



Kirklees Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

A partnership approach

2024 - 2029

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Foreword

I am pleased to introduce this refresh of the Kirklees Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy which sets out how, working collaboratively with our partners, we will tackle homelessness and rough sleeping across the Kirklees district.

The Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy supports both the shared outcomes for Kirklees, set out in the Council's Corporate Plan, as well as the delivery of priorities in our key partnership strategies, including the Health and Wellbeing Plan.

Through the implementation of the Strategy we hope to increase prevention of homelessness, reduce rough sleeping and ensure that our residents have access to high quality, joined-up services and the right help, in the right place, at the right time.

It is well documented that homelessness services across the country are under pressure. A lack of affordable private rented properties, in addition to an acute shortage of social housing and a squeeze on household budgets as a result of rising prices, is leaving some households vulnerable to or facing homelessness.

In Kirklees we are seeing an increase, year on year, in the numbers of households at the point of crisis before approaching the Council for help with rehousing, resulting in a significant rise in temporary accommodation demand – something we must address as a priority action.

Despite the challenges and pressures the sector faces, we have seen a number of notable achievements over recent years which are acknowledged in this Strategy.

We are committed to driving forward, alongside partner organisations, the delivery of services that have a real impact on the lives of some of our most vulnerable residents.

Cllr Moses Crook, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Transport and Housing

Introduction

The Kirklees Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for 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. In Kirklees, we recognise that 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.

We also recognise that our vision for preventing homelessness and rough sleeping can only be achieved by working with key partners and other stakeholders in the sector – including the Kirklees Homelessness Forum, health colleagues and Registered Providers operating across the area.

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.

This 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.

Collaborative partnership working has informed the refresh of this Strategy and helped to shape its four overarching priorities:

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

The Strategy sets out some of the key achievements that have contributed to preventing homelessness, securing accommodation, providing support and resources, and minimising the risk of rough sleeping across our district since the last Strategy was published in July 2019.

And it highlights the increasing challenges and pressures we face in supporting some of our most vulnerable residents.

To support this Strategy refresh, and in line with government guidance, a review of homelessness and rough sleeping across the Kirklees district has taken place. In addition, a deep dive has taken place into what's working well, areas that need to be addressed, as well as future opportunities and threats.

The views of service users have also been central to shaping our priorities and objectives. Their lived experiences can be found in the case studies that run throughout this strategy.

Our shared approach aims to build on successful collaborative working across the statutory and voluntary sectors, as well as the private rented sector.

Moving forward, this Strategy will support decision-making and the monitoring and delivery of priorities. It will help us to draw in resources behind the priorities and provide assurance that we are acting on homelessness and rough sleeping; maximising homelessness prevention and enabling access to appropriate advice and support when homelessness and rough sleeping does arise.

The priorities set out in this Strategy will be delivered through an action plan which will 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.

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.

Background

There are a number of different definitions of the term 'homelessness'. Whilst it is often a term identified with people who are sleeping rough on the streets, this group of people only account for a very small proportion of all homeless households.

In this Strategy, the term 'homelessness' includes those who are staying temporarily with friends or family, sofa-surfing, staying in a hostel, squatting or at risk of violence in their home. It also includes those who are living in such unsuitable conditions it is unreasonable to occupy or those who have no legal right to occupy where they are living.

Homelessness affects many households, including those who have accommodation but are unable to continue to live there due to their individual circumstances, such as financial hardship, relationship breakdown or legally compliant repossession by a landlord.

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping in Kirklees

Overview of current homelessness challenges

Housing insecurity and levels of homelessness are increasing right across the country, with Kirklees being no exception. This is compounded by the lack of availability of social housing as well as the availability and affordability of private rented sector accommodation.

- Local authorities and partners face increasing demand with fewer housing options available to help people in to. As of January 2024, there were over 18,400 households on the Housing Register across the Kirklees District (compared with 11,000 in 2018). The number of lettings per year by the Council, and through nominations to housing associations, is approximately 1,800.
- More people are presenting as homeless at the point of crisis, limiting the ability to explore preventative options.
- Many of those who present as homeless or in housing need have a range of complex vulnerabilities, which compound the difficulties faced in securing appropriate accommodation for them and also the specialist support they require.

- Year on year comparisons show a significant increase in temporary accommodation need across Kirklees. The rising demand for temporary accommodation has meant that there is not enough self-contained temporary accommodation available to meet that demand, leading to greater use of bed and breakfast hotels for temporary accommodation placements, which are unsuitable for many households.
- In Kirklees, we have seen more families with children presenting as homeless (or at risk of) and due to the reduction in longer-term housing options, this results in additional challenges in terms of the suitability of temporary accommodation. The number of families with children who are temporarily placed in Bed & Breakfast hotels is too high.
- The cost of temporary accommodation is placing significant financial pressures on the Council's budget.
- Welfare reform and cost of living increases have further impacted the ability of households on low incomes to find suitable, affordable accommodation.
- Right to Buy has exacerbated the challenges the Council faces, since the receipts are not sufficient to acquire or build new stock and hence the reduction in property numbers is not matched by the number the Council can afford to replace.
- Whilst the Government's decision to return Local Housing Allowance (LHA) (the maximum amounts of housing support claimants of Universal Credit and Housing Benefit can usually get for private rented homes of different sizes) to the 30th percentile of local market rents from April 2024 is welcome, disparities between median rent prices and LHA rates in the district has made private renting difficult and unaffordable for many low income households receiving benefits.
- The table below shows rental market data and demonstrates the disparity between market rents and LHA levels in the Kirklees district.

	Median monthly rental prices, October 2022 to September 2023 (£pcm)	Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate 2023/24 (£pcm)	LHA Shortfall (£pcm)
'Room'	370	245.5	124.50
1 Bed	495	369.5	125.50
2 Bed	595	450	145
3 Bed	725	550	175
4 Bed	995	705	290

- Rough sleeping in Kirklees is a big challenge. In line with national trends, the number of rough sleepers has increased over the last 18 months, despite the efforts of the dedicated rough sleeping team and partners. Most rough sleepers in Kirklees are males over age 25, and from the UK or Eastern Europe.

- As an asylum dispersal area, there will always be a number of former asylum seekers in Kirklees who find themselves homeless. Homeless presentations from refugees who receive positive asylum decisions in Kirklees have increased in line with Government decisions on asylum dispersal processing policies.
- There is significant uncertainty over future funding and viability for a range of public and third sector services which have a role to play in supporting homeless prevention and meeting people's housing and support needs. This presents a significant challenge to tackling homelessness and rough sleeping effectively.
- Moving into temporary accommodation can be extremely disruptive and unsettling for individuals and families. Without the right support, tenancies for those who were homeless can break down easily. Wraparound support is key to addressing this but the ability to provide this is diminishing.
- The need for essential repair works at key sites makes it necessary to move households out of their properties on a temporary or permanent basis - placing additional pressure on resources.

