

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025-2030

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Foreword

A place to call home is what we all want for ourselves, our children, and our loved ones. Everyone should be able to live in a safe, secure and comfortable home, where they can set down roots, work and enjoy life. Good housing provides the foundation for good health, good education, good jobs and a good life.

The numbers of households who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness has increased across the country. Our district is no different. There is no 'quick fix' to resolving many of the broader social and economic challenges surrounding homelessness, but in the context of strained Council budgets and other pressures, it is important that our plans and aims are prioritised and reflect what we can realistically achieve locally.

Our new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025-2030 places strong emphasis on early intervention and preventing homelessness, improving advice and information, reducing our reliance on private sector temporary accommodation, using the resources we have more effectively and working closely with partner organisations to reduce the occurrence of homelessness and rough sleeping.

The Strategy focuses on five strategic priorities over the 5-year term:

1. Early intervention and prevention
2. Improve advice, information and options
3. Increase available affordable housing and reduce our reliance on private sector temporary accommodation
4. Use available resources more effectively
5. Reduce and work towards ending rough sleeping

We are determined to prevent and relieve homelessness wherever we can. With demand rising, there is great pressure on existing and future resources available to the Council and our partners, but together we will do everything in our power and continue working towards ending homelessness in all its forms.

Councillor Pamela Brivio
Portfolio Holder for Housing, Education and Skills

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Dover District Council ("the Council") is required by the Homelessness Act 2002 to produce and publish a strategy at least every five years that outlines how homelessness and rough sleeping will be prevented and relieved in the district.

- 1.2 The Council is committed to fulfilling its statutory obligations to prevent and relieve homelessness and rough sleeping, and support individuals either homeless or at risk of homelessness to secure suitable accommodation. There is no 'quick fix' to resolving many of the broader social and economic challenges surrounding homelessness, and in the context of shrinking council budgets, it is important to ensure our plans and aims are prioritised and reflects what we can realistically achieve locally.
- 1.3 The content of this Strategy sets out what our strategic priorities are and what actions will take to achieve them. It is important that our aims and actions are flexible and adaptable to national and local changes and meet the needs of the district. Key to achieving them will involve working with our partners to share knowledge, skills, and experience to prevent, relieve and reduce homelessness and rough sleeping.
- 1.4 This strategy replaces our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2024 and is designed to be a working document for the Council and our partners.
- 1.5 The following legislation and regulation informs the content and priorities of this Strategy:
 - Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996
 - Homelessness Act 2002
 - Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities
 - Localism Act 2011
 - Care Act 2014
 - Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
 - Rough Sleeping Strategy Delivery Plan in 2018
 - National Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019
 - Domestic Abuse Act 2021

2. Key achievements since 2020

- 2.1 Since our last strategy was published in 2021, the Council has made some significant strides in improving our homelessness services, and relationships with our partners.
 - We have made progress supporting those who are homeless on discharge from hospital. A Homelessness Needs Assessment was completed in 2021 which demonstrated a need for a Pathway Team in East Kent. The Team is comprised of a GP, nurse, housing officer and a Pathway Coordinator. Collectively they provide support to anyone attending hospital who is homeless, ensure that a Duty to Refer is completed to their chosen local authority and ongoing support following discharge is provided for a period of 2 months. The Pathway approach has been well received by individuals in and the approach has been endorsed across East Kent Hospitals NHS Trust, who provide training to equip hospital staff to feel confident to support someone who is attending as homeless.
 - We continue to play an active role in the Kent Housing Options Group (KHOG), a sub-group in the Kent Housing Group forum. As members of KHOG we have worked closely with other local authorities, registered providers, voluntary

organisations and public authorities to improve processes and protocols to support homeless households, so that support is consistent across the county.

- We set up a Rent in Advance and Deposit Scheme which has supported individuals and households since 2021 to secure accommodation by assisting them with rent advance and deposit payments. In addition to this we ring-fenced 50% of the Discretionary Housing Payment fund for homelessness cases, ensuring that our allocation is fully spent each year.
- We have embarked on an ambitious programme of increasing our housing stock, through new build developments, developer contributions and acquire properties using recycled Right to Buy receipts (1-4-1 acquisitions). Since 2020 we have delivered an additional 187 properties for social and affordable rent, and shared ownership.
- We have been successful in achieving funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (formerly known as the Department for Levelling-Up, Housing and Communities) and Homes England through the Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme (RSAP) to purchase 8 self-contained units of accommodation specifically to support entrenched rough sleepers off the streets. The funding has also enabled us to collaborate with our partner Porchlight, to provide additional 1-on-1 support for clients, like the Housing First principles.
- In addition to the Rough Sleepers Accommodation Programme (RSAP) funding, by working in partnership with Folkestone & Hythe District Council via the Rough Sleeping Initiative Partnership, we have been successful in bidding for approximately £4 million of funding from DLUHC to help support our work and efforts to get people off the street and into accommodation.

3. Context

Defining homelessness and rough sleeping

- 3.1 Homelessness does not only describe the conditions of people visibly sleeping rough. A person is homeless if they have no accommodation in the UK or elsewhere which is available for their occupation and which that person has a legal right to occupy. A person is also homeless if they have accommodation but cannot secure entry to it, or the accommodation is a moveable structure, vehicle or vessel designed or adapted for human habitation and there is nowhere it can lawfully be placed in order to provide accommodation. A person who has accommodation is to be treated as homeless where it would not be reasonable for them to continue to occupy that accommodation. Examples include, people staying with family and friends, people living in squats and those in temporary accommodation provided by the Council. A person is threatened with homelessness if it is likely they will become homeless within 56 days, this might be because they have been given a notice under section 21 of the Housing Act 1988.

- 3.2 Rough sleepers are defined for the purposes of rough sleeping counts and estimates as:
1. People sleeping, about to bed down (sitting on / in or standing next to their bedding) or actually bedded down in the open air ('bedded down' is taken to mean either laying down or sleeping, such as on the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments).
 2. People in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations or 'bashes').
- 3.3 The definition of 'rough sleepers' does not include people in hostels or shelters people in campsites or other sites used for recreational purposes or organised projects, squatters or travellers.
- 3.4 The causes of rough sleeping can be divided into structural factors and individual factors. Structural explanations locate the causes of homelessness in broader forces, and individualist explanations focus on the person vulnerabilities and circumstances of those who experience rough sleeping. However, these factors can be interrelated and reinforced by one another:

Structural factors	Individual factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty • Inequality • Housing supply and affordability • Unemployment and insecure employment • Access to social security 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor physical health • Mental health problems • Experience of violence, abuse and neglect • Drug and alcohol problems • Relationship breakdown • Experience of care or prison • Bereavement • Refugees

Homelessness legislation

- 3.5 The primary homelessness legislation - Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 – provides statutory under-pinning for action to prevent homelessness and provide assistance to people threatened with or actually homeless.
- 3.6 In 2002, the government amended the homelessness legislation through the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) (England) Order 2002 to:
- Ensure a more strategic approach to tackling and preventing homelessness, in particular by requiring a homelessness strategy for every housing authority district; and
 - Strengthen the assistance available to people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness by extending the priority need categories to homeless 16 and 17 years old; care leavers aged 18, 19 and 20; people who are vulnerable as a

result of time spent in care, the armed forces, prison or custody, and people who are vulnerable because they have fled their home because of violence.

