



Cheshire West & Chester Council

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

2020-2025



Building futures, opening doors



Cheshire West
and Chester

Definition

The definition of homelessness is 'the state of having no home' - but you don't have to be living on the streets to be homeless.

Most homeless statistics record statutory homelessness i.e. those households which meet specific criteria set out in legislation, and to whom a duty has been accepted by a local authority.

Such households are rarely homeless in the literal sense of being without a roof over their heads, but are more likely to be threatened with the loss of, or are unable to continue with, their current accommodation.

The term 'rough sleeper' does refer to someone who is roofless who beds down in the open air such as on the streets, in doorways, in parks or in buildings not designated for habitation such as stairwells, car parks, or sheds.

Every local housing authority must have a homelessness strategy in their district which applies to everyone at risk of homelessness, not just people who may fall within the statutory framework.

Draft

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Foreword

Cheshire West and Chester's new Homelessness Strategy for 2020-2025 sets out a new approach to homelessness in our borough. I would like to thank partners from all sectors that have contributed and supported the development of this strategy.

The main focus of our strategy will be to prevent homelessness in the first place, and to help those who are homeless to build a better future. We have made positive progress over the past five years, but more needs to be done.

The road ahead will be challenging. There are increasing pressures on budgets in all sectors, alongside the continued impact of welfare reforms. However, I am confident that if we work in partnership to tackle these issues we can have a positive impact on homelessness in Cheshire West and Chester.

Rough sleeping has been high on the national agenda and has gained much media coverage. We have seen an increase in rough sleeping locally in recent years and there are many more people in the borough living in precarious housing situations such as sofa surfing, temporary accommodation and hostels.

We know that prevention of homelessness is vitally important to tackling disadvantage and creating sustainable communities. People who do not have access to sustainable accommodation will find it difficult to engage in education, training or to maintain or gain employment.

It is important in such times where budgets are reducing and demand for specialist services are increasing, that we work together and pool our resources to ensure people in our communities get the right support, at the right time. No single organisation can solve homelessness alone; we must proactively work together to intervene earlier and prevent it happening.

I look forward to working with other public services, local community groups, charities, businesses and residents to deliver this strategy over the coming years.

Cllr Richard Beacham
Cabinet Member for Housing

Introduction

This strategy has been developed in consultation with key partners following a review of homelessness in Cheshire West and Chester and takes into account recent developments in relevant legislation and policy.

This strategy seeks to set out a collaborative approach to tackling homelessness in Cheshire West and Chester over the next five years. An early help approach has been shown to prevent homelessness and must be the foundation of this strategy. Together as partners we can expand on this approach, not only to prevent homelessness but also to achieve wider outcomes such as improved health and well-being and better job prospects.

The Council and its partners have made progress in tackling homelessness over the lifetime of the last strategy, but the landscape we are working in has changed. Austerity, welfare reforms, the economic position, housing supply and the affordability and the growth of the private rented sector have all contributed. In addition to this, wider policy and legal changes have had an impact on both the national and local homelessness situation.

This strategy will build on the previous good work; the last homeless strategy had a clear focus on prevention and since 2015 over 7700 cases of homelessness have been prevented enabling people to stay in their current property or find an alternative. The strategy will take full account of a changing landscape including the implementation of the Homeless Reduction Act 2017, which came into force in April 2018. It will be underpinned by a clear action plan which will be monitored by the Homelessness Strategy Steering Group.

Achievements since the last strategy

The last Homelessness Strategy was published in 2015. The action plan for the strategy was reviewed and revised throughout the period of the strategy and there have been a number of achievements over the last 5 years:

- The Council's Health and Wellbeing Board signed up to St Mungo's Charter for Homeless Health
- A Homeless Health Needs Audit was carried out by Public Health
- A Hospital Discharge Protocol was agreed with the Countess of Chester Hospital to ensure that people are not discharged from hospital unless they have accommodation to go to
- Four direct access spaces have been developed in Northwich increasing this type of provision across the borough
- Over 20 care leavers age 16/17 were supported into social housing through a new scheme to reduce the cost of residential placements
- A private landlord service with incentives was introduced with over 310 landlords now signed up creating 221 tenancies of which 160 tenancies have been sustained for 12 months or more.
- A triage service has been introduced to provide advice and support to private landlords and allows cases to be fast tracked to the Department of Work and

Pensions and formal training has been provided to 89 landlords on safeguarding, fuel poverty, Universal Credit and safe homes.