Overview of key homelessness and rough sleeping data

To support this refresh of the Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, a review of homelessness and rough sleeping across the Kirklees district has taken place, including:

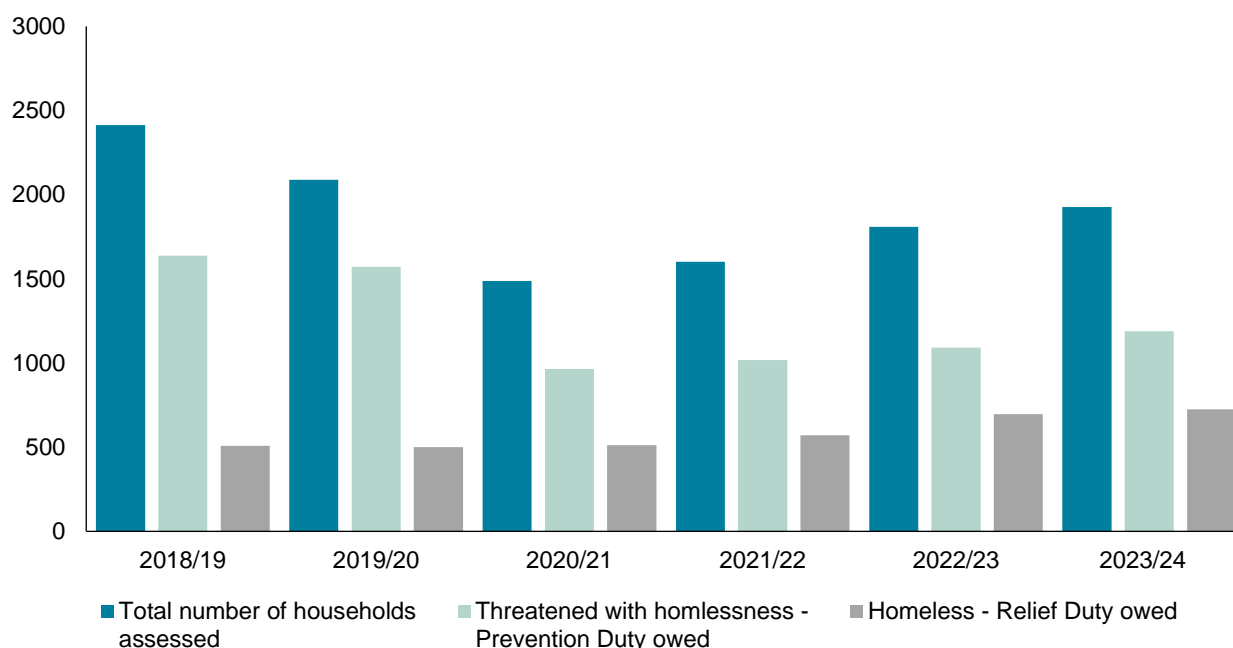
- Current homelessness trends
- Activities for preventing homelessness
- Activities for securing accommodation
- Activities for providing support
- Resources available to prevent and tackle homelessness

The top three reasons why households in Kirklees find themselves homeless are because they are asked to leave by family or friends, or after being subjected to domestic abuse, or because their private rented tenancy has ended. These top three reasons are common to most local authorities across the country.

Between April 2018 and September 2023, 10,286 homelessness assessments were undertaken by Kirklees Housing Solutions Service, triggered by people presenting to the Council as homeless or threatened with homelessness. The number of assessments peaked in 2018/19, at 2,414 that year and then reduced during the years affected by the COVID pandemic. Figures started to increase in 2022/23, however, and in 2023/24 the number of homeless assessments was 1,926.

In 2022/23, the Council dealt with significantly more households at the 'relief' stage of homelessness (39%) i.e. when the household was already homeless, compared to 2018/19 when only 24% were at the relief stage. This indicates there has been a reduction in recent years in the ability to secure homeless prevention options.

Homelessness Assessments



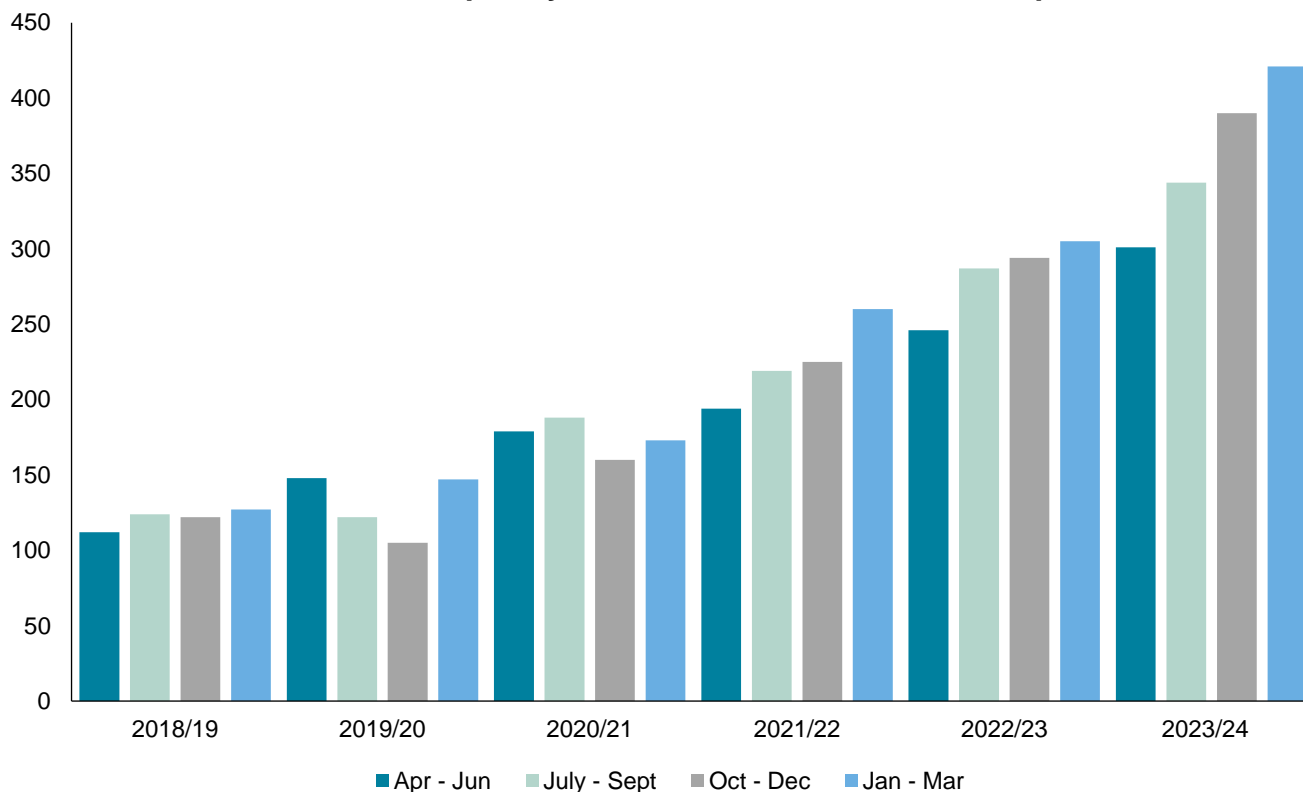
In recent years, when households have had their homelessness prevented, the majority of positive housing outcomes have been through securing a social rented tenancy. However, the number of those who have secured either a social rented tenancy or a private rented tenancy has reduced each year, which indicates growing pressures on availability of either social or private rented affordable housing options.

