help could be, for example, providing a bond guarantee, funding a rent deposit or working with a private landlord to make properties available.
- **Personal Housing Plans:** Personal Housing Plans: the Council must carry out a holistic assessment of the applicant's housing needs, support needs and the circumstances that led to them becoming homeless.
- **A Duty to Refer:** certain named public authorities must refer users of their service, who they have reason to believe are homeless or threatened with homelessness, to a local housing authority of the service user's choice. The aim of this is to help people to get access to homeless services as soon as possible and ensure that people's housing needs are considered when they come into contact with a range of public bodies.

Rough Sleeper Strategy The Government published a Rough Sleeper Strategy in August 2018 that lays out their commitment to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and end it by 2027. The work to deliver these aims is built around three core pillars: Prevention (understanding the issues that lead to rough sleeping and providing timely support for those at risk), Intervention (helping those already sleeping rough with swift support tailored to their individual circumstances) and Recovery (supporting people in finding a new home and rebuilding their lives).

Welfare Reform Act 2012 The major proposal for reform was the introduction of Universal Credit, which replaced the previous in and out of work benefits. Welfare reforms present ongoing challenges to households in receipt of benefits and to the organisations and individuals that house and support them. Most notably, since the introduction of Universal Credit, local authorities and social housing providers have reported its impact on claimants' ability to meet their household costs.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 This Act addresses the needs of victims of domestic abuse, the act imposes a duty on the Council's to provide support in safe accommodation and that all eligible victims of domestic abuse have a priority need for assistance.

The Care Act 2014 The Care Act set a strong expectation that agencies would work together to protect children, young adults and people with care and support needs.

Children Act 1989 The Children Act sets out clear expectations on the requirement for suitable housing for 16- and 17-year-olds, looked after children and preparing care leavers for independent living. Subsequent guidance and case law has clarified how social and housing services should work together.

LOCAL CONTEXT

Council Plan (2022-25) The Council Plan sets out an ambitious programme to improve the lives of people in Rotherham with five key themes



Housing Strategy (2022-25) The Housing Strategy provides an overview of Rotherham's housing needs and local housing market related issues. The Housing Strategy's six key priorities for the 2022-25 period are:

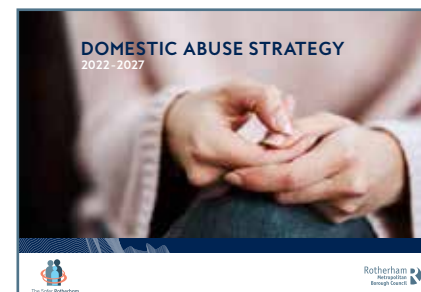
High quality new homes

- Affordable homes to meet local need.
- Investment in existing homes.
- Bringing empty homes back into use.
- Supporting people to live independently.
- Strengthening communities.



The Domestic Abuse Strategy (2022-2027)

- Prevention and Early Intervention.
- Justice and Ongoing Protection.
- Responding to Changing Need and Demand.
- Minimising Harm through the Provision of Early Help.
- Support for Children and Families.
- Providing Safe Accommodation and Appropriate Support.



What is Local Data Telling Us?

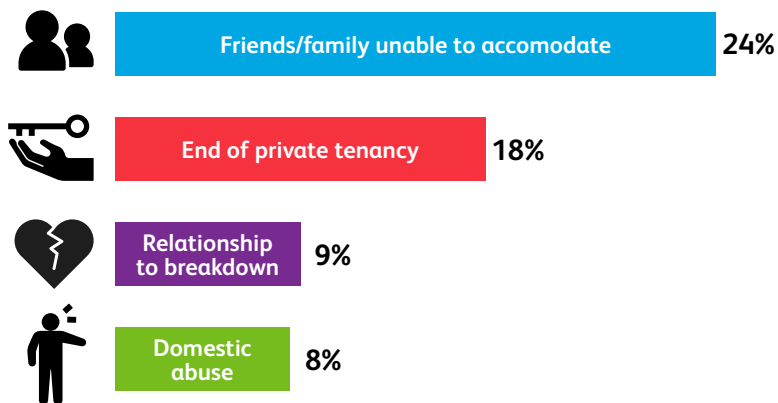
- **April-Sept 2022**
there were **538**
homeless
applicants/
households