- The Empty Homes Strategy was adopted and each year over 200 properties are brought back into use.
- The Housing First model of support and accommodation for complex adults was trialled and further funding for 10 more units has been awarded to the Council
- Housing related support and homeless services contracts were combined into one holistic service. The new homelessness support contract with clear emphasis on prevention was awarded to Forfutures for 9 years
- A multi-disciplinary case management approach was adopted for rough sleepers to help identify every rough sleeper in the borough with an aim to reduce rough sleeping
- Following a review outreach services for rough sleepers were increased from 6.30am to midnight every day
- The Council made a successful bid to the MHCLG for a Rapid Rehousing Pathway grant and an assessment hub at Hamilton House for rough sleepers opened in April 2019.
- Severe Weather Emergency Provision (SWEP) was reviewed and new provision using churches and volunteers was successfully introduced
- The Housing Options service was redesigned to create new triage and case management teams, along with new ICT, to enable the successful implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- Following a successful bid the Council was awarded a 2 year sub-regional grant from the MHCLG to prevent rough sleeping which helped to develop the Upstream sub-regional prevention service with Forum Housing
- Since the last strategy was published 7707 cases of homelessness have been prevented
- 10 additional TA units (8 single rooms and 1 double unit) have been provided in Chester and increased support is now provided to temporary accommodation residents from Forfutures, along with improved management arrangements for the buildings
- Of the 230 unit council house building programme, 20 of these are shared ownership, and 210 affordable rent, due for completion in November
- A successful bid was made by CWAC for additional accommodation and community hub for victims of domestic abuse

National strategic context

Since 2002, the Government has made homelessness prevention a priority through providing increased funding to tackle homelessness, setting challenging targets for the prevention of homelessness, and placing requirements on local authorities to produce homelessness strategies. At the same time however, we have seen a range of statutory changes, welfare reforms and annual reductions in government funding to local authorities which continue to have an adverse impact on homelessness. Levels of homelessness have increased nationally over the last few years as has the number of households placed into temporary accommodation. This trend has been mirrored in Cheshire West and Chester.

National homelessness developments since the last review in 2014:

- In October 2016, the Government announced a new £40 million homelessness prevention programme to provide an innovative approach to tackling homelessness, with prevention at its heart. This included £10 million for targeted support for those at imminent risk of sleeping rough or those new to the streets and £10 million in Social Impact Bonds to help long-term rough sleepers with the most complex needs.
- In 2017 councils were given greater flexibility and control over homelessness budgets through the “Flexible Homelessness Support Grant”.
- In April 2018 the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 became the biggest change to homeless legislation in decades. The Act builds on the existing provisions of Part 7 of the 1996 Housing Act (as amended by Homelessness Act 2002), it extends councils duties to those who are homeless and has a focus on prevention. The Government has awarded ‘new burdens’ grants to councils to meet some of the funding challenges of the new Act. The key changes brought about by the Act include:
 - Improving the advice and information available about homelessness and the prevention of homelessness.
 - Extending the period ‘threatened with homelessness’ from 28 days to 56 days
 - Introducing new duties to prevent and relieve homelessness for all eligible households, regardless of priority need, intentionality and (local connection).
 - Introducing assessments and Personal Housing Plans setting out the actions authorities and individuals will take to secure accommodation.
 - Encouraging public bodies to work together to prevent and relieve homelessness through a Duty to Refer
- In August 2018 the Government published a Rough Sleeping Strategy which set out how the Government plans to end rough sleeping entirely by 2027 with a three-pillared approach:
 - Prevention – understanding the issues that lead to rough sleeping and providing timely support for those at risk
 - Intervention – helping those already sleeping rough with swift support tailored to their individual circumstances
 - Recovery – supporting people in finding a new home and rebuilding their lives.