Positive accommodation outcomes for prevention cases	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Social rented sector	573	672	421	394	399
Private rented sector	184	257	159	127	153
Staying with family	132	115	41	27	47
Staying with friends	45	78	41	20	21
Owner-occupier	8	3	1	4	5
Other	20	6	7	6	18
Not known	6	10	4	5	7
Total	968	1141	674	583	650

The number of homeless households who have needed to be placed into temporary accommodation in Kirklees has risen very significantly since 2018/19, by at least 168%. This steep rise is indicative of the difficulties faced in sourcing affordable housing and is in line with national trends. Temporary accommodation placements rose from around 125 in 2018/19

(snapshot figures at the end of each quarter) to around 300 at the end of 2022/23. Figures have risen again during 2023/24, to over 400 at the end of each quarter.

Households in temporary accomodation at end of each quarter

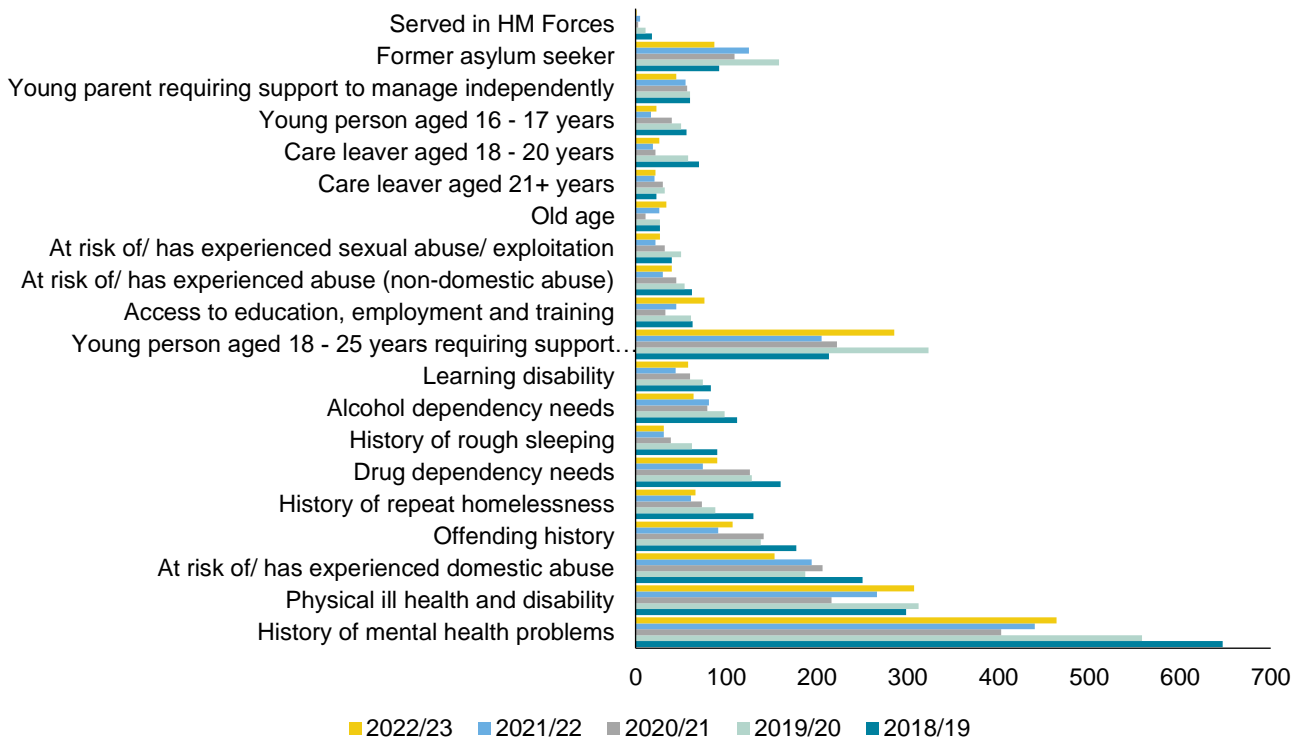


In Kirklees, over 30% of homeless households fall into the 25 – 34 age profile. The ethnicity profile of homeless households largely mirrors the overall profile of the Kirklees district. However Black African, Caribbean, and Black British residents account for 4.7% of homeless households, compared to just 2.3% of the overall population in Kirklees, indicating this is an at-risk group.

The review confirmed that many of Kirklees’ homeless households have vulnerabilities which give rise to support needs.

In 2022/23, 77% of homeless households had at least one identified support need, with the most common support need being mental health. Other prevalent support needs include physical ill health and disability, young people aged 18 - 24 requiring support to manage independently, domestic abuse, drug or alcohol dependency and offending history.

Support needs



Rough sleeping numbers across the Kirklees district peaked at 16 in 2019/20, in the one-night snapshot count which is reported annually to Government. Since then, numbers fell to 4 in 2021/22, then 3 in 2022/23. However, in more recent months figures have started to increase, with the last snapshot figure from November 2023 being 14, spread across the district.

Legal Context

All local authorities have a number of statutory duties in relation to homelessness and housing allocations. These duties are set out in legislation which includes the Housing Act 1996, the Homelessness Act 2002, the Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) (England) Order 2002 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

In addition, a number of prescribed public sector partners also have duties in relation to referring homelessness households to local authorities, as set out in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

What are our duties toward homeless people?

