

Report title: Kirklees Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 - 2029 & Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy 2024

Meeting	Place Scrutiny Panel
Date	12 August 2024
Cabinet Member	Cllr Moses Crook Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Transport and Housing.
Key Decision	Yes Affects all wards
Eligible for Call In	Yes
<p>Purpose of Report</p> <p>This paper seeks feedback from the Place Scrutiny Panel on the draft Kirklees Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 – 2029, as set out in Appendix 1 and summarised in sections 1 and 2 of this report, which will be considered for approval at Cabinet on the 10th September 2024.</p> <p>This paper also seeks feedback on the refreshed Kirklees Council – Housing Solutions Service Temporary Accommodation (TA) Placement Policy 2024, as set out in Appendix 2 and summarised in sections 1 and 2 of this report which will be considered for approval at Cabinet on 10th September 2024.</p>	
<p>Recommendations</p> <p>The Place Scrutiny Panel is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider and comment on the draft Kirklees Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, 2024 – 2029 (Appendix 1). • Consider and comment on the draft Kirklees Council – Housing Solutions Service Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy, 2024 (Appendix 2). 	
<p>Reasons for Recommendations</p> <p>The Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 – 2029 will enable the Council to fulfil its statutory duty to formulate and publish such a strategy every five years.</p> <p>The Strategy will also provide a framework for service development, resource prioritisation and partnership support, and thereby enhance outcomes for Kirklees residents who are vulnerable to or facing homelessness.</p>	

Resource Implications:

The Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy sets the strategic framework for the allocation of resources to homelessness and rough sleeping prevention. It also sets out how we will work with partners to make the best use of all available resources.

The Council has statutory duties to prevent and relieve homelessness, which give rise to direct resource implications. Over recent years, difficulties in sourcing sufficient housing options for homeless households against a backdrop of rising demand has resulted in a significant increase in costs to the Council particularly relating to much greater use of temporary accommodation. Indicative net costs for temporary accommodation in 2023/24 were up to £6.9 million, with hotel spend alone (gross) rising from £3.1 million in 2022 to £7.2 million in 2024 – although not all this spend relates to homelessness temporary accommodation placements.

The costs relating to delivering homelessness services and temporary accommodation are met through a variety of sources. Government grant(s) and partnership funding is utilised, but the majority of costs fall on the General Fund. The delivery of the priorities within the Strategy will therefore be crucial to the Council's aim to contain / reduce the growth in costs which has occurred over recent years.

Whilst the Strategy includes a commitment to looking for further funding to support homelessness prevention and support activities, it does not commit the local authority to provide or expand further funding to external partners. Partners have fed back that a stronger commitment from the local authority would help to ease uncertainty across the sector, and would enhance delivery of some of the priorities identified in the Strategy.

Electoral wards affected: All

Ward councillors consulted: Engagement has now taken place with all party groups, who have provided feedback on the proposed direction of travel of both the Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and the Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy.

Public or private: Public Cabinet report

Has GDPR been considered? Yes. Consent documents for case stories have been filed and shared with the Communications Team for holding centrally. The names of all people featured in case stories have been anonymised.

1. Executive Summary

1.1 Summary of the Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 - 2029, presented at Appendix 1

The Kirklees Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 – 2029 sets out the key issues around homelessness in Kirklees, the challenges we face, and the priorities that we aim to focus on over the next five years.

It is informed by local data and intelligence and aims to address changes at an operating level, including significant increases in the number of households in need of temporary accommodation at a time of on-going budget challenges.

In line with the Council's shared outcomes, the Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy focuses on achieving better outcomes for vulnerable children, providing high quality, joined-up and accessible services that safeguard children and

adults from harm, and working collaboratively to support people to live in suitable and affordable homes in attractive places within a supportive community.

1.2 Summary of the Kirklees Council – Housing Solutions Service Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy 2024, presented at Appendix 2

The Kirklees Housing Solutions Service Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy sets out how homeless households will be prioritised for temporary accommodation, both inside and outside of the district.

2. Information required to take a decision

2.1 Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

The refresh of the Kirklees Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy brings our cross-sector response to tackling homelessness and rough sleeping in the Kirklees district up to date, so that we are able to focus activities where they are needed most.

The 2024 Strategy updates our vision for Kirklees; placing greater emphasis on the importance of partnership working to achieve our shared goals. And in response to feedback during engagement, we have developed four new key themes which better reflect our joint priorities. These are set out in more detail below.

Early identification of any threat of homelessness, targeted interventions and the provision of high-quality advice and assistance ensures people have the best chance of staying in their home.