- In September 2018 the MHCLG announced funding for the Rough Sleeping Initiative across the 84 councils with the highest levels of rough sleeping. Further RSI funding became available in March 2019 for other areas. The 2019-20 RSI funding was intended to support interventions that can be set up and delivered at pace to have an impact on Rough Sleeping numbers next year. Services that attracted funding included specialist support in the areas of mental health and substance misuse.
- In October 2018 the MHCLG announced funding for the “Rapid Rehousing Pathway” (RRP), covering four of the interventions as set out in the Rough Sleeping Strategy:
 - Somewhere Safe to Stay hubs
 - Supported Lettings
 - Navigators
 - Local lettings agencies
- In December 2018, 11 areas were selected as the “early adopters” of the Somewhere Safe to Stay rapid assessment hub model, and in February 2019, another 42 “early adopter” areas were announced to pilot the other three elements of RRP. A second RRP funding round for 2019/20 was opened in March 2019.

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Our challenges

Nationally the government recognises that the housing system is 'broken'¹ and recent statistics show that homelessness and rough sleeping is on the increase. Locally there are also a number of pressing issues:

- A lack of affordable housing particularly for single people and especially those under 35, who are on low incomes or unemployed. This group is impacted by the under 35 shared room rate. This is the biggest group of people who approach the Housing Options service for assistance.
- The continued impact of welfare reforms particularly spare room subsidy, benefit cap, introduction of universal credit and changes to sickness benefits.
- A tendency for private landlords to be more selective of tenants who are perceived to be low risk.
- Poverty and low incomes are key barriers for accessing suitable housing and maintaining stable and financially sustainable tenancies. Access to employment is a key mechanism for preventing homelessness.
- People living on the streets are at risk of illness and early death from a range of health problems including substance misuse, and mental and physical ill health.
- An ongoing undersupply of social housing - (council and registered social landlords) and other affordable housing. Registered housing providers are now private (not public) bodies and have to manage risk very carefully.
- The ongoing need for efficiencies and savings in local government and continued austerity has led to a reduction in the support and advice services available locally for those who are vulnerable, which can mean people are presenting in crisis.
- We need to do more to recognise the impact and cost that the trauma of homelessness can have on both adult and children's physical and mental health and well-being.
- A number of the people presenting as homelessness have a mixture of complex needs, common to these are substance misuse, mental health and offending. Some of these people are spending periods of time rough sleeping and begging, others are in and out of supported housing, prison and hospital and a number are precariously housed, often 'sofa surfing'. The challenge here is encouraging people to engage in the services and accommodation available and ensuring all partners are pulling together for the same aim.
- A limited number of options for temporary accommodation and the continued use of B&B out of area, including for families.

Overall ensuring that people who have experienced homelessness are able to sustain accommodation in the long term requires both the availability and access to suitable housing and the appropriate support structures. Individuals and households also need to have the capacity and resilience to maintain occupation of their home.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fixing-our-broken-housing-market>

What the Homelessness Review is telling us

The results of the review illustrate that the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 has impacted not only the way that homelessness data is collected but also the outcomes and duties owed to any individual or household that present to the Council as homeless.

The number of homeless acceptances (i.e. those who are homeless, in priority need, unintentionally homeless and have a local connection), have slightly reduced and, although prevention activity has a new focus following the new legislation, outcomes could be improved.

There has been a steep rise in the number of placements in temporary accommodation, particularly bed and breakfast which supports the fact that it is becoming more challenging to successfully prevent homelessness. Analysis is ongoing to determine why this is happening but some initial observations are that there is limited move on from supported housing, housing options for some people with a range of support needs can be limited, there are not enough supported/emergency housing options available and access to the private rented sector is a challenge.

The biggest group presenting as homeless are single males between the ages of 25-44, often with a range of complex needs. The new ways of working under the Homeless Reduction Act lead to more people presenting to the service for advice, support and accommodation and there needs to be more focus on trying to keep people in their existing accommodation where this is feasible.