The Council has a duty to provide information and advice about homelessness and a duty to investigate where we have reason to believe that someone is, or is threatened, with homelessness.

- Prevention duty - requires that local authorities take reasonable steps to try and prevent homelessness from occurring for anyone at risk or threatened with homelessness within 56 days.
- Relief duty - where a household is homeless and eligible, the Local Authority must work with them to relieve their homelessness (assist in securing suitable alternative accommodation) within 56 days.
- Interim duty to accommodate - where the applicant is homeless, eligible and in priority need, the Council has a duty to provide interim accommodation.
- Main housing duty – following the relief duty if someone is still homeless, eligible, has a priority need and is not intentionally homeless the Council has a duty to find them suitable accommodation.

Local Authorities can discharge the main duty through an offer of accommodation with the Council, or a Registered Provider, or with an offer of a private rented tenancy.

Further guidance which local authorities should adhere to in relation to homelessness is contained within the Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities. Not all homeless households will be owed the same duties in terms of the provision of emergency housing or an offer of long-term housing – a more detailed explanation of the different duties which are owed can be found here: [Homeless duty and eligibility criteria | Kirklees Council](#).

Local Picture

What we've achieved since the publication of the last Strategy

In addition to maintaining a productive homelessness service which fulfils its statutory duties, the Council and its partners continued to work collaboratively to enhance existing provision, deliver new initiatives, and strengthen positive working relationships.

At the time of the last strategy, several initiatives were in the development stages or newly created and have since become established and are achieving positive outcomes.

Housing allocations and housing options

A recent refresh of the Housing Allocations Policy determined how best to ensure that households with the greatest housing needs can access social housing, including those who are threatened with or experiencing homelessness. The refreshed policy is deemed good practice by sector-recognised experts and includes additional priority for care leavers, those in the armed forces/veterans and people fleeing domestic abuse. An open housing register has been retained alongside the refreshed policy to allow anyone wishing to join the register to be able to do so albeit the council's ability to rehouse all applicants is severely limited by the availability of suitable affordable housing options.

Following a need to further focus on accommodation options in the private rented sector, the Private Rented Partnership Team, established in 2022, is working with landlords to increase the

provision of private rented good quality, affordable accommodation available for long term tenancies for homeless households - assisting 85 households into private rented accommodation in its first two years to date.

An innovative pilot to use empty student accommodation increased the number of temporary accommodation units available to us, particularly self-contained accommodation for families. A considered approach has also been taken to using additional Council stock as temporary accommodation units, including re-profiling the number of family-sized temporary units available.

Currently we utilise 208 Council-owned units as temporary accommodation along with an additional 14 former student houses that we lease separately.

The Temporary Accommodation team (Housing Solutions Service) has access to 90 one-bed units, 83 two-bed units, 20 three-beds and 13 bedsits. At the student accommodation site being leased there are an additional 12 six-bed units and 2 larger properties that are used as Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMOs). A further 34 larger self-contained apartments are also utilised on a nightly paid basis.

The additional leasing initiatives have helped minimise costly/unsuitable bed and breakfast placements.

The Supported Housing Improvement Programme (SHIP) team was established, via dedicated government funding. The team is working to ensure that supported housing in Kirklees is of a good quality, is meeting the needs of residents, and that Value for Money can be evidenced and monitored. The team is also working with other SHIP teams in West Yorkshire to ensure a consistent approach is applied for providers.

Preventative work continues operationally to ensure people can remain living independently and with as little intervention from homelessness pathways as possible. This includes our ongoing work around home adaptations including facilitating access to Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) as well as working with private sector landlords to ensure they comply with any new legislation e.g. Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards to improve homes for tenants to support reductions in energy bills.

We are also focussing our efforts, across services, on tenancy sustainment - looking at the most effective ways to support households to remain and thrive in their tenancy once they secure a home, to ensure that homelessness does not arise. Joint work with early support teams and anti-social behaviour teams for example, is helping to prevent tenancy breakdowns, and a range of different partners undertake bespoke tenancy sustainment actions including Housing Solutions, Homes and Neighbourhoods, other Registered Providers (Housing Associations) Children's Services and housing support agencies.

People sleeping rough

The Council's Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) Team is now well established. The team is working alongside homelessness partners and street outreach groups throughout the year to assist those at risk of sleeping rough. This includes facilitating access to emergency accommodation and support with addressing poor health and wellbeing, substance misuse and tenancy sustainment. The team includes a dedicated substance misuse worker and an Adult Social Worker, ensuring that complex vulnerabilities can be identified and supported in a holistic

way. A trauma-informed and personalised approach is taken to ensure the team build trust with the individual for the best possible outcomes.

Our strong voluntary sector continues to play an invaluable role in the provision of immediate relief to assist those in need, including via street outreach.

Excerpt from Patrick's Story

Patrick was asleep on one of the benches in St Peter's Gardens. He was in his 50s. He was invited to the Mission to get warm and to have some food. Patrick accepted happily and enjoyed a free breakfast in the Mission Café.

One of the Mission's advice officers assessed that the best course of action would be for Patrick to meet with one of the Council's RSI team which he did later that morning in a private room at the Mission. The RSI officer established that Patrick was homeless and sleeping rough after losing his job which came with accommodation included. The RSI team managed to find Patrick temporary accommodation in a Bed and Breakfast whilst he started making a claim for benefits and the Council established his eligibility for Housing within the Kirklees area.

Your voice matters so we will...continue to ensure Voluntary and Community Sector agencies remain key partners and continue to undertake and promote the significant value of outreach work.

Three properties have been acquired under the Government-funded Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme (RSAP) and provide dedicated temporary accommodation for those sleeping rough (or at risk of) with additional wraparound support provided alongside by the RSI Team. The properties give individuals a stable foundation to help them become longer-term tenancy ready.

The Council successfully re-tendered the supported housing contract for the purpose-built homeless hostel in Huddersfield, ensuring a consistent and dedicated approach to hostel placements for single homeless people, including rough sleepers.

The Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) continues to be used appropriately and flexibly, ensuring that everyone who is given a bed through SWEP receives a visit by a housing officer the next morning to talk through options and discuss how they can get longer term help.

Vulnerable cohorts – specialist support

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. New 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. Whilst a significant focus is on care leavers and those aged 16-17 where the Council has a statutory duty, the pathways incorporate support for all young people aged 16 to 24. Priority activities have been undertaken to maintain and expand appropriate support for young homeless people.