- There has been
a **decrease year
on year** for the
last three years:



Main reasons for homelessness

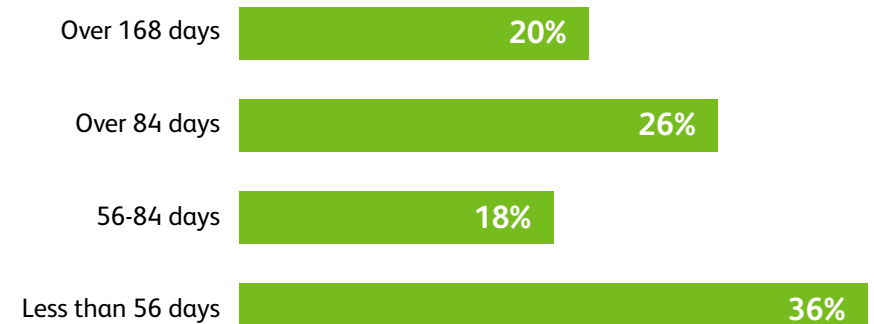


Demand for Emergency Temporary Accommodation

- Last year (2021/2022) there were 217 homeless cases closed at the prevention stage. A further 614 were closed at the relief stage. This is a combined total of 76 % of homeless cases closed due to being prevented and relieved.
- The number of households living in temporary accommodation has steadily reduced over the period of April 2022 to November 2022.
- At the start of 2022, there were a total of 202 households living in hotels and council dispersed temporary accommodation, of which 96 households were residing in hotels. (80 single people and 16 families with dependent children).
- As of 24th November 2022, this had reduced to a combined total of 123, reducing households residing in hotels to 25. (23 single people and 2 families with dependent children).

Snapshot December 2022

Length of time homeless households living in temporary accommodation

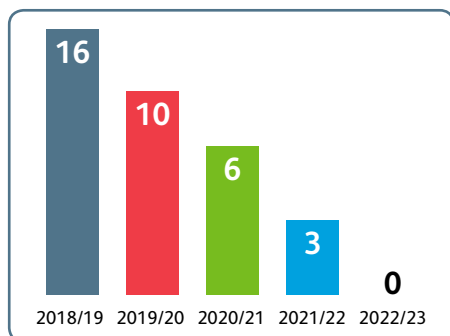


Complex Needs and Homelessness

Complex needs are defined as a lead applicant having 2 or more areas of vulnerability, such as substance misuse, offending behaviour, mental, physical ill health and domestic abuse.



Rough Sleeper Counts

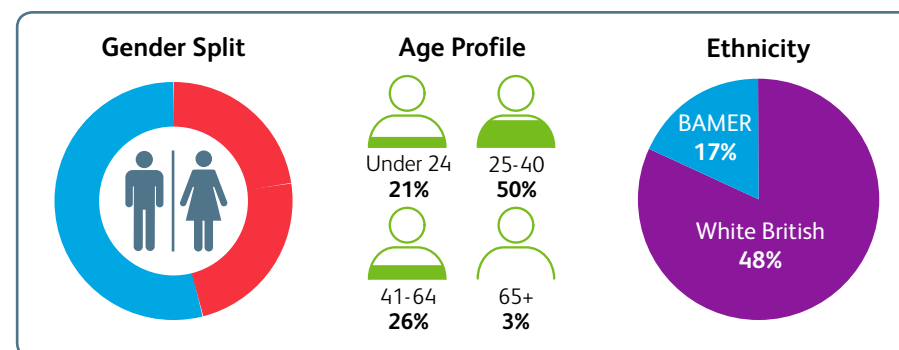
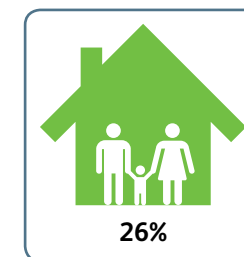


Move on Housing Types

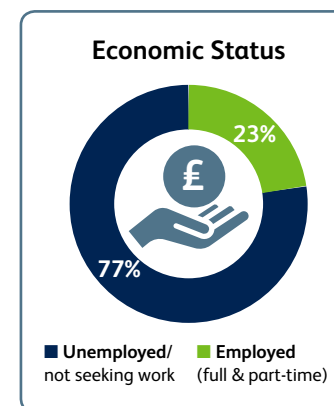
- A total of 792 homeless households were rehoused between April 2020 and March 2021.
- The highest supply of housing was council housing, 457 were housed into council properties, 146 into supported housing, 76 into Housing Association properties and 113 rehoused into private rented tenancies.
- In the first 6 months of 2022-23, there has been a decline in private rented housing lettings for homeless households.