The review has highlighted the link between homelessness and health and has illustrated the significant health inequalities experienced by homeless people, especially those who are sleeping rough. Homeless people are more likely to suffer from a range of health problems including substance misuse, and mental and physical ill health but many find it difficult to access and engage with mainstream health services, particularly primary care services (GPs) and as a result health problems may be left untreated or they approach services at the point of crisis e.g. through A&E departments. Problems can also arise on discharge from hospital, particularly for those who do not have accommodation to return to or those that may find their existing accommodation is now inappropriate or unsafe for them. This can have a negative effect on ongoing health care and lead to readmission to hospital.

The key findings from the review are:

- The number of people presenting as homeless has increased. This is mainly because the HRA17 enables more people to access help earlier. Of 1847 cases opened 726 were already homeless.
- There are more homeless single people. The number of single people (or couples) represents 84% of those already homeless
- The prevention and relief of homelessness can be improved with the right resources. Of the 1847 cases 602 had homelessness prevented or relieved.
- DHP is used well and productively to help prevent homelessness.
- The number of single people owed the full housing duty is much higher than previous years. Being vulnerable due to mental health problems now represents 26% of those owed a full housing duty.

- Relationships with private landlords need developing and more evictions need preventing through tenancy support. The main reason for statutory homelessness is the ending of an assured shorthold tenancy.
- The customer survey found that relationship breakdown, eviction by private landlords, violence, and eviction by parents were the main reasons for homelessness. The main underlying causes were mental health issues and affordability.
- Cuts or changes to benefits and frozen benefit rates continue to lead to increasing debts and homelessness.
- Stakeholders are in agreement that drug and alcohol issues, mental health, debts and low income, family breakdown and poor coping skills were the underlying issues that led to homelessness.
- We are seeing high numbers of people in temporary accommodation and expenditure on bed and breakfast needs to be reduced significantly. 220 more households were placed in bed and breakfast during 2018/19 than the previous year. 75% of the households were single people, many with complex needs.
- The number of people in bed and breakfast now represents 59% of all those in temporary accommodation (52 households). Many people are placed outside the area which impacts family support, education, and access to services such as drugs treatment and work coaches.
- Rough sleeping is still an issue in the area. 34 rough sleepers were known to the Outreach service in May 2019. 17 rough sleepers were identified and verified in the last official rough sleeper count in October 2018. Dual diagnosis (mental health and substance misuse issues) are prevalent amongst the rough sleeping community.
- Providing more emergency bed spaces can help alleviate rough sleeping only if there are clear achievable pathways into alternative accommodation with support.
- People are waiting longer for supported housing and those in supported housing are not able to move into independent housing due to a shortage of permanent housing options especially shared accommodation and 1 and 2 bed properties.
- More accommodation needs to be sourced from social and private landlords to enable move on and initiatives such as Housing First.
- The number of hidden homeless or those sofa surfing is increasing and people are waiting longer to get rehoused.
- Mental health support is seen as a priority by customers and stakeholders
- Frontline staff need to be trained to a high standard to help improve the customer journey.

Our vision and priorities

“Working in partnership to end homelessness in Cheshire West and Chester”

The review has highlighted a number of issues that need to be addressed within the strategy. The resources available to tackle homelessness are limited and it would be impossible to address each and every one so it is therefore necessary to prioritise the main themes. The five priorities identified in the strategy are based on the findings in the review and current government thinking and emphasise the importance of early intervention and prevention.

Priority One

Maximise homeless prevention options, activities and outcomes

Act faster to prevent people losing their homes, early identification of problems and the provision of high quality advice and assistance will ensure people have the best chance of staying in their home.

Priority Two

Support rough sleepers and those with complex needs

Provide rough sleepers and those with complex needs, with the right accommodation and support to build their resilience and sustain independent living.

Priority Three

Reduce the demand for temporary accommodation and the use of B&B

Relieve homelessness through effective action and robust pathways and ensure that suitable accommodation can be secured at the point of crisis.

Priority Four

Increase local housing options

Enable people to secure homes they can afford, working in partnership to make best use of existing resources, improve access to available housing options in private and social rented sector, increase supply, promote active move on from supported housing and identify and address gaps in provision.