The Kirklees Welcomes Partnership is now well established – ensuring support is available at any stage of a household’s resettlement or migration journey. Within this partnership, the Refugee Resettlement Team in Housing Services, formed in 2022, works with and supports households on government-established refugee resettlement schemes as well as those who have received a positive decision to remain. Close links are in place with health, third sector and community language partners to best support these cohorts.

The support programmes for the main refugee schemes have achieved very positive rehousing and homeless prevention outcomes, particularly with Ukraine and Afghan cohorts. Also, we have maximised the funding opportunities under Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) made available for these groups.

Kirklees Better Outcomes Partnership (KBOP) - developed in 2019 – is a collaborative partnership aiming to prevent homelessness and deliver better outcomes through working to empower people so they can overcome barriers to finding or sustaining suitable accommodation. The KBOP model of delivering floating support services has reached more than 6000 people over the last five years, helping to prevent homelessness and achieve a range of wider outcomes including better health, employment, and better resilience for many clients.

Excerpt from Darren’s Story

“My situation was different. I was one of the Windrush generation and I became redundant after 11 years in a job to find I had no status and no access to benefits, so I lost everything. I wasn’t supported by anybody until somebody at the social justice team at the benefits office put me in touch with citizens advice who contacted the home office. I can’t remember when I was referred into KBOP, but it was luck more than anything coherent that saved me. The lady at the job centre and my KBOP worker, Katie, have been amazing.”

Your voice matters so we will...continue to promote the importance of Duty to Refer and ensure support is provided in a person-centred way.

We have worked with relevant partners to establish a clear protocol for prison-leavers who are threatened with homelessness when their sentences are ending. There is now a clear route to undertaking homeless assessments and providing housing advice for prison leavers, at the earliest opportunity. We are supporting ex-offenders at risk of rough sleeping into private rented accommodation to reduce reoffending and homelessness, through the Accommodation for Ex-Offenders Scheme.

A partnership approach is also taken to tackling homelessness as a result of domestic abuse. Housing services play a key role in multi-agency responses to domestic abuse presentations, with appropriate emergency housing provided where necessary, either in specialist refuges or in other forms of temporary accommodation. One of the four key priorities in the [Kirklees Domestic Abuse Strategy](#) is supporting victims to maintain or access safe and stable housing, with housing and homelessness sector partners playing a key role in delivering against this priority.

Other homeless prevention support

The Council and its partners offer a range of cost-of-living support, including financial support and debt and budgeting advice, as well as support with the cost of food and help to keep homes warm and reduce energy bills.

There are also many resources available for those experiencing mental health problems or who need urgent help [Mental health support | Kirklees Council](#).

There are a number of charities and organisations operating across the district that help the homeless and those experiencing poverty. Some of the services provided by charities and third sector organisations include:

- cheap or free food
- laundry room
- washing facilities
- activities
- advice on finding accommodation and benefits
- access to medical treatment

The Council's [Local Welfare Provision team](#) run a non-cash scheme, which provides support like food parcels, furniture and debt advice.

The Pathways to Employment service co-ordinates training, education and job opportunities for people who have been homeless. They also run a range of courses for people to improve their skills.

Kirklees Employment and Skills are committed to developing life and work skills for all, enabling better employment opportunities for those who live in Kirklees. They are available to support residents in breaking down any barriers that they may face when moving into employment, progressing within their career, and developing skills.

The Employment Kirklees programme offers information and guidance for those looking to improve their job status, and helps by sourcing better work opportunities, and ensuring people have the skills needed to develop and thrive.

Strategic Vision and Priorities

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 have identified four strategic priorities that will support us in driving our Strategy and achieving our vision:

- Strengthen partnership working to address homelessness and secure the right accommodation.
- Rapid early help and intervention to prevent homelessness from occurring.

- Access to long term homes and temporary accommodation which is safe, decent, accessible and affordable.
- Tackle rough sleeping to ensure it is rare, brief and not recurring.

In line with the Council's shared outcomes, set out in the Council Plan, this 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.

Meeting the housing needs of vulnerable people by preventing homelessness and supporting those who are homeless including rough sleepers off the street and into appropriate housing with the right level and type of support are key priorities in the overall strategy for housing in Kirklees. Delivery of the Kirklees Housing Strategy is one of the keys to preventing homelessness, by enabling housing growth, particularly of affordable housing, in order to meet population growth and demand across the district.

This Strategy also aligns with, and supports the delivery of our key partnership strategies, including the Kirklees Health and Wellbeing Plan; by setting out how we will work with partners to enable access to the right care and support and make the best use of all available resources.

Priority 1: Strengthen partnership working to address homelessness and secure the right accommodation:

The needs of people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness often stretch across different services, including housing, mental health and children's services, in addition to the voluntary and charity sectors.

The way we work collaboratively across services and agencies is fundamental in helping to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping.

Excerpt from Ebrahim's Story

"I am very grateful to have been placed in temporary accommodation following being in a war-torn country and experiencing being tortured. I had lost my family, lost my dream and lost my hopes! At times when I was sleeping rough, I felt that my life was no better than a dog's – at least a dog had a home...I hope that I shall now begin to feel human again and be able to give something back to others who need help as I once did."

Your voice matters so we will...promote the importance of having a proactive partnership approach to ensure timely assessments and support/ advice for people leaving asylum seeker accommodation.

Key to effective partnership working is communication, as well as the sharing of information and best practice, in order to learn from others working across the sector.

We acknowledge the vital role that existing relationships and ways of working play in addressing homelessness and securing accommodation for households across the Kirklees district.

However, during engagement, partners highlighted the need to go further, recognising that more can be done to improve and build on joint working practices.

Feedback from Mohammed and Paolo's Stories

Both Mohammed and Paolo received a positive decision to remain in the UK following their asylum seeker claim being assessed. They have fed back separately that increased communications would be useful between the Home Office commissioned accommodation provider and the Council including to help receive speedier advice before the accommodation notice expires. This was not only in relation to finding alternative accommodation but also in relation to being able to open a bank account to support their registration for Universal Credit.

Your voice matters so we will...continue to maintain and aim to improve all communications between partner agencies.

We will therefore take steps to enhance the way we work together; combining skills, resources, knowledge, and experience to provide the best support we can and help people achieve outcomes and overcome barriers to prevent homelessness and tackle rough sleeping.

Feedback from Jason and Paul's Story

Both Jason and Paul have experienced homelessness and slept on the streets. They are both in their 50s. Both gave feedback about shared accommodation as a housing option.