- 3.7 The Localism Act 2011 amended the Housing Act 1996 relating to local authorities' duty to secure accommodation can be brought to an end with an offer of suitable accommodation in the private rented sector. These changes allow local authorities to end the main homelessness duty with a private sector offer (with a minimum 12 month assured shorthold tenancy), without the applicant's consent.
- 3.8 Some applicants will identify care and support needs that cannot be met by the housing authority; or which require health or social care services to be provided alongside help to secure accommodation. Housing authorities should be mindful of duties under the [Care Act 2014](#) including those relating to assessment and adult safeguarding; and the use of Care Act powers to meet urgent care and support needs where an assessment has not been completed.
- 3.9 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 significantly reformed England's homelessness legislation by placing duties on local authorities to intervene at earlier stages to prevent homelessness in their areas. It also requires housing authorities to provide homelessness services to all those affected, not just those who have 'priority need'. These include:
- An enhanced prevention duty extending the period a household is threatened with homelessness from 28 days to 56 days, meaning that housing authorities are required to work with people (regardless of priority need status, intentionality and whether they have a local connection) to prevent homelessness at an earlier stage; and
 - A new relief duty for those who are already homeless so that housing authorities will support households for 56 days to relieve their homelessness by helping them to secure accommodation.
- 3.10 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 amends Part 7 of the 1996 Act to strengthen the support available to victims of domestic abuse. The Act extends priority need to all eligible victims of domestic abuse who are homeless as a result of being a victim of domestic abuse. The 2021 Act brings in a new definition of domestic abuse which housing authorities must follow to assess whether an applicant is homeless as a result of being a victim of domestic abuse.
- 3.11 The Government published its Rough Sleeping Strategy Delivery Plan in 2018 which required all local authorities to update their homelessness strategies to include rough sleeping. The National Rough Sleeping Strategy was also published in 2019 and set out the Government's target of halving rough sleeping by 2022 and eradicating all street homelessness by 2027. It emphasises three aspects of approach: (1) prevention, (2) intervention and (3) recovery.
- 3.12 In May 2023, DLUHC launched the Ending Rough Sleeping Data Framework across all local authorities in England. This sets out a clear and defined vision for ending rough sleeping, which is that it is prevented wherever possible. The new Framework tracks progress about five core indicators, that sit under the four main aims:

- Preventing people sleeping rough (indicated by number of new people sleeping rough and number of people seen sleeping rough after being discharged from institutions)
- Making rough sleeping rare (indicated by number of people sleeping rough)
- Making rough sleeping brief (indicated by number of people experiencing long term rough sleeping)
- Making rough sleeping a non-recurring experience (indicated by number of people returning to rough sleeping).

The new data framework is an important step towards driving better outcomes and realising the cross-government goal of ending rough sleeping.

National context

- 3.13 During the last decade, households affected by homelessness have increased across England, with extreme pressures on statutory services and increased demands on social, affordable, and appropriate accommodation.
- 3.14 While the causes of homelessness for individual households vary, there are several agreed reasons for the long-term national rise:

1. Failure of Local Housing Allowance (LHA) to keep pace with rents

- 3.15 The LHA rate is the maximum amount of housing benefit which a private renter can claim to help them pay their rent. When first introduced in 2008, the rate was calculated to cover rent or the cheapest 50% of the housing market in a household's local area, known as a 'Broad Rental Market Area' (BRMA). Since 2011, the rate has been reduced to cover only the bottom 30% of the local a housing market, reducing the pool of properties available.
- 3.16 In 2013, the link between LHA rates and the actual rent increases was broken, resulting in a 2-year 1% rise and a 4-year freeze from April 2016 in line with the then Government's welfare reforms which became law in 2016 (Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016). In contracts actual rents have continued to rise rapidly.
- 3.17 In response to the Covid-19 pandemic the Government realigned LHA rates with the 30% percentile but the rates were frozen again for 3 additional years from 2020. In November 2023, the chancellor proposed unfreezing of LHA rates. The Rent Officers (Housing Benefit and Universal Credit Functions) (Amendment) Order 2024 sets LHA at the lower 30% of local rents, however there are categories per property and there is maximum LHA depending on the type of accommodation deemed appropriate for their household (i.e. size). This came into force on 31st January 2024. While the increase is welcomed it is effective until 31 March 2025. The Government is yet to confirm the LHA rates from 2025/26 onwards.

2. Benefit cap and Universal Credit

- 3.18 The benefit cap was introduced in 2013 and limits the maximum amount of benefit a working-age household can receive. When originally introduced the cap was £500 per week (around £26,000 per year) for a family, and £350 a week (around £18,200 per

year) for single person. One of the aims of the cap was to reduce Government spending and tackle incentives where benefits paid better than employment. In 2016 the cap was lowered to £20,000 per year (London is £23,000 per year), however from April 2023 the benefit caps were increased by 10.1%. Despite this, many households have seen their benefits cut significantly.

- 3.19 Universal Credit (UC) was introduced in 2013 to simplify the welfare system by incorporating six means-tested benefits and tax credits into a single monthly payment for working-age households. Rollout of UC has been gradual but was completed by 2022. New claimants for UC must wait 5-weeks for their first payment, which can compound existing problems with debt and rent arrears, as many claimants do not have savings to support them during this waiting time. People also require access to a bank account and the ability to use a computer or a smartphone, which can exclude some of the most vulnerable groups from accessing benefits.
- 3.20 Claimants who previously had their housing benefit paid directly to their landlord are now responsible for paying rent from a monthly budget under UC which is paid directly to the claimant. This change has led to some households falling into arrears, raising concerns about eviction and homelessness. However, landlords or tenants can request for the housing element of the UC to be paid directly to the landlord; this is not done automatically.

