



WINCHESTER

PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING

STRATEGY 2019 – 2024



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Foreword by Portfolio Holder



Cllr Kelsie Learney
Winchester City Council
Portfolio Holder for Housing

Homelessness remains a constant theme in our work and the Council remains committed to early intervention and preventing homelessness wherever possible through a network of partnership working.

This strategy clearly sets out the practical ways the Council will achieve its aims and objectives including the Council's corporate commitment to not use bed and breakfast accommodation and to ensure that no one needs to sleep rough within the Winchester district by 2023.

An effective Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy and its Action Plan are key tools in helping to deliver our objectives in meeting the needs of the most vulnerable and excluded members of our community by providing targeted help and support to enable them to prevent homelessness and sustain tenancies.

We have seen an upturn in approaches for housing advice and assistance from people facing homelessness and officers are focussing a great deal of attention on delivering an effective package of preventative measures a key part of our approach in tackling the causes of homelessness.

A focus by officers on early intervention work avoids the need to take corrective action later and delivers more efficient and cost effective homelessness prevention services. There are clear proven cost benefits to developing preventative services rather than relying on expensive and reactive emergency provision such as bed and breakfast and other temporary accommodation.

In 2018, a strategic multi agency Social Inclusion Group was introduced to bring together a network of senior decision makers to effect established system changes and reduce duplication of effort, ensuring the prevention of homelessness is central to all our partners work.

When someone facing homelessness approaches the council for housing assistance they are often at the end of their homelessness journey having suffered many crisis and interactions with other public bodies and voluntary sector services a long the way.

Our strategic aim is that agencies work together and in partnership to support those at risk of homelessness. Together we need to think about how we can prevent all households from reaching a crisis point that results in homelessness and in some cases the need to sleep rough. We need to ensure that every contact we make with vulnerable households' makes a difference bringing together all our skills and resources to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping.

We know we can not solve all the issues alone and that homelessness is a complex issue and is not always solved by simply putting a roof over someone's head and as such we will continue to build a stronger network of partnerships and services to help deliver our strategic vision.

We strongly believe that our strategic theme of early intervention and prevention work, supported by our network of partners and local communities will ensure we find positive ways to support people to maintain a stable home and prevent people becoming homeless in the first place



GOLD STANDARD
AWARD FOR
THE HOUSING
OPTIONS TEAM



44
HOUSEHOLDS IN
CITY LET PROPERTIES

Since the previous Homelessness Strategy the following significant outcomes have been achieved.

- Gold Standard award for the Housing Options team.
- No bed and breakfast placements for young people and families
- Maintained low level rough sleeping numbers.
- Introduced a 'City Lets' scheme as an alternative and ethical private landlord offer to help people in housing need secure private rented accommodation
- Co-commissioned homelessness services in partnership with Hampshire Country Council and Registered Providers.
- Increased the supply of supported housing units.
- Increased the supply of Council owned affordable housing and delivery of an Extra Care scheme.
- Established a co-commissioned assertive outreach team to identify and support people rough sleeping at the earliest opportunity.

- Established a strategic multi agency Social Inclusion Group (SIG) to effect system change across partnership working opportunities.
- Become a member of the MEAM (Making Every Adult Matter) charitable network.
- Embedded the Supporting Families programme within Housing Services.
- Co-location of the CAB within the Council Offices
- Introduced a discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant programme to keep people living with disabilities in their own home.
- Produced an Empty Homes Strategy and a register of empty homes offering support to property owners to bring homes back in to use.
- Exceeded the government's local target to accommodate and settle vulnerable Syrian Refugees.

Cllr Kelsie Learney
Winchester City Council
Portfolio Holder for Housing

The Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Delivery Priorities



1

Provide early intervention and support to prevent homelessness



2

Promoting systems change through partnership arrangements



3

Ensuring sufficient supply of accommodation



4

Provide the right support and services so that no one needs to sleep rough

Introduction

The homelessness sector has been through significant change since the last Preventing Homelessness Strategy was published in 2014. Including the introduction of new legislation in 2017, in the form of the Homelessness Reduction Act. The biggest change in homelessness legislation in 40 years.

The impact of welfare reform has resulted in many more people being at risk of homelessness. Frozen Local Housing Allowance rates have reduced access to the private rented housing sector for vulnerable households.

Homelessness is a complex issue that cannot be solved by one organisation alone with a range of social and economic factors contributing to the causes of homelessness. Many of these issues are not housing related. Childhood trauma has been linked to drug and alcohol abuse in later life as well as domestic abuse and mental health issues often leading to homelessness and rough sleeping.

The impact of homelessness can be devastating and damaging with long term consequences for those affected. The Council is committed to tackling the causes of homelessness, to prevent and reduce homelessness and end rough sleeping within the Winchester district by 2023. 'Delivering quality housing options' is a key strategic outcome and corporate commitment within the Council strategy with an objective 'To drive down homelessness across the district and support partner agencies in the drive for an improved life for those in need'.