Priority Five

Maximise and maintain partnership working

Work better together in a co-ordinated way to prevent homelessness and build resilience; strong relationships, common assessment and referral processes, information sharing, co-location and jointly delivered services will lead to better outcomes for the homeless.

The objectives in this strategy are interrelated and reinforce that working together will help to achieve an end to homelessness. Key to delivering the strategy will be continued collaborative working across the council and its partners. However we recognise we need to strengthen these relationships both operationally and strategically. We will seek to improve and build on our existing partnership working to support people to stay in their properties or to find lasting and affordable housing solutions.

To be successful, prevention and early intervention is key, as is flexibility in service delivery and listening to customers. We will find new ways of understanding and addressing the factors that can lead to homelessness – such as the ending of private tenancies, family or relationship breakdown and discharge from institutions such as prisons and hospitals. We will also develop a greater understanding of the impact of wider social issues such as childhood poverty and disadvantage, unemployment, poor health and wellbeing and lack of access to affordable, decent homes. We believe this

will greatly increase the chances of positive outcomes for people at risk of becoming homeless. We have adopted a person-centred housing and support solution which seeks to ensure effective information and advice is available at every stage to maximise the positive outcomes for those who are or may face homelessness.

Early intervention will help us tackle rough sleeping which the National Rough Sleeper Strategy 2018 identifies as a top government priority and reaffirms the target to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and eradicate it by 2027. Our Rapid Rehousing Pathway funding is enabling us to develop clear pathways and provide appropriate support and accommodation for rough sleepers and we will need to consider how these services can continue once the 12 months funding comes to an end. We are committed to reducing rough sleeping in the long term and will do this by ensuring that outcomes for rough sleepers are sustainable.

We are seeing high numbers of people in temporary accommodation and expenditure on bed and breakfast needs to be reduced significantly. By reducing expenditure on bed and breakfast we can improve the accommodation and support on offer. We need to work with social housing providers to help us increase the availability of suitable temporary accommodation whilst at the same time reduce the overall expenditure on temporary accommodation by early intervention work.

Governance of the strategy

The strategy and action plan will be reviewed annually. The Homelessness Strategy Steering Group is responsible for monitoring the progress and delivery of the strategy and action plan. Membership of the group is made up of representatives from organisations and voluntary groups working with homeless people in the borough.

Action Plan

This action plan illustrates the main areas of work over the next five years and a detailed action plan will be developed annually to enable a flexible response to any emerging needs, trends and policy changes. Actions and targets in the detailed plan will be agreed with partners who will be asked to make specific commitments on their contribution to the strategy.

ACTION PLAN		
PRIORITY ONE		
To maximise homeless prevention options, activities and outcomes - act faster to prevent people losing their homes, early identification of problems and the provision of high quality advice and assistance will ensure people have the best chance of staying in their home.		
Ref	Action	Target/Outcome
1.1	Adopt a commitment to prevent homelessness which has buy in across all council services and with wider stakeholders including landlords (social and private), criminal justice agencies, police and health services.	Corporate approach to the prevention of homelessness. Provide early support to reduce the numbers of people who present in crisis.
1.2	Ensure an early intervention approach is adopted by all, referring people earlier for support and advice, ensuring sufficient capacity to respond to referrals.	To increase the number of early referrals to the service to prevent crisis.
1.3	Raise awareness of homelessness with relevant organisations and stakeholders.	To raise awareness of the causes and consequences of homelessness and promote what others can do to prevent homelessness.
1.4	Use DHP (Discretionary Housing Payment), as a prevention tool for homelessness, targeting it where it will have most impact.	To have an agreed process with Transactional Services to ensure that DHP supports the prevention of homelessness.
1.5	Develop pre- eviction protocols with both social and where appropriate private landlords.	To provide early housing options and advice to tenants to try and prevent homelessness or support a managed move.
1.6	Ensure the availability of budgeting, debt and money management advice in support of homeless prevention and the implementation of Universal Credit.	People can access support to manage their monthly UC payments including rental payments.
1.7	Produce and provide high quality housing advice in a number of formats.	To make advice more accessible and available, with a particular focus on those who are at greater risk of homelessness.