Household Composition

- One or more dependent child under the age of 16 years.



BAMER (Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic and Refugee)



Priority 1. Make homelessness a rare occurrence by focusing on prevention and early intervention

Why is this important?

The prevention of homelessness is a national and local priority, and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 has meant that the Council needs to take a proactive approach to help people at risk of homelessness, to sustain tenancies and prevent them from becoming homeless again.

Many people approaching the Council are already in crisis before they approach the homelessness service. This provides limited time to resolve their housing situation and therefore increases demand for emergency temporary accommodation.

By focusing on more early homelessness prevention, we can help people to remain in their homes, or to find a new home without experiencing homelessness. We want to stop homelessness before it happens and where it cannot be avoided it is important to ensure that it is a rare occasion.



What we have done so far:

- 76 % of homeless cases were resolved within 56 days between April 2021 – March 2022, of which 26 % were at the prevention stage.
- We improved access to information, providing more help and advice to help prevent homelessness. This included publishing a handbook information booklet called H.O.M.E (Helping Others Made Easy).
- We have improved the coordination to hospital discharges, ensuring that there is a housing plan for everyone and reducing time spent in hospital.
- We have increased early homelessness prevention awareness for young people with learning difficulties by funding additional Early Help workers in Children's Services to support families at risk.
- We have worked closely with our colleagues in Children's Services to develop a housing pathway, giving them a choice about where they live and support to enable them to sustain their housing.
- We have funded the development of an online Tenancy Training Programme.

Over the next 3 years

- We will increase targeted early prevention activities, including to low-income households who need advice with debt and budget management who may be struggling through the cost-of-living crisis.
- We will continue to carry out Council tenancy health checks with welcome visits to identify any support needs for intervention.
- We will improve communications and engagement with private landlords so that we can intervene sooner where there is a risk of eviction.

- We will strengthen the Adult Social Care Pathway by improving the coordination and integration of support services around individuals and families to recognise the impacts of recurring instances of homelessness (including trauma) and act to prevent these where possible, adapting multi-disciplinary approaches which are focused on the best interest of the person.
- Victims of Domestic Abuse presenting as homeless will continue to be provided with a specialist Domestic Abuse and Housing Support Officer at the first point of contact.
- We will review the 16/17-year-old joint protocol with Children's and Young People's service to prevent homelessness amongst young people.
- We will review what resources are linked to the First Response service to support families in crisis.
- We will continue to improve pathways into sustainable housing for Care Leavers.

Impact Measures

- Increase the number of homelessness cases resolved at the prevention stage
- Increase the proportion of homelessness cases opened and resolved within 56 days from 76 % to 80 % by March 2024 (Target to be reviewed annually)
- Reduced number of households reapproaching the homelessness service within 12 months of their homelessness being resolved.



Priority 2. Minimise the use and improve the quality of temporary accommodation, and end the use of hotels

Why is this important?

Our main focus is to prevent homelessness and our long-term goal is to reduce the use of all forms of temporary accommodation. However, where homelessness cannot be avoided, it's important to make sure that we have sufficient, good quality temporary accommodation available, and ensure stays in temporary accommodation are as brief as possible by supporting them to move on to settled housing sooner.

Recently the Council has made more use of hotel accommodation to supplement the Council's own temporary accommodation units. The Council strives to ensure that stays in hotels are provided as a last resort and for as brief as possible. Unlike self-contained accommodation with facilities such as kitchen and cooking facilities, hotels do not provide suitable provisions to enable households to eat healthily and within an affordable budget. They are also very expensive to provide. Therefore, we want to work towards ending the use of hotels as temporary accommodation.