The new Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024, will continue to build on early intervention and preventative work through our network of partnership agencies. It also introduces the concept of co-production opportunities to enable those with lived experience of homelessness to be heard and to contribute to the way the Council plans and delivers homelessness services.

Winchester is an attractive district with a strong economy and varied cultural life but there are also inequalities of both health and wealth. The revised strategy explores joint working collaboration opportunities through a systems change approach to tackle the complex issues of homelessness.

The updated strategy clearly set out the practical ways the Council will achieve its aims and objectives. This includes the Council's commitment to continue to not use bed and breakfast accommodation for young people and families and to ensure that no one needs to sleep rough within the Winchester district by 2023.



Winchester is an attractive district with a strong economy and varied cultural life but there are also inequalities of both health and wealth.



OUR VISION

EVERYONE WITHIN THE
DISTRICT RECEIVES
MEANINGFUL ADVICE TO
PREVENT HOMELESSNESS
AND ACCESS TO SERVICES TO
ENSURE THAT NO ONE NEEDS
TO SLEEP ROUGH

A homeless review and assessment of local homelessness was undertaken to identify key issues and trends. The Homelessness Review Report is found on the Council's website. The report includes consultation undertaken to inform the 4 key strategic delivery priorities.

Our vision and the strategy focuses on 4 key delivery priorities:

- Provide early intervention and support to prevent homelessness.
- Promoting systems change through partnership arrangements.
- Ensuring sufficient supply of accommodation.
- Provide the right support and services so that no one needs to sleep rough.

The key priorities align with the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 which encourages local authorities to intervene at an earlier stage to prevent homelessness and to improve the provision of support to anyone who is eligible and homeless, regardless of priority need or intentional homelessness.

The need for an effective and collaborative approach to tackling homelessness and its root causes is embedded within our strategic vision through partnership working opportunities.

The Council introduced a multi agency Social Inclusion Group in 2018, to bring together a network of senior decision makers to challenge established systems and to effect change. With an ambitious pledge to reduce rough sleeping in the Winchester City Centre by 2020 and to end rough sleeping within the Winchester district by 2023.

To support the work of the Social Inclusion Group the Council became a member of the MEAM (Making Every Adult Matter) charitable network this year in recognition of the Council's development of local partnership working. Our vision is to further develop a collaborative problem solving approach to tackling the root causes of social problems associated with homelessness.



Delivery of the Preventing Homelessness Strategy 2014–19

In 2017, the Council's housing options service achieved the Government's Gold Standard award for its committed approach to preventing and tackling homelessness for all. The Council was the first local authority in the County and only the fifth nationally to achieve the award.

The 2014 Preventing Homelessness Strategy underpinned the award with its early intervention and prevention plans for the Council's housing options service. The aims and objectives of the strategy were set out and aligned with the government's 'Gold Standard' qualifying criteria. Providing advice and assistance to all at risk of homelessness regardless of whether they met the Housing Act 1996, tests of homelessness. This positive approach meant that the Council was in an excellent position to deliver the new Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, enacted in 2018.

Through our strategy work we have maintained and introduced the following headline achievements:

- No bed and breakfast placements for young people and families
- Maintained low levels of rough sleeping numbers.
- Improvement of the Council's temporary accommodation stock
- Increased supply of supported housing units

- Accommodated families through the Council's 'City Lets' ethical landlord Private Rented Housing scheme.
- Established a multi agency Universal Credit project group to mitigate the roll out of UC across the district.
- Embedded partnership working within our service delivery.

Further details in respect of strategic achievements are listed within the Member Foreword.

The Homelessness Reduction Act placed new duties on local authorities to prevent and relieve homelessness for all eligible applicants regardless of priority need and brought new duties to prevent and relieve homelessness with 4 key measures:

- Extension of the definition of threatened with homelessness from 28 to 56 days
- A new duty to prevent homelessness for all eligible applicants threatened with homelessness, regardless of priority need.
- A new duty to relieve homelessness for all eligible applicants regardless of priority need, and
- A new duty to refer for specified public services to notify the LA if they come in to contact with someone who they believe may be at risk of homelessness.

Consultation and Communication

The strategy has been developed in consultation with partner organisations and customers. An independent housing consultant was commissioned to review current local systems and support in place to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping, canvassing views from a number of partner agencies, as well as meeting with individuals currently accessing local homelessness services.

The scope of the report was based on 5 priority areas.

- The current situation in relation to homelessness and rough sleeping by canvassing views from internal council staff and managers, partner agencies, and individuals currently within the system.
- Understanding the part partner agencies play and their strengths, values and assets.
- Identify what systems need reviewing.
- Identify outcomes that individuals / organisations are seeking.
- Identify who has the potential and desire to champion, advocate and lead.