PRIORITY TWO**Supporting rough sleepers – providing them with the right accommodation and support to build their resilience and sustain independent living.**

Ref	Action	Target/Outcome
2.1	Development of clear pathways for men and women particularly at crisis points where the risk of rough sleeping is heightened, i.e. prison release, hospital discharge and evictions.	To reduce the risk of rough sleeping, sofa surfing and the revolving door of homelessness. To get commitment from other services to support the wider needs. To ensure health needs are met.
2.2	Develop joint working arrangements with adult social care, children's social care, safeguarding, primary care, mental health and substance misuse.	Ensure referrals are in place between services to reduce the health and well-being inequalities of homeless people. To develop a joint assessment and support planning approach to address needs and risks around homelessness.
2.3	Improve the health of rough sleepers by working more closely with the Cheshire and Wirral Partnership and St Werburgh's Medical Practise for the homeless.	To ensure that the health needs of rough sleepers are met
2.4	Develop and undertake a coordinated programme of joint intensive outreach with partners to establish accurate numbers and support people on the streets	To give a clearer picture of rough sleeping, inform service development and support those on the streets
2.5	To continue with a multi-disciplinary case management approach for rough sleepers	To help identify every rough sleeper in the borough with an aim to reduce rough sleeping
2.6	Ensure there is sufficient capacity and support available to run SWEP (Severe Weather Emergency Protocols) all winter.	To provide sufficient beds throughout winter for those who are on the streets, including an assessment of their accommodation and support needs. To reduce the risk of cold related illnesses and excess winter deaths.
2.7	To work in partnership with Community Safety, the Police and other key stakeholders to develop an action plan to tackle begging in the borough.	To reduce begging and rough sleeping in the borough.
2.8	To continue to pilot a Housing First model, to see what lessons can be learnt and whether this approach could be used more widely.	Reduce the revolving door of homelessness and increase tenancy sustainment.

2.9	Increase access to mental health and substance misuse support. Look to implement learning and good practise from the 12 month funded RSI posts.	To reduce rough sleeping To build resilience and help sustain independent living
2.10	Improve advice and training for staff working with complex needs clients to create 'psychologically informed environments' within all homelessness services.	To improve the customer journey by providing specialist advice To help address the complex needs of the homeless population
2.11	Make effective use of clients with lived experience to shape our services.	To improve services for both clients and staff To improve engagement

PRIORITY THREE

Reduce the demand for temporary accommodation and the use B&B– effective action to relieve homelessness through strong and effective pathways to ensure that suitable accommodation can be secured.

Ref	Action	Target/Outcome
3.1	Work with a range of landlords to secure additional units of temporary accommodation.	More local options for temporary accommodation. Sending less people out of area. Reduce the use of B&B
3.2	Develop effective pathways to and from temporary accommodation, i.e. there are sufficient bed spaces and that move on is timely.	Prevent bed blocking in supported housing. Gain a better understanding of why length of stay can vary and barriers for move on.
3.3	Improve performance monitoring frameworks.	To provide better intelligence to support commissioning decisions and service delivery models.
3.4	To review the provision of accommodation and support for 16-17 year olds and care leavers.	To mediate home visits if this is a viable option. To ensure that appropriate accommodation and support is available with clear pathways once they turn 18.
3.5	To review the Allocations Policy in relation to homeless applicants	More social housing available for homeless households
3.6	To increase the options available in the private rented sector to enable a discharge of duty into private rented housing	More housing options for homeless households

PRIORITY FOUR

Increase local housing options – enable people to secure homes they can afford. Demand for limited social and supported housing is high and some households have difficulty accessing the private rented sector. The council will work with partners to make best use of existing resources, improve access to available housing options, increase supply and identify and address gaps in provision.