Working collaboratively with key partners and other stakeholders in the sector – including people affected by homelessness and rough sleeping – a deep dive has taken place into what's working well, achievements since the publication of the last Strategy, areas that need to be addressed, as well as future challenges, opportunities, and threats.

Our vision is for Kirklees to be a place where we work collaboratively to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping, where those most in need are able to access the right help, in the right place, at the right time.

We recognise that this vision can only be achieved by working with key partners and other stakeholders in the sector. Collaborative partnership working has also informed the objectives set out in this Strategy and helped to shape its four overarching priorities:

1. Strengthen partnership working to address homelessness and secure the right accommodation.
2. Rapid early help and intervention to prevent homelessness from occurring.
3. Access to long term, settled homes and temporary accommodation, which is safe, decent, accessible and affordable.
4. Tackle rough sleeping, to ensure that it is rare, brief, and not recurring.

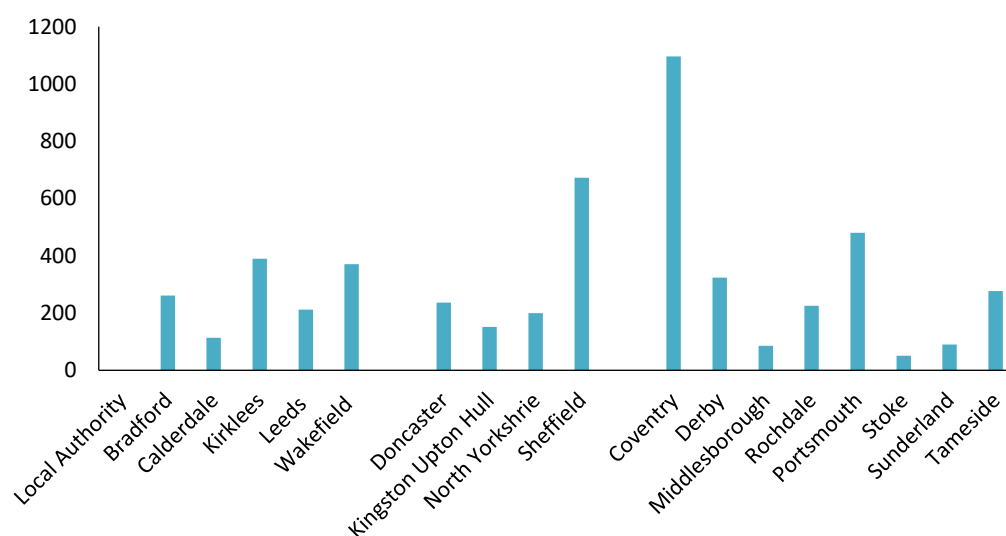
Meeting the housing needs of vulnerable people by preventing homelessness and supporting rough sleepers off the street and into appropriate housing with the right level and type of support are key priorities for this Strategy. As is actively working to reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation for prolonged periods.

Local authorities have a duty to accommodate homeless families or individuals who are assessed as meeting a 'priority need' criteria until they are able to secure long-term housing. These households are initially offered temporary accommodation, which is

intended be a short-term option for people when there is no other accommodation available to them.

Many local authorities across the country are experiencing rises in demand for temporary accommodation. Year on year comparisons show a significant increase in temporary accommodation need across Kirklees over the last five years.

The graph below shows a comparator snapshot of the number of households in temporary accommodation at the end of December 2023, across a range of local authorities. The other local authorities in the graph are a mix of near neighbours, other authorities with similar statistical characteristics (according to LG Inform) and a selection of other Key Cities.



With a growth in the requirement to provide temporary accommodation, and lack of available suitable options to enable households to move on quickly, the length of stay in temporary accommodation in Kirklees is too long for many, and there has been a significant increase in the number of households who have had to be accommodated in bed and breakfast hotels. The average length of time a household spends in all forms of temporary accommodation can be up to 24 months, dependant on the household circumstances – this is both inappropriate for the household and expensive for the public purse.

All four of the priorities within this Strategy will directly or indirectly explore ways to reduce temporary accommodation usage whilst still ensuring that statutory duties are met. The Strategy sets out how we will aim to encourage partners to use a strengths-based approach with residents to prevent homelessness from occurring in the first place; encourage those who find themselves in that predicament to present as early as possible rather than during immediate crisis and work to increase the accommodation options available to those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

There is a need to work with partners including Registered Providers to increase the range and suitability of affordable social and private rented sector housing - exploring new ways to diversify accommodation and support. Accessing greater numbers of tenancies through Registered Providers and private landlords will bring about significant benefits for homeless households through diverting from or shortening stays in temporary accommodation.