Jason's experience was mixed *"...you had your own room, communal kitchen, bathroom but because this was communal, there was someone who lived there who used to eat my food that I left in the fridge, so from there I moved in with my [family member] and fell off the scene with Kirklees Housing."*

When asked about gaps in support, Paul said *"Not expecting a grown man of 52 to be sharing or opting for student accommodation."*

Your voice matters so we will...aim to help people overcome barriers to using shared accommodation and continue to explore alternative housing options.

To address this priority, we will:

- Close the gap in knowledge around what partners are doing (day to day operations and pipeline work)
- Promote greater awareness among relevant staff, organisations and agencies of support and services available, including the Council's own Support Offer, to maximise referrals
- Develop approaches to improving information and data sharing to support informed decision-making and collaborative working
 - Improve the way information is shared between Housing Solutions and Registered Providers

- Examine supported housing evictions data to develop a district wide approach to eviction prevention
- Carry out a review of nomination agreements and systems, drawing on best practice examples from elsewhere
- Align approaches (with Registered Providers) to nominations and data submission
- Look to create more joined up messaging for the residents of Kirklees, including but not limited to those who are already customers
- Refresh key partnership forums – including the Homelessness Forum - to improve links between the Council, the voluntary sector, and Registered Providers
- Strengthen partner relationships with registered provider partners, to further build on their contribution to helping provide both long term and temporary accommodation for homeless households
- Introduce a mechanism to gain and share customer feedback to support continued learning and reflection
- Develop our understanding of supported housing needs and provision
- Continue to support the provision of a range of quality supported housing options across the Kirklees district
- Look for further funding to enhance the direct support options available to those living in supported housing
- Work with the Supported Housing Improvement Programme (SHIP) to create both a Supported Housing Charter and a Quality Assurance Framework to ensure partner provision best meets local needs
- Work with partners to enable access to services to improve education, training, and employment as well as access to support linked to increases in the cost of living.
- Agree a process with partners on how we can make better use of resources through joint funding applications where appropriate
- Embed joint housing pathways and protocols for target cohorts of vulnerable homeless households, ensuring that partners and customers understand their commitments

Priority 2: Rapid early help and intervention to prevent homelessness from occurring

The earlier people approach the Council and its partners for assistance, the more opportunity there is to prevent homelessness occurring.

The most effective way to avoid homelessness is to intervene before people's situations reach crisis, and to connect them to the right support when this is needed.

Where people continue to struggle before finally approaching the Council for help and advice, their housing situation can become more difficult to resolve and a sustainable, successful outcome is harder to achieve.

Excerpt from Christine's Story

"Options of housing are very limited, but it leads to other massive stresses. You need jobs, training, money, deposits. How is this all possible when someone is struggling to just survive daily."

Your voice matters so we will... continue, as a partnership, to work with people using a strengths-based approach and in a holistic way which considers all aspects affecting their housing options.

Kirklees Council's Housing Solutions Service is the front door to receiving housing advice and support for members of the public who are at risk of becoming homeless. The service provides universal housing advice, alongside homeless assessments and housing related support for some cohorts. The service also provides and manages temporary accommodation for those homeless household to whom the Council owes a duty to accommodate.

Early identification of problems, rapid early help, and early targeted interventions, as well as the provision of high-quality advice and assistance is essential if we are to ensure people have the best chance of staying in their home.

Excerpt from Steve's Story

When asked what could have been done earlier or better, Steve responded:
"People who listen to our problems and have the power to understand our problems so that they can better identify who is prioritised and qualified for more help."

Your voice matters so we will... promote the importance of having a proactive partnership approach to ensure timely assessments and that support/ advice is undertaken using a strengths-based and person-centred approach.

Promoting the services available to residents, building knowledge within communities, and ensuring information is easy to find and accessible to all, so that households know where to turn to and who to contact before they reach crisis point is also critical if we are to prevent people becoming homeless in the first place.

To address this priority, we will:

- Continue to ensure individuals receive rapid access to housing advice, targeted interventions, and tailored support, including those individuals with multiple and complex needs
- Continue to ensure that health needs of homeless households are met, through flexible service provision, outreach and identifying and addressing health inequalities
- Explore as a partnership what options are available where funded services can no longer continue at the same level or in the same format
- Continue to support people at risk of becoming homeless to stay in their existing home or make a planned move to alternative accommodation

- Encourage households to present at the earliest opportunity to reduce the pressures associated with crisis-based intervention and increase the opportunity to prevent homelessness from occurring
- Encourage all partners to commit to the Duty to Refer including partners outside the mandatory framework
- Encourage partners to use a strengths-based approach with all customers, enabling resources and targeted intervention for those who are most vulnerable and/or with multiple complex needs
- Focus further on the links between health and homelessness by helping to address housing issues which are impacting on tenants and putting them at risk of homelessness
- Raise awareness of support options available, including the role of the Housing Compliance Team and other partners in supporting landlord/tenant mediation and helping to prevent private rented evictions occurring.
- Look to secure resources to enhance our tenancy relations function, to further support both private sector landlords and tenants when approaches are made to the Council. All partners to link in with benefits advice, employment and training support and access to other local specialist support provision to enable individuals to develop resilience and thereby avoid homelessness
- For those in council tenancies, provide support 'on the ground' to help households to better integrate into communities, put roots down, and build informal support networks, introducing them, for example, to community groups and Tenant and Residents Associations
- Complete pre tenant checks to ensure tenancies are successful, sustainable, and supported
- Review the information available on the Council's website to ensure that it is clear and easily accessible
- Encourage partners to adopt consistent messaging and signposting as appropriate to the Council's website
- Continue to explore and pursue bids for government and other external funding for preventing homelessness initiatives
- Work with colleagues in public health and other partners on the 'Core 20+5' funded programme to provide income maximisation support
- Review how customers currently access services to ensure that our housing solutions service is genuinely accessible to all
- Continue to share best practice on homeless prevention with the regional partners including the West Yorkshire Local Authority Homelessness Forum and those working on the SHIP programme (supported housing)
- Maximise the creative use of incentives to encourage homeless prevention through maintaining existing living arrangements
- Continue to strengthen joint working to ensure prison leavers are given the appropriate advice well in advance of coming out of prison
- Continue our commitment to those experiencing domestic abuse as set out in statutory duties and the Kirklees Domestic Abuse Strategy. Ensuring we work together to create and maintain a range of housing options, choice, and information available
- Review and embed homelessness pathways for specific cohorts, including young people, mental health hospital discharge etc
- Review and implement best practice approaches to front-door homeless presentations, building on learning from peers and expert advisers

Priority 3: Access to long term homes and temporary accommodation which is safe, decent, accessible and affordable

Securing access to long term homes in either the social rented or private rented sector has become much more difficult over the last five years. As well as a reduction in successful social and private rented outcomes, those homeless households who could previously stay longer with family or friends are also now approximately 60% less likely to be accommodated – primarily due to the increase in the general cost of living and the pressure this is having on extended households.