3. Cost of living crisis, inflation, and interest rates increases

- 3.21 The Cost-of-living crisis is being felt in varying ways. Research in 2022 showed that low-income families faced an average £372 deficit between their LHA and the cost of the cheapest rents in their local areas. In March 2023, only 23% of households in England were able to afford to pay their usual household bills compared with a year ago (March 2022), an increase of 17% in November 2021.
- 3.22 In October 2022, inflation across the country reached a high of 11.1%, well above the Bank of England's target of 2%. While this has now significantly reduced to 2.2% (September 2024), the impact of high inflation has had a marked impact on the cost of food and bills. The fall of inflation does not equate to the fall in prices, but merely slows the rate that prices increase. The high rate of inflation also had a marked increase in the cost for materials used for the construction of new buildings, impacting on the delivery of much needed new affordable housing.
- 3.23 Inflationary pressures have also impacted mortgage interest rates, which have seen significant increases over recent years, reaching as high as 6.10% for a 2-year fixed term, and 5.69% for a 5-year fixed term in May 2024.¹ This has had an impact to owner-occupiers' finances. While freehold ownership remains the most secure form of accommodation in the UK, around 4.9 million properties in the UK are owned as buy-to-let investments by private landlords. The higher interest rates can result in private rent increasing to cover the increased mortgage costs, or some smaller landlords selling their portfolios as it is no longer affordable or profitable. This has an unfortunate

¹ [What are the current UK mortgage rates? | Property blog \(rightmove.co.uk\)](#)

trickle-down effect on private renters who are forced to either pay higher rents, as well as increased food and utility costs, or face eviction and homelessness.

4. Declining social housing supply and an expanding private rented sector

- 3.24 Since the 1980s, the number of new Council and social rented properties has been steadily declining. This is the result of two processes: (1) fewer homes being built, and (2) existing Council homes being sold through the Right to Buy. It has been nationally recognised that there is a shortage of much needed social housing.
- 3.25 According to one estimate commissioned by the National Housing Federation (NHF) and Crisis from Heriot-Watt University, around 340,000 new homes need to be supplied in England each year, of which 145,000 should be affordable housing.² Figures published by Homes England, the Government's housing accelerator, show that the number of new homes delivered in 2022/23 was 239,870 of which 63,605 were affordable housing³, well below the Department for Levelling-Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) commitment to build 300,000 new homes every year by the mid-2020s.⁴
- 3.26 The lack of affordable housing means that large numbers of low-income households have been unable to access affordable housing and have instead found homes in the private rented sector (PRS), where the rents are generally far higher and there is no regulation or cap on rent increases. In the English Private Landlord Survey 2021, the number of households in the PRS rose by 45% between 2008-09 and 2020-21, from 3.1 million to 4.4 million. The PRS is the second largest tenure in England, home to around 19% of all households, compared with just 14% in 2008-2009, when it was smaller than the social rented sector.
- 3.27 The lack of security of tenure in the PRS make low-income tenants vulnerable to eviction, in particular Section 21 'no-fault' evictions allow landlords to end an assured shorthold tenancy (AST) without needing to give a reason. The Government has committed to ending this practice through the Renters' Rights Bill (previously the Renters' Reform Bill), including the abolishment of fixed-term assured tenancies and assured shorthold tenancies, and imposing obligations on landlords. However, there is no indication when the Bill is likely to become law have only acted to make the situation more precarious.
- 3.28 The growth of the PRS is an important trend related to homelessness. The end of a private sector tenancy is a leading trigger for homelessness applications. Nationally, 31,320 households in 2022/23 judged as homeless or threatened with homelessness were in this position due to the loss of an existing tenancy in the private rented sector⁵.

² [Tackling the under-supply of housing in England - House of Commons Library \(parliament.uk\)](#)

³ [Supply of affordable housing - House of Lords Library \(parliament.uk\)](#)

⁴ [Tackling the under-supply of housing in England - House of Commons Library \(parliament.uk\)](#)

⁵ [Statutory homelessness in England: financial year 2022-23 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Most private rented ASTs ended due to the landlord wishing to sell or re-let the property at 68.7% (21,350 households) and increase of 20.1% compared to 2021/22.⁶

5. Reduced affordability of housing in the private rented sector over the long term

- 3.29 Private sector housing costs are taking up an increasing share of incomes, as incomes fail to keep pace with rising rents. In England, private rents rose by 11.1% in January 2023 compared to the same month a year before⁷, and roughly 26% of median pre-tax pay would need to be spent on an average property on the private market in England.⁸
- 3.30 Rent levels are determined by the market and are not subject to caps or controls. As noted above, LHA rates and incomes are not rising at the same rate as rents, but due to a lack of private rent regulation, Local Authorities are unable to act against this rising cost of housing.

6. Extensions of the duty local authorities owe

- 3.31 In recent years, the number of people who can seek support due to homelessness and threatened with homelessness has risen. As noted above, the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, which came into force in 2018, increased the scope of duties owed by local authorities. See 4.8 above.

7. Reduced Discretionary Housing Payments

- 3.32 Local Authorities can award Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) to households receiving the housing costs element of Universal Credit (UC) or Housing Benefit (HB), if they need further financial assistance with housing costs. DHPs can be awarded to households facing rent shortfalls, or short-term costs associated with moving home. Other than in Scotland, there is not obligation on local authorities to pay DHPs in any particular case, and local authorities have broad discretion in setting the level and length of awards.
- 3.33 Additional DHP funding has been provided to local authorities to help those affected by welfare reforms introduced in the 2010s. However, annual DHP funding for England and Wales was fixed at £100 million per year from 2022/23 until the end of 2024/25. This level of funding is lower than in the years from 2013/14 to 2021/22, with Government at the time citing 'broader economic pressures' when they announced the freeze at reduced 2022/23 levels.⁹
- 3.34 There has also been no commitment or update on the level of funding post 2024/25, and as the current Government has cited having to make serious financial decisions, there is a need to use DHP funds more strategically.

⁶ [Statutory homelessness in England: financial year 2022-23 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

⁷ [Rent prices: How much have they gone up in your area? - BBC News](https://www.bbc.com/news/health-65444444)

⁸ [Private rental affordability, England, Wales and Northern Ireland - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk)

⁹ [Discretionary Housing Payments - House of Commons Library](https://www.parliament.uk)

Local context

3.35 The Homelessness Act 2002 and the Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities states that in preparing their strategies local authorities must conduct a review of homelessness and rough sleeping within their administrative area. As part of this review, the Council must assess (1) the levels, and likely future levels, of homelessness in their district, (2) activities around prevention and relief, and (3) the resources available to the Council, the social services authority for the district, other public authorities and voluntary organisations.

3.36 The full review has been used to inform the development of this Strategy. This section will provide a summary of the key findings.

3.37 **Local housing market**

- Private rent rates in the district between 2020-2022 increased on average by 7.7%. The average private rented in the district was £880 (Sept 2024), an increase from £825 a year previous, a rise of 6.7%.
- Despite the uplift in Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate from 1 April 2024, the Council has one of the lowest LHA rates in Kent, on average being around 30-35% below other Kent LHA rates. Low LHA rates have several notable impacts:
 - It impacts on the housing benefit received by residents. A lower LHA rate means less housing benefit to cover the cost of rent. Considering that private rents have increased substantially over the past 10 years, this leaves low-income households in the PRS financially worse off.
 - It impacts on the Council's and Registered Providers' (Housing Associations), ability to build or acquire additional social housing through Homes England grants.
- In 2024, the average property price in the district was £291,000 which is a 52% increase compared to the average house price in 2014 (£192,000).
- Private rented accommodation now accounts for 19% of the total tenure type in the district, compared to just 9% recorded in the 2001 Census.
- The Census 2021 data showed that there are 7,039 socially rented properties, equating to 13.9% of all household types in the district, a decrease of 1.5% since 2001.
- In October 2024 there were 1,501 households on the Council's Housing Waiting List. An analysis of the waiting list shows that there is significant need for 1- and 2-bedroom properties.