Additional objectives have also been built into the strategy which focus specifically on Kirklees residents who have the greatest housing need to ensure we are prioritising those at their most vulnerable but also making best use of resources. This includes maintaining and expanding, where possible, dedicated pathways and/or housing priority for care leavers (in support of our corporate parenting duties), supporting ex-offenders who are homeless at the point of leaving prison, households who have been subject to domestic abuse, those serving or who are veterans of our armed forces and those at risk of rough sleeping.

The overall success of the Strategy will be measurable through a positive direction of travel in these areas:-

- More positive homeless prevention outcomes
- Greater use of private rented sector accommodation
- Less reliance on bed and breakfast for temporary accommodation
- Reduced length of stay in all types of temporary accommodation; and
- Reduction in rough sleeping

This Strategy refresh has been undertaken during a period of unprecedented demand for homelessness support, and against a backdrop of uncertainty about future national policy, funding, and economic conditions, all of which impact upon delivery of the strategy's priorities. The priorities and actions linked to the Strategy may therefore require more comprehensive review in a timeframe that is earlier than the full five years.

2.2 Housing Solutions Service Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy 2024

This document sets out Kirklees Council's Policy for how homeless households will be prioritised for temporary accommodation, both inside and outside of the district.

The policy covers both interim placements made under Section 188 of the Housing Act 1996, while enquiries are made into a customer's homeless application and longer-term temporary accommodation placements for customers owed the main housing duty under Section 193 of the Housing Act 1996.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the Council prioritises customers who have the greatest need to be in or close to a particular location or need to move away from a particular location for safety reasons. Consideration will be given to the size of the household and the type of temporary accommodation available at the time.

The Policy sets out key principles, factors to be considered when making placements, along with how the Policy will be monitored and reviewed. The Policy confirms the Council's commitment to offering temporary accommodation within the Kirklees district, wherever possible, but acknowledges this is likely to depend on the availability of accommodation within Kirklees. Sourcing temporary accommodation within Kirklees rather than out of district is preferable both in terms of securing best value and also providing better customer outcomes.

3. Implications for the Council

3.1 Council Plan

Working with people, partners and place

The Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 - 29 will be centred on working with people affected by homelessness, enabling and empowering them to develop the skills, resilience and improvements in their health and wellbeing that they need to move on to a more settled, happy and stable situation.

Our priorities will primarily focus on those who are in the greatest housing need and will ensure a strengths-based approach is taken to work with people to achieve outcomes.

A collaborative approach has been taken in developing the Strategy. This means that the strategy is informed by a range of partners' perspectives and contributions. All of the objectives within the Strategy include actions which partners commit to developing and delivering, and the action planning and monitoring of the Strategy over the next five years will be undertaken through partnership collaboration.

The strategy recognises that Kirklees is a diverse community and that in addressing issues of homelessness and rough sleeping, a Place Based approach is needed. This includes consideration of people's local support networks, and where and how they access services.

The Strategy will highlight work taking place to ensure compliance with Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards and help to reduce energy bills, which contributes to ensuring people can remain living in their homes sustainably.

Improving outcomes for children

For young people at risk of homelessness, there is a long-standing partnership approach between Housing and Children's Services which ensures that no young people are unduly at risk as a result of losing their home. Joint protocols and pathways have been developed and we have seen continued success with 16 -17-year-olds presenting as homeless, with most returning home safely.

The Strategy also highlights the significance of early help and intervention, and tailored support which is key in addressing the housing needs of care leavers. The joint housing pathway in place for Kirklees care leavers has been developed to support the Council's corporate parenting duties.

The Strategy highlights the positive work taking place with Children's Services, and support being provided to our young people to prevent them from becoming homeless. In addition, the strategy includes objectives to improve outcomes for homeless households with children, in relation to securing more appropriate temporary and move-on housing options.

3.2 Financial Implications

The demand pressures arising from homelessness and in particular use of temporary accommodation are significant.

Enhancing homelessness prevention options, securing more sustainable accommodation outcomes for residents, along with a reduction in B&B usage will have a direct positive impact on the Council's financial position.

Current spend on homelessness, in particular temporary accommodation, is inefficient and perpetuates a lower standard of service provision below what we expect.

The objectives within this Strategy aim to enhance homeless prevention, secure more sustainable and suitable housing outcomes, and thereby slow down further growth in temporary accommodation use and reduce the amount of time households need to stay in temporary accommodation.

3.3 Legal Implications

The Homelessness Act 2002 places a statutory duty on all local housing authorities to carry out a homelessness review for their area and, in consultation with local partners and stakeholders, formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on the results of that review, at least every five years.