Ref	Action	Target/Outcome
4.1	Develop a clear and co-ordinated private sector offer. Improve access to good quality private rented housing to expand choices and provide affordable options. This includes supporting both tenants and landlords and developing new approaches that are attractive to all parties.	Improve options available to customers. Develop strong partnerships with PRS landlords. Co-ordinate resources and how we work with private landlords across the borough to improve efficiency and avoid duplication. Supporting landlords where required to improve property standards and energy efficiency, to reduce the risks of fuel poverty.
4.2	Work in partnership to bring empty homes back into use for those who are vulnerable to homelessness.	Provide more options for those who are at risk of homelessness or who are ready to move on from supported accommodation. Bring back long term empty homes into use as an affordable housing option.
4.3	Work in partnership to ensure there is sufficient range of supported accommodation	Increase the specialist provision for different client groups.
4.4	Increase the supply of affordable housing in the borough.	Development of new affordable housing for rent/sale/shared ownership.
4.5	Make the best use of the existing council stock and social housing within the borough	Revise the Allocations Policy. Review nominations agreements.
4.6.	Develop more affordable housing options such as shared housing, particularly for young people and options for single men age 25 and over	Improve access to accommodation for these groups.
4.7	Promote the Council's Domestic Abuse Strategy DVA-Strategy-2016-20 and work in partnership with domestic abuse services so that anyone fleeing domestic abuse gets the support they need including accommodation.	Improve options available to this group through signposting and partnership working.
<p>PRIORITY FIVE</p> <p>Maximise and maintain partnership working – working better together, including with customers, in a co-ordinated way to prevent homelessness and build resilience; strong relationship, common assessment and referral processes, information sharing, co-location and jointly delivered services will lead to better outcomes for the homeless.</p>		
Ref	Action	Target/Outcome
5.1	Explore ways to increase partnership working and build support to tackle homelessness.	Further develop multi-agency working around homelessness. Develop a more co-ordinated approach to homelessness.
5.2	Consider the co-location of services to provide a holistic needs assessment and support planning process and a single point of access for customers.	Better offer to customer, meeting holistic needs. More efficient and effective service delivery model.

5.3	Seek to involve services users in the design of services and policies and actively seek feedback from those accessing the Housing Options Team.	To ensure lived experience is informing service delivery.
5.4	Work in a way, strategically and operationally, that ensure services are progressively aligned to support homeless prevention at an early stage to help more people stay in their current accommodation or have a planned move rather than end up in crisis.	Development of integrated housing pathways. Make every contact count to support homeless prevention.
5.5	To develop an ongoing communication programme to educate the public about what support is available for those who are rough sleeping and begging, including the development of an alternative giving scheme.	Raise awareness of services available to rough sleepers/complex needs/beggars. To offer alternative ways the public can support this group.
5.6	Encourage more organisations to use the Duty to Refer to support those who are at risk of homelessness.	Increase the numbers presenting to the service at an earlier stage. Encourage referrals from all agencies not just the statutory ones. Increase homeless preventions through early intervention work.
5.7	Ensure there is no duplication of support between services and that support plans are joined up.	Working in a holistic way to address the causes of homelessness and increase tenancy sustainment. Maximise resources, skills and knowledge.
5.8	To review the joint protocol and assessment process for young people age 16/17 at risk of homelessness.	To ensure it is fit for purpose and identify potential improvements to the process. Ensure housing and homelessness information is available in the right formats and places for the target client group, particularly care leavers.
5.9	Review and develop the strategic and operational groups that work around homelessness in the borough.	To bring local organisations together to promote a joined up message, pool resources and find new solutions to end the cycle of rough sleeping and homelessness. Raise awareness of support available for those who are at risk of homelessness.
5.10	Develop a protocol with Education Welfare to ensure that children in temporary accommodation are supported	To reduce the impact of lost school days on children placed in temporary accommodation, particularly out of area.
5.11	Increase and improve opportunities for people to volunteer, working with voluntary sector partners, local businesses and residents	To provide opportunities for customers that improve chances of being employed, living independently that supports personal development to improve their lives. To integrate people and communities
5.12	With work Employment and Skills to develop pathways for customers into local employment opportunities	To provide opportunities for customers that improve chances of being employed, living independently that supports personal development to improve their lives.

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