3.38 **Homelessness (figures between 2018/19 – 2023/24)**

- Since 2018/19 the Council has assessed 3,478 households, of which 2,473 (79%) were owed support by the Council, either to prevent them becoming homeless or to provide relief from homelessness.
- More households in the district were owed a relief duty (52%) than those owed a prevention duty (48%).

- The number of households assessed and owed a prevention duty because they were served a valid Section 21 has increased over the last 5 years, and on average the number of cases has increased by around 28% per financial year.
- Most applicants who required support from the Council lived in 'private rented accommodation' (31%) and 'living with family' (23%).
- The top five support needs of homeless applicants were a 'History of mental health problems' (24%), 'Physical ill health and disability' (17%), 'Learning difficulty' (9%), a 'History of repeat homelessness' (8%) and 'At risk of / has experienced domestic abuse' (7%).
- Based on quarterly returns, on average 177 households were living in temporary accommodation per quarter. 53% of this total (94) were households with dependent children. To date, there are in the region of 300 households living in TA in the district.

3.39 **Rough sleeping 2018/19 – 2023/24**

- The number of rough sleepers in the district has fallen significantly over the last 5 years. In Autumn 2018 it was estimated that there were 20 people sleeping rough; in 2021 this had dropped to just 5. However, in the last few years as the country has emerged from the Covid-19 pandemic, the numbers have increased to 9 in 2023.
- Men are overwhelmingly more likely to be rough sleeping than women in the district. Broken down, 84% of people sleeping rough were men, while only 16% were women. The number of women sleeping rough dropped from a high of 5 in 2018 to 0 between 2019-22, however this increased to 1 in 2023.

Dover District's policy context

Corporate Plan 2023-2027

- 3.40 The Corporate Plan 2023-2027 sets out the Council's vision and aims for the district and the Council over the 4-year period, including the priority activities the Council will focus on delivering. It is the key strategy from which the Council's budget, service plans and individual objectives cascade.
- 3.41 Strategic Priority 1 'Improving our housing' sets out how the Council will prevent homelessness and use of temporary accommodation, by:
1. Making the best use of government homelessness and rough sleeper grant funding opportunities.
 2. Increasing our number of homes for temporary accommodation to alleviate homelessness (as part of our overall ambition to provide additional council homes).
 3. Working collaboratively with other statutory and voluntary sector agencies to support homeless people and those facing homelessness.
- 3.42 This Strategy along with other housing policies and documents work towards achieving the aims set out in the Corporate Plan, while also working towards national and regional objectives.

Dover District Local Plan 2020-2040

3.43 The District Local Plan was approved in October 2024 and highlighted a need for a minimum of 11,140 additional properties by 2040 to meet the needs of the districts growing population¹⁰. Of this total it has been identified that the following properties are needed:

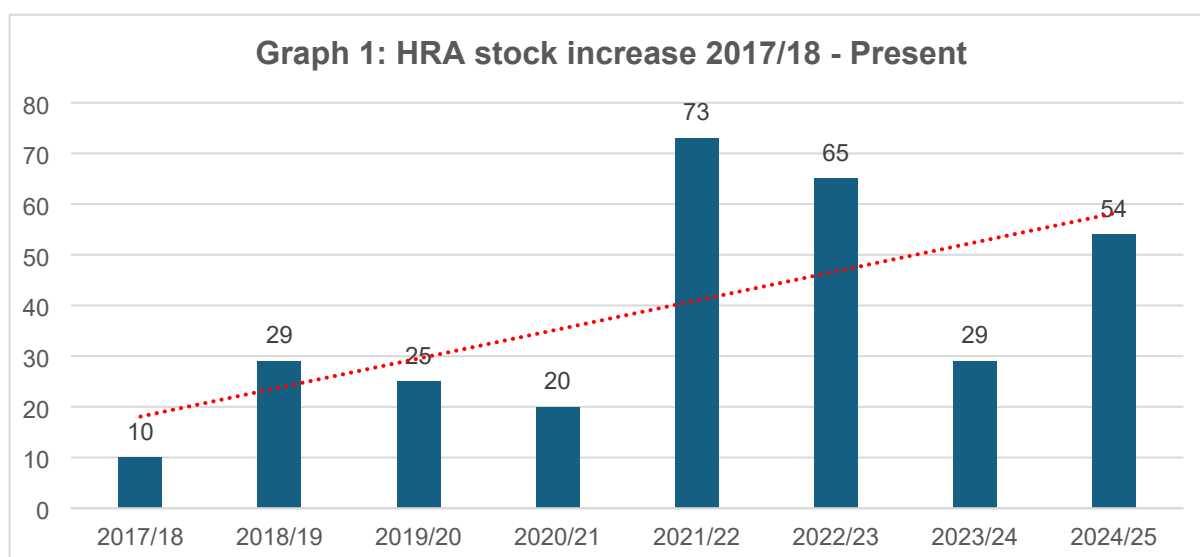
- 3,464 affordable housing properties
- 6,975 owner-occupier properties
- 700 private rented properties

Increasing the Council's housing stock

3.44 The Council currently has 4,556 properties within our Housing Revenue Account (HRA). Of this total:

- 3,824 are general needs properties (social and affordable rent)
- 532 are sheltered or semi-sheltered properties
- 156 are temporary accommodation properties
- 44 are Shared Ownership

3.45 The Council has sought to increase the number of properties within our HRA, for general needs (social and affordable rent), shared ownership and temporary accommodation (TA) over the past few years.



3.46 As part of the Corporate Plan 2023-2027 the Council aims to provide at least an average of 200 additional council homes (new build and acquisitions) each year (800 in total over the term of the Corporate Plan). This figure includes homes for both general needs and temporary accommodation purposes.

¹⁰ [Modelling the future demand for First Homes \(doverdistrictlocalplan.co.uk\)](https://doverdistrictlocalplan.co.uk)

Kent Housing Group

- 3.47 The Kent Housing Group (KHG) is a forum for housing organisation in Kent and Medway and has representation from all twelve district and borough councils, Medway Council, eleven housing associations, five support providers, Kent County Council and Kent Public Health. KHG also has representation from several organisations who work in partnership with social housing landlords, including Homes England, the National Housing Federation, the National Residential Landlords Association, and the South East Housing and Development Group.
- 3.48 As part of KHG the Council has worked with other local authorities and organisations listed above to improve housing and services. Since publication of our last Strategy, we have supported with the development of:
- the Kent and Medway Housing Strategy 2020-2025 'A Place People want to call Home'
 - a protocol for social landlords to address domestic abuse
 - a joint protocol between KCC and LHAs to address needs of intentionally homeless families with children and guidance document for IH and families with complex needs
 - the Kent and Medway Duty to Refer Protocol
 - the Domestic Abuse and Information Sharing Guidance Note

4. Our vision and priorities for 2025-2030

- 4.1 This Strategy sets our vision for the next five years to prevent and relieve homelessness and work towards reducing with the aim of ending rough sleeping.
- 4.2 The Action Plan within this Strategy expands on what actions will be taken to achieve and address each strategic priority.