What we have done so far:

- Since March 2022 we have reduced the number of households living in hotels from 96 to 16 as of January 2023 (reduction of 80).
- Since March 2022 we have reduced the overall number of households living in temporary accommodation from 202 to 111 (reduction of 91).
- We have set up four temporary accommodation dwellings for hospital discharges, providing a safe place to live and ensuring there is a plan to move on into more settled housing in place.

- We have provided two accessible temporary furnished accommodation properties for people with a disability.
- We have increased temporary accommodation for households fleeing domestic abuse, providing up to 14 furnished properties and support for households.
- We have recruited specialist domestic abuse support workers who support households who are experiencing homelessness and in temporary accommodation.

Over the next 3 years

- We will seek to end the use of expensive nightly paid hotels.
- To support this goal, as an interim measure we will increase temporary accommodation available to the Council from 114 to 130 by March 2025.
- Over the longer term we want to reduce the use of temporary accommodation through a stronger focus on prevention.
- We will review the current temporary accommodation portfolio to ensure it continues to meet local need.
- We will improve the quality standards of temporary accommodation by developing temporary accommodation lettable standards.
- We will improve reletting times of our temporary accommodation.

Impact Measures

- End the routine use of hotels as temporary accommodation by March 2025.
- Reduced the average time spent in temporary accommodation.

Priority 3. Increase access to affordable housing options

Why is this important?

Having a home that is affordable allows households to put down roots in a community, provides a sense of belonging and supports emotional wellbeing. Being on a low-income creates barriers to accessing and sustaining affordable housing. The short supply of affordable housing is a significant driver of homelessness and despite the Council best efforts to increase affordable housing, demand continues to outstrip supply.

Our aim is to improve the housing options available to homeless households, including increasing the accessibility of private rented housing. We also want to make sure that all households in Rotherham are given fair access to social housing and our duties are effectively met.

The Housing Strategy 2022-2026 aims to increase affordable homes through new build and bringing empty homes back into use.

What we have done so far:

- During April 2020 and March 2021, 791 homeless households were rehoused into settled housing.
- We have delivered more affordable homes across the borough, either directly or by working with housing providers to meet local need.
- We have reviewed the Council's Housing Allocations Policy and made amendments to enable people who are in or have served in the armed forces to access social housing regardless of local connection.
- All applicants have an affordability assessment prior to being offered council accommodation.

- We have worked with stakeholders and partners to identify and provide clear housing pathways for vulnerable groups.
- We have increased the number of supported housing available in Rotherham.

Over the next 3 years

- We will increase the number of households rehoused into private rented accommodation.
- We will explore landlord incentives to help increase access to affordable private rented housing.
- We will continue to help secure private rented housing by supporting financial assistance for tenancy deposits and rent in advance.
- We will increase the number of social housing, by building more council housing and working in partnership with registered social housing providers.
- We will review the Housing Allocations Policy.
- We will work in partnership with our commissioning colleagues to review housing related support and accommodation needs in Rotherham.

Impact Measures

- Increased number of households rehoused into settled housing (Council, Housing Association, private rented and supported housing). Between April 2020 and March 2021 there were 791 households rehoused into settled housing, we will use these figures for our baseline.

Priority 4. Improve access to housing support, employment and health services

Why is this important?

Having access to good quality advice and information can play a key role in homelessness prevention and intervention, as well as tackling health inequalities. Getting the right advice and support can avoid a need for more serious interventions. The key is to understand each household's situation and what can be done to improve outcomes, building on their strengths including their community connections.

Support is often needed to help households navigate through the benefit system, or to overcome complex barriers to finding and staying in employment. Homeless individuals can also often experience multiple long-term health conditions and face multiple barriers to accessing healthcare.

Our aim is to ensure that households that are affected by the cost of living crisis can access quality advice and support, to maximise their income and address housing and health problems early.

What we have done so far:

- We have completed thousands of pre-tenancy affordability assessments to help avoid future homelessness cases, including more than 2,200 since April 2022.
- We have supported residents with claims for benefit entitlements, generating more than £1.1m additional income for residents in the last year.
- We have provided holistic tenancy support to more than 1,100 council tenants since April 2022 resulting in 97% of tenancies being sustained 6 months after the threat of eviction.