The Council's current Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy runs 2018 – 2023: [Kirklees Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018 - 2023](#) and was approved by Full Council on 17 July 2019.

A Supreme Court judgement in 2015 (Nzolameso Vs Westminster City Council) introduced a requirement that all Local Authorities should have a policy for allocating temporary accommodation (TA) to homeless households. One of the key drivers for this requirement is for LAs to minimise making TA placements 'out of borough' as far as practicable. Every LA's TA Placement Policy should be 'approved by democratically accountable members of the Council' and be made 'publicly available'.

Kirklees previously included its TA Placement Policy embedded within the Housing Allocations Policy, however during the recent refresh of the Allocations Policy it was decided to instead treat a refreshed TA Placement Policy as a standalone document, as it does not relate to the allocation of long-term social housing. An internal review of the TA Placement Policy has therefore been undertaken to reflect the current pressures on TA and current practice, and the draft refreshed policy is attached.

3.8 Other (e.g. Risk, Integrated Impact Assessment or Human Resources)

An IIA has been undertaken as part of the development of the Strategy. The case I.D is IIA-602315164.

The key challenges outlined in the Strategy identify the main risks we face in relation to homelessness pressures, in particular rough sleeping, use of temporary accommodation and the landscape for housing demand and support services. These risks are incorporated in and reviewed regularly by the Housing Services risk register. In light of the severity and likelihood of some of these risks, they are also subject to review at Corporate Risk Panel. The development of the Strategy is considered to be one of the mitigants for these risks, as the Strategy is designed to be a long-term framework for prioritising objectives and actions which in turn will address some of the homelessness pressures once implemented effectively.

In terms of the Armed Forces Covenant, this Strategy reflects the Council's commitment in relation to additional priority within the Housing Allocations Policy for homeless armed forces personnel/veterans. The priorities within the Strategy, particularly early help and prevention, access to long term homes and tackling rough sleeping will ensure appropriate homelessness advice and support is available.

4. Consultation

Consultation has taken place with both Political and Officer Groups as well as the Portfolio Holder for Housing on both the Policy and the Strategy.

During engagement it was suggested that greater emphasis be placed on how the Strategy will address increasing demand for temporary accommodation, by securing more sustainable accommodation outcomes for residents, along with a reduction in B&B usage - enhancing our tenancy relations function, for example, to support this aim.

A request was also made for more information on the sources of funding to help tackle homelessness and rough sleeping, including grant funding and cost pressures on the general fund, and for more detailed evidence from the data review to be included in the Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

Comments and feedback have been used to help further develop and enhance both documents and are also reflected in the priorities and objectives set out in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

5. Engagement

We have worked collaboratively across the sector to develop the Kirklees Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 – 2029; consulting extensively with partners, who have been instrumental in the process of developing the priorities and objectives in this Strategy and who will play a crucial role in its delivery.

In preparing this strategy and developing the priorities and objectives, we have engaged with a number of key stakeholders, including:

- Kirklees Homelessness Forum (KHF).
- Registered Providers.
- People with lived experience of homelessness.
- Kirklees Health Inclusion Group (KHIG).
- Colleagues from across the Council, including Homes and Neighbourhoods, Childrens and Adult Services.
- DLUHC specialist homelessness advisor.

6. Options

6.1 Options Considered

The Place Scrutiny Panel is asked to provide comments and feedback on the draft Kirklees Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, 2024 – 2029 and the Kirklees Council – Housing Solutions Service Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy 2024 which will be considered for approval at Cabinet on 10th September 2024.

6.2 Reasons for recommended option

The Homelessness Act 2002 places a statutory duty on all local housing authorities to formulate, agree and publish a homelessness and rough sleeping strategy at least every five years.

The Council's current [Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy](#) was approved by Full Council in July 2019 and expires this year.

7 Next steps and timelines

It is proposed that approval is sought for the Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and Temporary Accommodation Policy at Cabinet, on 10th September 2024.

It is also proposed that the priorities set out in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy will be delivered through an action plan to be developed once the strategy is approved. The action plan will then be monitored and reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that actions remain relevant and to capture any emerging issues, as well as policy and legislative change.

Action plan monitoring will include regular review of key performance indicators associated with homelessness and rough sleeping.

8 Contact officer

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9 Background Papers and History of Decisions

The current Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy was approved by Council on 19th July 2019: [Item 10 1.pdf \(kirklees.gov.uk\)](#)

10 Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Draft Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 – 2029
- Appendix 2 – Draft Kirklees Council – Housing Solutions Service Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy 2024

11 Service Director responsible

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