- 4.3 The five strategic priorities for our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025-30 and Action Plan are addressed below.

1. Early intervention and homeless prevention

How we will achieve this:

- 1) Improve collaboration with support services for better prevention and relief resolutions.
- 2) Improve early intervention to prevent households being evicted.
- 3) Improve tenancy support and sustainment of tenancies, preventing homelessness and repeat homelessness.

- 4.4 The key to reducing homelessness is through preventative action. Homelessness prevention means providing support to address their housing need and other needs, such as mental health support or support to find employment, to avoid homelessness. Wherever possible and appropriate, the Council will prioritise efforts to prevent homelessness so that households can remain in their existing accommodation.

- 4.5 Prevention has many benefits, including:

- 1) It can avoid the trauma and upheaval of homelessness experienced by households.
- 2) It may allow for a planned move, giving households more control over the timing as well as the type and location of any new accommodation.
- 3) It incurs fewer costs for the Council than relief of homelessness, helping to reduce pressure on homelessness budgets.

- 4.6 In 2021 the private rented sector (PRS) was the second largest source of accommodation in the district, having increased in size by 140% since 2001. As the size of the PRS has grown, so has the risk of households being faced with eviction, and therefore at risk of becoming homeless. The end of PRS tenancies is one of the leading causes of homelessness in the district. It is therefore essential that we tackle the causes of homelessness in the PRS and increase the number of prevention by intervening earlier.

- 4.7 Some tenants might experience landlords with poor and / or unlawful practices like harassment and illegal evictions and leave households in insecure accommodation or at risk of homelessness. We will ensure that tenants are able to access information setting out their rights and responsibilities as a tenant, how they can seek help from the Council and other agencies, and where appropriate, signpost them to external support services.

- 4.8 Another cause for concern is the relationship breakdowns between landlords and tenants which can lead to eviction. We will support households as best we can with liaising with their landlord to avoid them being evicted from their properties, for

example, because of rent arrears or a tenancy dispute. This may involve negotiating repayment plans or helping to address benefit issues, supporting both tenants and landlords to understand their rights and responsibilities.

- 4.9 We also recognise that some households include vulnerable people, which may have contributed to their precarious housing situation or may be a result of it. The Council will signpost people who have vulnerabilities and require support to services who can offer them specialist advice and support. We will also work with those services when providing our relief and / or prevention duties.
- 4.10 Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) provide financial support to help with rent or housing costs and is another tool that we can use to prevent homelessness. Over the last 5 years we have paid out £1,124,897 in DHP which has gone on to help and support 1,194 households at risk remain in their property.
- 4.11 Key to effective prevention is productive collaboration with other partner organisations who provide homelessness support and advice. We can learn from one another to help provide more efficient and robust support. This could include, shadowing other organisations, promoting co-location working, and where appropriate sharing resources such as expertise and data (where possible and legal to do so) between organisations to build stronger and more effective working relationships, thereby having a greater impact on reducing homelessness.

2. Improve advice, information and options for homeless households

How we will achieve this:

- 1) Communication and messaging deliver consistent information regarding housing options and challenges, to manage client and partner expectations.
- 2) Vulnerable households are supported adequately, reasonable adjustments are made, and they are provided with a range of options when they approach the Council for support.

Delivering consistent information regarding housing options

- 4.12 Prevention starts with access to clear information. Some households are aware of the Council's statutory duty to intervene at the point of homelessness, but fewer at-risk households are aware of the service we could provide to *prevent* homelessness. They are therefore unlikely to approach the Council before they are at, or very near, the point of crisis. We will endeavour to ensure that our housing needs and options webpages have correct and accurate resources, the language used is clear and in 'plain English' and there are clear ways residents can contact us for housing advice.
- 4.13 Demand for homelessness support has increased significantly over recent years, which can impact on our ability to provide tailored support. While our aim is to help and support all households who approach us, it is important that we set service

expectations for households (e.g. how long it may take for us to respond). As part of the review of our webpages, we will consider ways in which we can inform households of our service expectations, setting out what we are responsible for, what the household is responsible for, and what the expected and current response times will be. This will be regularly monitored and updated.

- 4.14 Views and feedback from households who have used our service is an important self-reflective tool for us to use to help improve the quality of the services we provide. We will work on using surveys to ask households their views experiences and perceptions of the services they have received, and whether any improvements can be made.

Providing vulnerable households, a range of options to access appropriate support, adjustments and advice

- 4.15 We acknowledge that many households may feel at their most vulnerable when they reach out to us for homelessness prevention support and advice, and we are committed to providing a caring and compassionate approach to homelessness. As part of our on-going efforts to improve resident experience and support vulnerable households:

- We have recruited two Prevention Officers whose role it is to provide dedicated preventative support and advice to households.
- We will consider establishing a Temporary Accommodation Team to focus on supporting households in and out of Council-owned temporary accommodation or private sector Temporary Accommodation (TA). This includes helping to resolve issues, such as maintenance and repairs, rent arrears and accessing support services.
- We have jointly established a new Pathway Team with Folkestone & Hythe District Council to support individuals discharged from hospital who are homeless.
- In 2024, the Council approved and adopted a Vulnerable Tenant Policy. The aim of the Policy is to support vulnerable tenants (including potential tenants and homelessness applicants) to have equal access to our services, and where required, making reasonable adjustments to them.

- 4.16 In addition to what we have already achieved:

- We will review the training that our front-line Officers receive to ensure that it is appropriate, current and provides them with the correct skills, knowledge and tools to deal with complex cases.
- We will review our internal processes to ensure that they are robust, efficient and reflect our statutory duties while also taking account of the needs and sensitivities of households.
- We will consider conducting 'new tenancy risk assessments' for new general needs tenancies to identify support needed to help the household maintain their tenancy and avoid the risk that the tenancy fails.