- We have supported over 400 people into employment and over 500 into training since October 2020.
- We have worked with a number of homelessness providers who deliver support to vulnerable households.



Over the next 3 years

- We will ensure households are supported through the cost-of-living crisis, including through our financial inclusion offer.
- We will continue to increase opportunities for employment, training, volunteering, and education to all households.
- We will work with health partners and help to reduce health inequalities for all homeless households.
- We will promote the use of translation services for applicants where English is not their first language.

Impact Measures

- Increased proportion of homeless households successfully connected to employment, training, education, or volunteering opportunities.
- Reduced number of evictions for rent arrears or repossessions.

Priority 5. Support people with complex needs

Why is this important?

Complex needs may include entrenched street homelessness, repeat service use or being otherwise vulnerably housed, mental, psychological, or emotional health needs, drug and/or alcohol dependency. Some individuals will have had contact with the criminal justice system, have physical health needs and have experience of domestic violence and abuse.

Access to appropriate and timely drug, alcohol and mental health treatments can play a vital role in moving people away from homelessness and into long term recovery. Some people find it difficult to access and engage with mainstream health services, particularly primary care services (GPs), and as a result health problems may be left untreated.

Problems can also arise on discharge from hospital, particularly for those who do not have accommodation to return to or those that may find their existing accommodation is now inappropriate or unsafe for them. This can have a negative effect on ongoing health care and lead to readmission to hospital.

People leaving prison or those who have experienced the criminal justice system are at higher risk of homelessness for a number of reasons, they may have a history of homelessness before entering the criminal justice system, have dependencies on drugs or alcohol or simply are unable to get support finding the right sort of accommodation on release from prison.

Our aim is to increase specialist housing provision and support for people with complex needs to enable them to sustain their housing.

What we have done so far:

- We increased the number of Rotherham Housing First properties from 25 to 35, providing 10 additional homes for people experiencing homelessness.
- We developed a service to support people experiencing homelessness with complex needs living in temporary accommodation to help them with their transition from temporary accommodation into more settled housing.
- The Council has joint funded the Probation Service specialist support workers for a supported housing project primarily for individuals leaving custody or at risk of reoffending, to enable them to work towards greater independence and recovery.
- We have employed a specialist housing officer to support the move on pathway for hospital discharges and prison leavers.



Over the next 3 years

- We will work with partners to review the pathway into mental health services, to maximise the benefits of collaborative working and improve homeless households' experience and access to services across a 24/7 support model.
- We will continue to improve pathways for people leaving institutions and long-term accommodation, such as hospitals and prison.
- We will seek opportunities to develop different housing models for people with complex needs. This includes increasing Housing First for adults and for young people aged between 18 to 25 years, focusing on young people who are in care and preparing for adulthood.
- We will work with colleagues in Children's Services to understand service need for homeless young people with complex needs.
- We will increase awareness and knowledge of trauma informed practices across homeless service provisions.
- We will increase staff awareness of all vulnerable groups, for example people with Learning Disability and Autism, generally to inform service processes and best practice.

Impact Measures

- Increased number of households with complex needs rehoused into settled housing.
- Increased number of supported accommodation dwellings, including Housing First.
- Reduced number of repeat homelessness for households with complex needs, reapproaching the homelessness service within 12 months of being rehoused.

Housing First

Housing First is built upon the principle that housing is a human right. It focuses on first giving someone immediate access to a settled and secure home. This is placed above goals such as sobriety or abstinence. The model is specifically tailored for homeless people with complex and multiple needs.



Priority 6. End rough sleeping in Rotherham

Why is this important?

No-one should have to sleep rough and it is therefore a priority to ensure that there is sufficient provision in place to provide effective support to anyone who finds themselves sleeping rough or where the prospect of rough sleeping is imminent.

Our aim is to build on what we have achieved so far by maintaining rough sleeping at a zero level by continuing to respond to emerging changes in Rotherham.