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 to be a short-term option for people when there is no other accommodation available to them. In Kirklees, the types of temporary accommodation that is used includes self-contained council homes, bed and breakfast hotels, shared accommodation and supported housing managed by a range of partners.

With a growth in demand for temporary accommodation, and lack of available suitable options to enable households to move on quickly, the length of stay in temporary accommodation 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 longer someone is homeless, the greater the risk of worsening physical and mental health problems. At present, 2% of households in temporary accommodation are still awaiting a home after 24 months.

Excerpt from Adam's Story

“Considering my wife's condition, she was pregnant and had diabetes, so proper nutrition is very important. And every meal of eating fast food and not eating healthier and more nutritious foods, this will definitely increase the stimulation of diseases. In my opinion, staying in a hotel despite these problems was not the right thing to do and we should have moved into a temporary or council house sooner.”

Your voice matters so we will... find the most suitable temporary accommodation available at the time based on household need. We will continue to aim to have people in temporary accommodation for as little time as possible by exploring all housing options open to them.

It is essential that we work to increase the accommodation options available to those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. This includes working alongside partners to increase the range and suitability of affordable social and private rented sector housing - exploring new ways to diversify accommodation and support.

Registered Providers of social housing have a key role to play here, by for example, aligning with the Council's Strategic Tenancy Policy, maximising the potential of nominations agreements

by working with the Council to rehouse people on the Social Housing Register, and ensuring a flexible and affordable tenancy approach for residents.

The private rented sector also has a key part to play in meeting housing need, including for homeless households. The Council and its partners are working actively and positively with private landlords and letting agents in order to enhance and incentivise access to private rented tenancies.

Excerpt from Samantha's Story

“The Council need to be aware of the disparity between the price of private rental properties and the Local Housing Allowance. When you are on the lowest benefits then the gap between these amounts is not sustainable. Landlords seem to be able to charge whatever they want. The amount of people going after one property is ridiculous, they expect you to view it and then be told that it has already gone to someone else. The amount of people with bad credit scores also means that private renting is not an option, so where are these people supposed to live?”

Your voice matters so we will...continue to work directly with landlords to incentivise or facilitate the offer of a property to customers. We will also continue, as a partnership, to try and influence government policy affecting housing options.

Increasing the supply and suitability of temporary accommodation options, and endeavouring to use less bed and breakfast hotels must also be a key objective of this Strategy to ensure that homeless households access more suitable temporary accommodation, and to reduce the cost to the Council.

To address this priority, we will:

- Ensure that homelessness issues and demands are factored into strategic plans for increasing the supply of affordable housing in Kirklees
- Continue to develop ways of working with the private rented sector to ensure it plays its role in both preventing homelessness and rehoming households
- Ensure greater accountability in relation to nominations; working with Registered Providers to prioritise nominations from local authorities where households are homeless
- Reduce the length of time it takes to turn around empty council properties when they become vacant
- Explore how lettable void properties might enhance our temporary accommodation offer.
- Work towards maintaining an adequate supply of good quality, suitable temporary accommodation, including leasing and partner provision
- Work towards containing further growth in the number of households in temporary accommodation
- Minimise the use of bed and breakfast accommodation, looking at best practice examples from elsewhere
- Improve the way we communicate and manage expectations by ensuring households understand that the Council has reduced duties to help if suitable accommodation is rejected

- Work with Registered Providers to secure more temporary accommodation and move-on support
- Explore options for the conversion of underused buildings into homes and bring empty homes back into use
- Continue to encourage those who are no longer in need of a larger property to consider a move - helping people right-size to free up valuable properties
- Continue work to prevent right to buy fraud by ensuring the Council's housing stock is only sold to those who legally qualify as well as actively investigating reports of abandonment, to prevent rent arrears and disrepair caused by unoccupied properties, ensuring that social housing stock is fully utilised
- Continue to review the sufficiency of, identify gaps in and where appropriate commission or encourage specialist housing e.g. supported accommodation for young people

Priority 4: Tackle rough sleeping to ensure it is rare, brief, and not recurring

Rough sleeping is the most visible and acute form of homelessness. The government defines rough sleeping as: sleeping, about to bed down (sitting on/in or standing next to their bedding) or bedded down in the open air (such as on the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments) and also people in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations, or 'bashes' which are makeshift shelters, often comprised of cardboard boxes).

The Government committed to ending "the blight of rough sleeping in England" when it published the national Rough Sleeping Strategy in September 2022. The strategy included a £2bn investment over the next three years, including an expanded £500m Rough Sleeping Initiative.

During the COVID pandemic the 'Everyone In' initiative sought to ensure that anyone who was sleeping on the streets was immediately provided with safe and secure accommodation, this led to a reduction in rough sleeping during 2020 and 2021 and in Kirklees, number of rough sleepers found in the annual count had reduced to 3 in 2022. However, since then, in line with national trends, the numbers rose to 14 in the latest snapshot figures from Autumn 2023.

Prolonged periods of rough sleeping have a significant impact on someone's mental and physical health. The longer someone experiences rough sleeping for, the more likely it is they will develop additional mental and physical health needs, substance misuse issues and have contact with the criminal justice system.

Excerpts from Michael's Story

"I had nowhere to go and therefore started sleeping rough again. I didn't approach the Council this time but don't really know the reason for this. I thought I needed to get my head straight and having slept rough in the past I thought that this would be a way of getting myself together again, disconnecting from the stresses of responsibilities in everyday life. When I was in my tent, I didn't have anyone or anything else to worry about initially but that changes quickly ...[I] bought a tent, went near the canal, saw some bad things under the bridge, crime, people being taken advantage of, it has affected me mentally." ... "I needed to sort my head out and felt the best way to do that was by cutting myself off..."

Your voice matters so we will...continue to work in a person-centred and trauma-informed way, giving people space and time to engage and keeping them as safe as possible wherever they are.

In Kirklees, a range of partners provide holistic and person-centred support for rough sleepers, or anyone in danger of rough sleeping, to help them get the appropriate support to access accommodation and improve their lives.

The Council and our partners engage directly at an individual level with people who sleep rough. Our approach is proactive, personalised and tailored to the individual, their specific issues, circumstances, and experiences.