4.17 Victims / survivors of domestic abuse and their dependents can be made homeless because it is no longer safe for them to reside in their home. Victims / survivors and their dependents, which includes children, can be some of the most vulnerable households to face homelessness. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 set out duties that the Council must comply with. A person who is homeless as a result of being a victim of domestic abuse has a priority need as set out in s189 of the 1996 Act. The accommodation must be available for occupation by the applicant together with any other person who normally resides with them as a member of the family or might reasonably be expected to reside with them. There are a number of potential accommodation options for victims of domestic abuse, and housing authorities will need to consider which are most appropriate for each person on a case-by-case basis taking into account their circumstances and needs. In addition to this the new Consumer Standards published by the Regulator of Social Housing require Registered Providers of Social Housing (“Registered Provider”) to have policies and procedures in place that addresses how victims / survivors of domestic abuse and their dependents will be supported. As a part of our obligations:

- We have developed and adopted a Domestic Abuse Policy for Housing which sets out our legislative and regulatory duties and how we will recognise and respond to cases of domestic abuse.
- We will also work in cooperation with specialist agencies to provide victims / survivors with support outside the scope of housing. Victims / survivors of domestic abuse might be particularly vulnerable and have individual support needs, this is recognised in the Policy.
- We will continue to work with other local authorities and organisations through the protocols and procedures established to support victims / domestic abuse. These include:
 - The Protocol for social landlords to address domestic abuse
 - Domestic Abuse and Information Sharing Guidance note
 - Joint Protocol between KCC and Kent LHAs to address the needs of intentionally homeless families with children.
- We will conduct a review of our Housing Allocations Policy to ensure that it promotes good practice and reflects the needs of victims / survivors of domestic abuse including their children for alternative accommodation.
- We will continue to use the Safer Scheme to enable victims / survivors including their children to remain in their home.

3. Increase available affordable housing and reduce our reliance on private sector temporary accommodation

How we will achieve this:

- 1) Improve access to private sector accommodation to meet the needs of those homeless or at risk of homelessness
- 2) Increase and deliver high quality Council-owned affordable housing.

3) Reduce our reliance on private sector temporary accommodation.

Improving access to private sector accommodation to meet the needs of those homeless or at risk

- 4.18 The Private Rented Sector (PRS) still plays an important role in helping prevent and relieve homelessness. Good productive relationships with private landlords are key to effective use of the PRS to prevent and relieve homelessness. We will continue working with landlords to find suitable properties in the PRS and build on positive and productive relationships with the aim of increasing the availability and supply of properties. Prevention Officers and Officers with the Private Sector Housing Team will work collaboratively to facilitate and endeavour to improve working relationships with landlords.
- 4.19 Long-term empty homes, if poorly maintained and / or left unoccupied for long periods of time by owners, can become eyesores to the local community, and a potential source of anti-social behaviour and crime. They are also an unused and important resource that could help address housing demand in the district and alleviate and prevent homelessness. It is not always easy to bring long-term empty homes back into use, but we will use what resources we have access to such as 'No Use Empty' scheme via Kent County Council, to support bringing as many empty homes back into use as possible.
- 4.20 As part of our efforts, we will review our Private Sector Housing Strategy that will set out our strategic approach to identifying empty homes, how we will work with owners, and what actions (both legal and holistic) we can take to bring those properties back into use. We will also work to identify empty homes across the district to bring them back into use through utilising various methods.

Increasing and delivering high quality Council-owned affordable housing

- 4.21 Having more affordable housing available, whether Council-owned, or owned by a Registered Provider (Housing Association), will help reduce the need for temporary accommodation. The Council has always endeavoured to increase the number of affordable housing in the district. One of the aims of the Corporate Plan 2023-2027 is to increase the number of affordable homes in the district. As part of our ongoing efforts, the Housing Development Team was established in 2020 to facilitate the development of Council-owned properties. The Council also has a statutory duty to provide a housing enabling function that ensures that planning applications are compliant with the Council's planning policies and supports Registered Providers with affordable housing statistics and advice.
- 4.22 The Council aims to increase its housing stock at least an average of 200 properties (new build and acquisitions) each year and for these to be used for either general needs or temporary accommodation. As part of our efforts to achieve this ambition, we will consider developing a strategy or plan that will set out how we will increase and deliver a mixed range of affordable housing options in the district.

Reducing our reliance on private sector temporary accommodation.

4.23 The number of households in temporary accommodation (TA) in the district has increased. We also recognise that the current level of use is unsustainable and represents a considerable financial burden to the Council.

4.24 Therefore, a key aim of the Strategy is to reduce the number of households in TA, including nightly paid accommodation, which is a particularly expensive form of TA, and because of its unstable short-term nature it can mean that households may have to move several times. For these reasons we will seek to reduce its use.

4.25 Reducing our reliance on the TA will be a twofold process. We will aim to (1) reduce the number of households placed in TA through prevention, while (2) providing stable, long-term accommodation for households to move out of TA. The Council has several programmes underway to help achieve this ambition:

- Acquisition of new properties for use as TA, owned and managed by the Council.
- Increasing our supply of available social housing, owned by the Council or a Registered Provider (Housing Association).

Since 2017/18, around 30% of new additions to our stock are homes for temporary accommodation. In doing so we aim to:

- Reduce our reliance on the PRS for temporary accommodation.
- Reduce the financial cost of homelessness to the Council.
- Ensure all our TA is of good quality.

4.26 The Council will continue to build or acquire TA while it remains operationally manageable and financially viable to do so.

4. Use available resources more effectively

How we will achieve this:

- 1) Make best use of government funding and where eligible apply for grants geared towards preventing homelessness and rough sleeping.
- 2) Make best use of existing housing stock.

Making best use of government funding geared towards preventing homelessness and rough sleeping

4.27 Access to central government funding can support our efforts to prevent and relieve homelessness and rough sleeping. It is crucial that, during a time of squeezed Council budgets, we apply for all applicable grant funding to support our ability and capacity to prevent and relieve homelessness. Over the past 4 years we have accessed grants geared towards supporting rough sleepers off the streets:

- In 2020 the Council was successful in its bid to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (formerly known as the Department of Levelling-Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) MHCLG for capital funding under the Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP), to purchase 6 x 1 bed units specifically for entrenched rough sleepers.
- In 2022 we were successful in a subsequent bid under the Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme (RSAP) for capital funding to purchase a further three flats for entrenched rough sleepers.

Revenue funding was attached to both bids but as this is due to end in March 2025, there is uncertainty about whether this will be extended.

4.28 In December 2022 MHCLG (formerly DLUHC) announced that £654 million would be provided to Councils in England between 2023 and 2025 through the Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG), to support the delivery of services aimed at preventing and tackling homelessness. The Council was allocated £505,653 in 2023/24, and a further £512,962 in 2024/25¹¹. The HPG has been crucial in supporting our efforts to prevent homelessness, however it is equally important for this funding to be utilised efficiently and effectively.

4.29 In September 2022, MHCLG (formerly DLUHC) announced up to £500 million long-term funding for local councils in England to support those sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough. This formed part of the Government's Rough Sleeping Initiative. The fund covers between 2022 to 2025. The Council was allocated £1,489,194.

4.30 We will continue to apply for grant funding where this is available, and where we are eligible. We will also review the impact each grant fund has and assess whether its impact can be maximised, such as recruiting additional staff to support prevention, or assessing whether there is scope to extend or increase financial support. We also acknowledge that other public authorities and voluntary organisations may also wish to apply for grant funding, and we encourage organisations to work together and share knowledge, data and resources (where possible and legally allowed) to support grant funding applications.