What we have done so far:

- We have reduced the number of rough sleepers from 16 reported in 2019 to 0 reported in the November 2022 as part of the official rough sleeper count.
- We have been successful with Government funding bids and secured around £2,975,000 from the Rough Sleepers Initiative and Rough Sleepers Accommodation Programme.
- We have developed the Rough Sleeper Initiative Team; this provided specialist roles to respond and support move on to safe accommodation.
- We have commissioned an 8-bedroom supported housing emergency accommodation hub, to enable a swift and effective response to get people off the streets.
- We have developed a digital initiative which is an alternative to the Just Giving scheme which enables the public to donate to a local charity rather than to hand money to people begging.

- We have carried out regular rough sleeper counts and responded to the needs of all rough sleepers that we have made contact with.
- We have provided Severe Weather Emergency accommodation.
- We have worked together with partners to deliver a community drop-in service, hosted by Shiloh, a local homelessness charity



Over the next 3 years

- We will continue to deliver effective services with our partners and continue to develop community drop ins.
- We will continue to work closely with the Community Protection and South Yorkshire Police, responding to emerging issues of street begging.
- We will improve our understanding of the nature and causes of rough sleeping in Rotherham.
- We will ensure there is a clear SWEP (Severe Weather Emergency Protocols) protocol and provision to respond to need.
- We will provide rapid rehousing solutions to households experiencing rough sleeping.
- We will work with commissioning colleagues and providers to strengthen the pathway into commissioned supported housing.

Impact Measures

- There will be no rough sleepers in Rotherham.
- All rough sleepers are accommodated off the streets.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

Rotherham Council is committed to ensuring all parts of the community can access, engage with and benefit from services, and its Equalities Strategy sets out the three key priorities of:

1. Understanding, listening, and engaging across all communities
2. Delivering fair, inclusive, and accessible services
3. Empowering people to engage and challenge discrimination and to promote good community relations

Having access to good quality and affordable homes and support is important for all of our diverse communities.

The Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeper Strategy seeks to remove barriers which people can face in accessing housing and homelessness support.

People experiencing homelessness can have multiple disadvantages, which can include people with learning difficulties and or autism. In particular, those individuals with 'mild' learning disabilities, where their difficulties may not be obvious, so other people and services may not provide necessary support and may be at a greater risk of becoming homeless.

The Council's specialist learning difficulties housing officer will drive the importance of removing such barriers and act as an advocate where appropriate raising awareness of best practice within housing services.

The strategy will support the need to increase staff awareness through training and development on how to identify when individuals require additional support and appropriate reasonable adjustments. This may include assisted communication or specific approaches and strategies that are known to be helpful to best engage and support the individual.

Where an applicant's first language is not English, the Council will provide translated information and interpreting services and publicise the availability of these services to residents and community organisations.

The Council will use data, engage and consult a diverse range of people to understand Rotherham's communities and what is important to them to ensure all the priorities within the strategy meet the needs of all groups of people, in particular those who are the most marginalised in our communities. We will continue to engage with our communities including people who have experienced homelessness and make sure current and future service provisions meet the need of our communities.



WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

Our engagement with the sector, and subsequent consultation, underlined the importance of a partnership-based and multi-agency approach to tackling homelessness. We want to make homelessness everyone's business: by everyone playing an active role, we can affect the greatest positive change.

Individual voices and stories have provided valuable insights around what the homeless system looks like from within and what can be done differently

People with lived experience have contributed towards the aims of the strategy. This gave us valuable insight around what the current homeless systems looks and feels like. We want to build on this moving forward by providing an opportunity for people with lived experience to get involved. With an aim to ensure services we deliver are both relevant and of value. This approach will strengthen our partnership with people who can provide expertise through their own lived experience.

The Council works with partners through various forums, including the Homelessness Forum and Rotherham Strategic Housing Forum.

We will work in partnership with the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority to access funding opportunities to help fund viable solutions to tackle homelessness in Rotherham.

The diagram below outlines the various roles involved in the delivery of this strategy with the person experiencing or at risk of homelessness at the core of everything this strategy seeks to deliver.



OUR APPROACH TO DEVELOPING THE STRATEGY

Our co-design, engagement and consultation approach involved listening and interacting with a range of people. This included homelessness service users, the public, partners and colleagues, which has helped inform and shape the strategy.