Excerpt from Jason's Story

"It was [Rough Sleeping Team officer] that first started engaging with me, he would come down and visit me when I was in tent, he'd come down in all weathers early in the morning and encouraged me to start looking at my options, as in temporary accommodation, sorting out my benefits, trying to help with health issues....I've been supported into a new property now and still receiving support from the council. Dealt with the same person all the way through we have a good relationship, he understands me and what I'm like, what help I need. He knows my needs and has got others involved to assist where needed too."

Your voice matters so we will...continue to build trusted relationships with people, working with them in a trauma-informed and individualised way.

We aim to reduce the numbers of people sleeping rough in Kirklees and ensure that rough sleeping is rare, brief, and not recurring.

To address this priority, we will:

- Continue to provide, alongside our partners, a range of advice, accommodation, and support services to people sleeping rough so they can move away from the streets and access and sustain long term, settled accommodation

- Continue to engage across partner agencies on rough sleeping cases, to ensure the multi-agency approach is maintained
- Continue to offer a wraparound support service for rough sleepers with a trauma-informed approach, whether on the streets or within accommodation
- Ensure that health needs of rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping are met
- Explore options to maintain and expand dedicated rough sleeper accommodation units, operating on Housing First principles
- Build upon drug/alcohol and adult social care specialisms developed for rough sleeper client groups
- Embed a targeted prevention approach to prevent the flow of new rough sleepers on to the street
- Update the homelessness and rough sleeping directory and refresh and broaden out the Good Practice Guide for Street Outreach, with input from service users
- Continue to explore and pursue bids for government funding for rough sleeping initiatives
- Influence government policy to commit to the long-term funding of the Rough Sleeper Initiative.
- Continue to use and build upon trauma-informed and person-centred approaches for all interactions with individuals who are homeless and/or sleeping rough
- Develop links with the West Yorkshire Adversity, Trauma and Resilience Network

Action planning and measuring success

The priorities set out in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy will be delivered through an action plan, which will be developed alongside our partners, and monitored and reviewed on an annual basis to demonstrate the progress we are making, 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.

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

- More positive homelessness 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
- Reduction in rough sleeping

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
- Elected Members, through attendance at both Party Group meetings and the Growth and Regeneration Scrutiny Panel

A selection of partner agency highlights are below (all of whom are part of the Kirklees Homelessness Forum), outlining the work they undertake in relation to homelessness and rough sleeping.

Kirklees Housing Solutions Service

The service works collaboratively with partners to ensure intervention takes place as early as possible with households who are at risk of becoming homeless, to prevent homelessness wherever possible, achieve better outcomes for people, and avoid costly and crisis interventions. Bespoke homelessness support pathways are in place for vulnerable cohorts including:

- Rough Sleeping Initiative team
- Refugee Resettlement Team
- Young People & Support Team
- Temporary Accommodation team
- Hospital discharge cases (general and mental health)
 - Prison leavers

Fusion Housing

Fusion Housing is a registered charity working across Kirklees with a focus on reducing the impact of homelessness and food poverty through the provision of supported and temporary accommodation, legal housing and welfare benefits advice, employment support and a Food Bank service. Fusion Housing aims to ensure that individuals and families have access to suitable, affordable accommodation along with the skills needed to successfully manage and keep that accommodation, also helping them to overcome the barriers that can prevent them from achieving this. Most clients accessing their services are either homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

Huddersfield Mission

Huddersfield Mission supports people experiencing poverty in Huddersfield and wider Kirklees. Their advice and support are available to all, but they are best known for their work with people experiencing significant poverty, homelessness, addiction, or poor mental health. They work with about 1000 different people every year and 30% of the customers are homeless or in some form of temporary accommodation

Over the last 2 years the Mission has significantly increased the practical support on offer. Additionally, they have expanded the range of health and wellbeing services they provide directly or in partnership with others. This includes free haircuts, health checkups, podiatry, wound clinic, health screening and testing (Hep C, HIV, TB etc). They also provide practical support through the provision of clothing, furniture grants, referrals for food parcels, sim cards, mobile phones, and utility vouchers.

Helping the Homeless (part of One Big Family)

Helping the Homeless have been working in Huddersfield for 7 years. They do street outreach on a Monday night offering food, drinks, hygiene items, underwear, and clothing to those who are both homeless and vulnerably housed. They work with the Rough Sleeping Initiative team to identify and assist people in need and offer ongoing support where needed once housed.

In the last couple of years they have seen the need to offer support to those who are in housing with food support, on occasion gas/electric top ups and also ongoing appointments. They do this to try and stop the revolving door of homelessness.

Together Housing

Together Housing is a registered provider of social housing and has 591 general needs properties across Kirklees plus a small number of supported housing schemes which are run in partnership with Horton Housing. The supported housing schemes contribute to homelessness prevention, giving residents stable and supportive accommodation until ready to move on and live independently. Tenancy sustainment is also key for the organisation. They have developed a pre-tenancy sustainability assessment involving their internal teams to ensure welfare benefits are in place alongside support and action plans where needed. A 'tenancy prediction model' is also used, assessing risk factors of a tenancy and the potential of it failing and learning from failed tenancies are also regularly reviewed. Together Housing has also signed up to commit to Duty to Refer even though this isn't a mandatory requirement.

Kirklees Council Public Health Team

Public Health focus on improving the physical, mental and social health and wellbeing of individuals and communities living, working and studying in Kirklees. The Wider Determinants of Health specifically focus on Housing, Poverty, & Place (Healthy Urban Design/Active Travel etc). Recently secured external funding under the 'Core 20+5' Programme will commission four providers across Kirklees to increase their internal capacity to provide people with income maximisation support-which directly and indirectly can mitigate against homelessness and the causes including debt. Within this will be an additional 2.5 posts with specific homelessness/housing remits to support people to sustain their tenancies

Incommunities

Incommunities Group is one of the largest social housing providers in Yorkshire. The Incommunities Money Matters team can provide support and advice for customers on welfare benefits, income maximisation, budgeting, utilities, debt management, access to food parcels and opening a bank account. There are 3 main support routes for their customers: rent arrears, energy hardship and food hardship, with bespoke support provided through each of these routes.

Yorkshire Housing

Yorkshire Housing is a registered provider of social housing with circa 1850 properties in Kirklees across various tenures – the majority are social housing general needs homes. Customers are subject to an assessment which ensures the property suits their needs, in an attempt to avoid repeat homelessness. They also have a strategy and budget for sustainment, the aim of which is to ensure that the customer can remain in their property long term and to ensure the tenancy doesn't fail within the first 12 months