4.31 Grant funding provided by Homes England is geared towards supporting the development of new affordable housing, for social and affordable rent, or shared ownership. Where it would prove beneficial and financially viable, we will consider applying for grant funding to help with the Council's aim of increasing the number of affordable properties within our housing stock.

¹¹ [Homelessness Prevention Grant: 2023 to 2025 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/homelessness-prevention-grant-2023-to-2025)

Making best use of existing housing stock

- 4.32 It is important that all properties owned and managed by the Council within our housing stock are fully utilised and allocated to households in priority need. Sometimes we are unable to relet a property immediately, for example the property requires urgent repairs before it can be let, or the property has been left in a condition by a previous tenant which makes it unsuitable for relet. When this happens it can temporarily remove a property from our stock that could be used to accommodate a household in need.
- 4.33 The Council is committed to ensuring that all properties, whether general needs or TA which become void are made available for re-let as soon as it practicably possible. To help achieve this, we will review our internal void management processes to ensure they promote efficiency in this service area.
- 4.34 Where possible, we will allocate accommodation for homeless households within the district, however, unfortunately, this is not always practical given the scale, demand and shortage of suitable accommodation over recent years. This is compounded by the escalating cost of housing, external financial pressures such as inflation and the cost-of-living crisis which has placed added pressure to Council budgets.
- 4.35 We will review our Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy. In doing so we will take account of the Temporary Accommodation Placing Protocol published by the Kent Housing Group.
- 4.36 Our Housing Allocations Policy was last reviewed in 2022. We will ensure that this Policy continues to be reviewed consistently, and in doing so we will take the opportunity to look at the effects of the Policy on homeless households.

5. Reduce and work towards ending rough sleeping

How we will achieve this:

- 1) Improve our understanding of the causes of rough sleeping and identify practical solutions to reduce its occurrence.
- 2) Support people to move off, and stay off, the streets.

Improving our understanding of the causes of rough sleeping and identifying practical solutions to reduce its occurrence

- 4.37 Rough sleepers are one of the most vulnerable groups in society. Studies have found strong correlations between homelessness and both physical and mental health conditions. Their housing need could be the result of any number of factors, often complex and traumatic, which can leave individuals further entrenched in a cycle of rough sleeping. It is therefore important that we improve our understanding of the complexities surrounding the causes and impacts of rough sleeping to help break this cycle and get people off the streets.
- 4.38 No single agency or organisation can solve and end rough sleeping. Only by working collaboratively with other public authorities and voluntary organisations through sharing knowledge, training and resources, can we progress towards achieving this aim. We will continue to work with our partners via the Rough Sleeper Case Review meetings, to share best practice, training and information to improve our knowledge, and identify practical solutions to reduce the occurrence of rough sleeping.
- 4.39 We will continue to develop all areas of delivery to improve the lives of rough sleepers and work toward the target of zero people on the street. Our vision is to continue to treat every individual with care and compassion, but also to understand their very specific needs and aspirations and not to see them as simply someone who sleeps on the street.

Supporting people to move off, and stay off, the streets

- 4.40 Ensuring that adequate support is there for rough sleepers is one of the first steps in helping them to move off, and stay off, the streets. The Council does not have all the expertise to support what can be a very complex case of rough sleeping, however in partnership with other public authorities and voluntary organisations, we can provide support network for the individual to move the off the street and into secure accommodation. This can include:

Specialist support services

- Drug and alcohol support
- Mental Health & Wellbeing
- Physical Health
- Immigration
- Education & Training
- Employment

Accommodation

- Emergency accommodation
- Support accommodation
- Housing First

- 4.41 We will consider ways that we can transform our service to ensure we support rough sleepers with respect, care and compassion. Whatever our approach may be, we will

seek the support from other public authorities and voluntary organisations to establish this initiative. Only by working together can we end rough sleeping.

5. Delivering the strategy

5.1 The Council has a wide range of services that support each other to prevent and relieve homelessness and rough sleeping:

- **Housing Options Team** – provide prevention and relief duties to homelessness households, or households at risk of homelessness.
- **Housing Allocations Team** – oversee the allocations process for social housing, owned and managed by the Council and nominates tenants for social housing owned and managed by Registered Providers (Housing Associations).
- **Interim accommodation Team** – oversees the allocation and management of TA owned by the Council and works with private sector TA landlords and tenants.
- **Housing Development Team** – tasked with progressing and managing the Council’s ambition to increase and develop new Council-owned affordable housing, for social and affordable rent, and shared ownership.
- **Private Sector Housing Team** – liaise with PRS landlords to ensure they are compliant with national legislation and regulations for the private sector, including long-term empty homes, and where applicable may carry out enforcement action.
- **Housing Policy and Enabling Team** – tasked with reviewing and developing housing policies as well as supporting Registered Providers with information regarding housing need and Council policy on affordable housing, to increase the supply of affordable housing in the district.

Multi-agency working

5.2 As well as Council services, there are many other invaluable services for homeless households provided by partner organisations, both statutory and voluntary. It is not possible to provide details of all of them but the most important for the purposes of this strategy are:

Key public / statutory partners:

- Other teams in the Council provide services including housing benefits, planning and development services and community safety.
- **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)** is the central government department with responsibility for homelessness and rough sleeping. (Formerly known as the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC)).

- **Kent County Council** is the social services authority for the area, the commissioner of housing-related support services and a co-signatory of the joint homelessness strategy.
- **Kent Police**
- **Kent Housing Options Group (KHOG)** is a sub-group of the Kent Housing Group forum.
- **Prisons and probation services** have responsibility for the discharge and ongoing management respectively of offenders in the community.
- **Kent and Community NHS Trust** provides a wide range of mental health and learning disability services for people of all ages.
- **East Kent NHS Trust** provides a Pathway service that supports patients discharged from hospital as homeless, or homeless individuals admitted to hospital.
- **The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)** has responsibility for Universal Credit (UC) and for the local job centres.
- **The Kent and Medway Safeguarding Adults Board** and the **Kent Safeguarding Children Multi-Agency Partnership** are responsible for reviewing all safeguarding referrals and providing safeguarding tools and protocols for practitioners.

Voluntary sector key partners:

- Registered Providers of Social Housing are an important additional source of affordable housing, which can include supported housing. Through their housing management services, they can play a key part in homelessness prevention and relief.
- There are several voluntary organisations in the district and nationally, which provide tailored support to individuals and households who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. These organisations are key to providing specialist support and helping to reduce and relieve homelessness and rough sleeping.

5.3 We will continue to work closely with these partners to achieve the vision and ambitions of this Strategy. Partnership with our partners is important for maximising resources effectively and ensuring better outcomes for households. The Action Plan within this Strategy expands upon how these partnerships will be used and how they will help deliver the Strategy.