The strategy has been developed in partnership with key stakeholders. An extensive pre-consultation was followed by a public consultation which outlined the proposed approach and asked for their views. The Council acknowledges that people with lived experience are often best placed to advise on what will make a positive difference to their lives and this is reflected within the strategy.

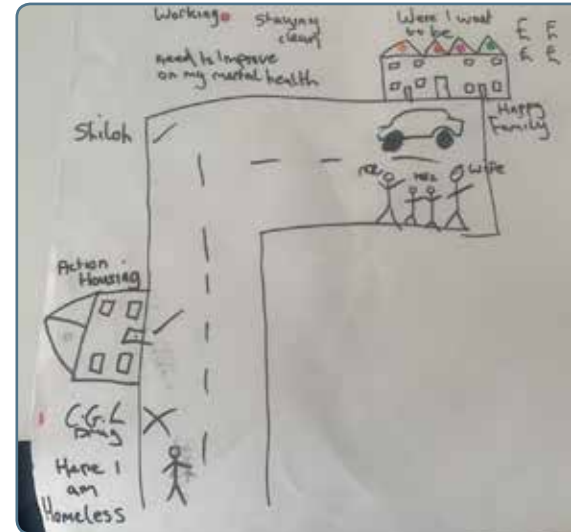
To ensure there were diverse conversations a range of different engagement methods to involve people were facilitated, so that we could hear the views of as many people as possible.



People with homelessness experience, expression through art, hosted by Shiloh and Crisis Skylight South Yorkshire 2022



Group session, Homelessness Service Team 2022



What's important to our customers, is also fundamental in the strategy:

To get support with my drugs and alcohol problems

To live in supported housing to help me get back on my feet

To make connections in the community, find new friends and opportunities

To improve on my mental health

To be able to get back to working

To keep staying clean

My end goal is.....

I want to be in a home of my own, settled with a happy family



GOVERNANCE

The Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeper Strategy is approved by Cabinet. The Council's Improving Places Select Commission will receive annual reports and provide scrutiny and challenge, to ensure we are focusing on and monitoring the right outcomes through the delivery of the strategy.

An Action Plan has been developed and we have assigned leads for each action.

We will report to the Homelessness Strategic Board bi-monthly, who will have oversight and provide challenge and help overcome any barriers we may come across in achieving our priorities.

To ensure effective partnership oversight, and to also provide challenge and help overcome any barriers, the Rotherham Homelessness Forum will meet twice a year to review progress. This will consist of senior managers from the Council, partners from the voluntary and statutory services.



Data Source used to help develop the strategy

The Council's homelessness cases data – which are local homelessness statistics on statutory homelessness applications, duties, and outcomes including demographic data for all households that have approached the service.

The Homeless Prevention and Rough Sleeper Strategy Review 2022, this contains local data and forms part of the supporting documents.

Local Population Data – this is part of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) which is a Council-wide collaboration bringing together data to assess the health needs of the local population. Housing is a wider determinant of health and has a significant impact on the wellbeing of our residents.

Strategic Housing Market Assessment – a research study (carried out in 2018) that helps us understand the nature and level of housing demand in Rotherham.

Council housing demand data – the number of bids we receive on council homes demonstrates the demand for different sizes. It also informs us of the demographics of those on the Housing Register and their needs.

Government Department for Levelling Up Housing Communities Data – which are official statistics on statutory homelessness applications, duties, and outcomes for local authorities in England.

Homelessness Monitor 2022 (Crisis UK) – analysis of homelessness impacts of recent economic and policy developments within the UK.

Census 2022 – national demographic makeup from the Census completed in 2021.

The Health Foundation, Data Hub, What Drive Health Inequalities – includes the links between housing and health, trends and inequalities in housing across different groups.

Everybody In, How to End Homelessness in Britain by Crisis UK.

Links to other key documents and data sources

Council Plan 2022-25 and Year Ahead Plan

Housing Strategy 2022 -2025

Health and Wellbeing Strategy

Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022-2027

Joint Strategic Needs Assessment - Rotherham Data Hub

Local Plan (including Sites and Policies Document and Core Strategy)

Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy

Rotherham Town Centre Masterplan

Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)

Tenant Engagement Framework

Ward Plans