Financial resources

5.4 All Housing Services detailed above in 6.1 are fully funded through the Council's base budgets for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and the General Fund, subject to review through the annual budget-setting process. From time to time a case may be made for additional internal funding to be provided for specific initiatives. These are considered by the Council, which must weigh them against other competing priorities and decide where to approve the resources.

5.5 Additional funding is sometimes received from central government for homelessness provision. In the past this included money:

- To assist with implementing the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
 - Towards new data collection requirements
 - Enable ‘everyone in’ to accommodate people sleeping rough during the Covid-19 pandemic; and
 - The Next Steps Accommodation Programme to help those accommodated under ‘everyone in’ to avoid returning to the streets.
- 5.6 In 2017 the government launched the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant, which it distributes to local authorities, with flexibility to use it in any way to support their activities in preventing and relieving homelessness. This was a very welcome and important source of new finance for the development of homelessness services particularly as it could be carried forward from one year to the next if not spent immediately, allowing the ability to take a longer-term view in addressing needs. This has been combined with the Homelessness Reduction Grant to create the new Homelessness Prevention Grant from 2021/22.
- 5.7 New government initiatives and grant funding to reduce the impact of homelessness and / or to enhance or introduce new services will be closely monitored and pursued where they are appropriate for the district. Partnership working with other local organisations sometime secures additional funding for homelessness work, and we will work with our partners where these opportunities arise.

6. Consultation

- 6.1 As part of the Strategy development process, the Council conducted a consultation with statutory and non-statutory services, and service users with lived experience of homelessness and rough sleeping. The consultation sought a wide range of views on the draft Strategy, the strategic priorities and the draft Action Plan. Consultations took place in person and online through several Focus Groups, in-person discussions with service users. Consultees were also invited to complete a survey and provide feedback on a draft of the Strategy and Action Plan. Details of the feedback throughout each consultative stage was reviewed and used to inform the final draft.

7. Implementation, monitoring, and review

- 7.1 The monitoring, evaluation and review of the Action Plan will be a function of the Strategic Housing team, the Housing Options team and where appropriate, the Rough Sleeper Case Review group which is a group comprised of Council officers, and representatives from other partner agencies.
- 7.2 Progress of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Action Plan will be reported within the Council’s existing performance monitoring and review processes.
- 7.3 This Strategy will be reviewed every 5 years from the date it is adopted in accordance with the Homelessness Act 2002. Any minor amendments required to this Strategy will be made by officers of the Council. Any significant amendments made to the Strategy will be approved by the Council’s Cabinet. If changes are required, we will, consult with stakeholders before such changes are implemented.

8. Equality, diversity and inclusion

- 8.1 The Council is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and to eliminating unlawful discrimination on grounds of race, age, disability, gender, sexual orientation, religion or belief, financial status and any other differences that can lead to discrimination or unfair treatment considering the principles of the Equality Act 2010. Please see our [Equality Policy](#) for more details.
- 8.2 A full Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was conducted for this Strategy in accordance with our Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) when carrying out our public duties (s149 of the Equality Act 2010). Mitigations have been identified to address where there are potential negative impacts to individuals with protected characteristics as a result of this Strategy's implementation.
- 8.3 The EIA will be updated where necessary when the Strategy is reviewed or changed in response to changes in legislation, regulation or Council operations.

9. Version control

Approval date	TBC
Approved by	Cabinet
Policy owner	Housing Services
Scheduled review	TBC

Strategy controls sheet		
Date	Summary of change	Author and approver

Action Plan 2025-2030

Strategic Priority 1: Reduce demand for homelessness service through prevention and proactive support

Objectives	Actions
Improve collaboration with support services for better prevention and relief resolutions.	Promote co-location or increase work shadowing with partner agencies to help build relationships and understand each other's roles and responsibilities.
	Share data, knowledge and expertise to improve better homelessness outcomes.
Improve early intervention to prevent evictions in private sector housing.	Continue to fully utilise the use of the Discretionary Housing Payments as a prevention tool.
	Continue to build on and improve relationships with private landlords.
Improve tenancy support and sustainment of tenancies, preventing homelessness or repeat homelessness.	Continue to conduct risk assessments at the start of new tenancies in General Needs.
	Sign-post new tenants to external training and useful tools on how to maintain a tenancy.
	Improve links with Registered Providers and their housing teams.

Strategic Priority 2: Improve advice, information and options for homeless households

Objectives	Actions
Communication and messaging to deliver consistent information regarding housing options and challenges, to manage client and partner expectations.	Provide training and information on housing issues for housing staff.
	Review and update the Housing Options webpages.
	Consider ways to communicate service expectations.
	Consider alternative communication methods to inform residents about housing advice and options.
	Establish a communication plan so that information on housing issues and challenges is far reaching.
	Investigate using surveys to monitor and improve services.
Providing vulnerable households a range of options to access appropriate support, adjustments and advice	Vulnerabilities are documented and reasonable adjustments are made where required.
	Develop a Domestic Abuse Policy for Housing.
	Review the Disabled Adaptations Policy

Strategic Priority 3: Increase the availability of affordable housing and improve the provision of temporary accommodation

Objectives	Actions
Improve access to Private Sector accommodation to meet the needs of those homeless or at risk.	Increase engagement with private landlords
	Review the Private Sector Housing Strategy.
Facilitate and increase the delivery of high-quality affordable housing.	Increase the number of Council-owned affordable homes in line with the Corporate Plan objectives.
	Purchase properties on the open market using recycled right to buy receipts.
	Identify site for affordable housing development and property acquisition opportunities.
	Support Registered Providers with data and analysis for affordable housing acquisitions and purchases.
	Build on and improve working relationships with Registered Providers and Developers.
Work towards increasing the number of Council-owned temporary accommodation units to reduce our reliance on the private sector.	Improve the quality of temporary accommodation through the provision of council-owned units.
	Reduce our use of private sector temporary accommodation.

Strategic Priority 4: Use available resources more effectively

Objectives	Actions
Make best use of government funding and where eligible apply for grants geared towards preventing homelessness and rough sleeping.	Apply for government grants to support and alleviate homelessness and rough sleeping.
	Review how grant funding is used and allocated to promote efficiencies and maximise impact.
	Access Homes England grant funding to help facilitate the acquisition and development of new affordable housing.
Make best use of existing housing stock.	Review our internal void management processes so they are effective and efficient.
	Review the Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy
	Establish a 'Hard to Let' Protocol
	Review the Housing Allocations Policy

Strategic Priority 5: Reduce and work towards ending rough sleeping

Objectives	Actions
Improve our understanding of the causes of rough sleeping and identify practical solutions to reduce its occurrence.	Continue to attend and contribute to the Rough Sleeper Case Review.
	Review areas of delivery to work toward the target of zero people on the street.
Support people to move off, and stay off, the streets	Work in partnership with other organisations to identify support solutions.
	Consider ways that we can transform our service to ensure we support rough sleepers with respect, care and compassion.