Consultation was also undertaken with housing teams delivering the service and with customers accessing the services offered by the Trinity Day

Centre and Winchester Churches Nightshelter.

Identified areas of continuous improvement within the strategy review process formed part of a consultation event held in January 2019, with local members and a network of partner agencies.

To further capture customer feedback a service questionnaire was circulated to both customers and local services. The Strategy and its identified priorities have been reviewed by a Council Member lead Business and Housing Policy committee.

The Council's tenant participation group 'Tenants and Council Together' (TACT) were consulted on the final draft of the strategy.



Delivering the 2019–2024 Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

The Council's delivery of homelessness services has been recognised by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government as a 'Gold Standard' housing options service since 2017. Successes have included maintaining low levels of rough sleeping, no use of bed and breakfast for young people and families since 2012, against the national trend of increased use by other local authorities, and for robust partnership working within an established network of agencies.

These strengths place the Council in an excellent position to deliver the outcomes of the revised strategy over the next five years and of remaining a gold standard local housing authority.

Reducing homelessness and rough sleeping through early intervention and preventive work across the Winchester district remains a key delivery priority within the strategy. However, finding lasting change and effective solutions will require a systems change approach to address the root causes of social problems associated with homelessness.

The multi agency Social Inclusion Group has been introduced in an attempt to effect change of practices within local agencies through a joined up collaborative approach. We need to work together in partnership to map local systems, understand the needs of our customers and available assets, foster a learning culture and share leadership responsibilities. This strategy fully adopts such a new way of working. The alternative is to continue to simply mitigate challenges and contribute to future system failures for those at risk of homelessness and rough sleeping on our streets.

A focus on early intervention work is a theme throughout the strategy building on the delivery progress of the 2014–19 strategy. It is proven that an early intervention approach avoids the need to take corrective action later and delivers more efficient and cost effective homelessness prevention services. There are clear proven cost benefits to developing preventative services rather than relying on expensive and reactive emergency provision such as bed and breakfast and other temporary accommodation.





THE HOUSING
OPTIONS TEAM SAW
1641
HOUSEHOLDS
IN 2018/19

WE USE
NIL
USE OF B&B,
EXCEPT IN
EMERGENCIES

OUTREACH
TAKES PLACE
5 DAYS
PER WEEK



Since the implementation of the Housing Reduction Act 2017, the footfall to the housing options service has seen a slight increase with 1,494 enquiries in 2017/18, increasing to 1,641 in 2018/19. Accepted homeless cases saw a slight increase too from 36 cases in 2017/18 compared to 40 in 2018/19. These small increases in service delivery demonstrates that the Council continues to build on its early intervention and prevention work. Avoiding the use of costly emergency and temporary accommodation placements and only accepting the main housing duty to a small number of cases.

The Council will continue in its quest to maintain nil use of unsuitable bed and breakfast for young people and families. A pledge made and maintained since 2012.

This strategy fully embraces the introduction of a rapid rehousing approach to recovery for those found sleeping rough. An approach that aligns with the Ministry for Housing, Communities & Local Government published Rough Sleeping Strategy.

The Council is already proactive in this area of work and as such continues to maintain low numbers of rough sleeping within the City Centre though a model focused on early intervention and prevention supported by a proactive 5 day a week outreach service. This outreach service will continue to be a focus of support through a robust and new improved partnership outreach service which will increase outreach times to cover evenings and weekends.

To support the rapid rehousing approach the Council has co-commissioned provision to support the delivery of a Housing First project within the City Centre in partnership with Hampshire County Council and solidifies the partnership working theme of this strategy.

The funding and new Housing First provision will support individuals to recover from crisis and meets the Council's statutory duties to prevent and relieve homelessness under the Homelessness Act 2017.

1. To provide early intervention and support to prevent homelessness across the district

- Providing early intervention opportunities to prevent and relieve homelessness through the frontline drop in housing options triage service.
- Developing a holistic person centered approach to all housing options assessments. Enabling access to the service through flexible approaches such as home visits, accessible offices, assertive outreach team and drop in surgeries.
- Explore opportunities to prevent future homelessness from occurring through education programmes in schools, family projects, and care leaving teams. Develop pre eviction protocols with social housing landlords through the promotion of early intervention work and support.
- Develop lead housing officers to champion housing options and support for bespoke groups. such as victims of domestic abuse, young care leavers, people suffering mental illness and those with complex needs. Prison leavers and those leaving hospital with no housing in place.
- Establish a community in house sustainment and floating support service across all tenures. An indentified need and gap in service delivery following local funding cuts.
- To explore all grant funding opportunities to support the work of the strategy.
- Working with partner agencies and the voluntary sector to support the implementation of the 'Duty to Refer' through robust referral opportunitites and joint service level agreements.



2. Promoting systems change through partnership arrangements

- Promoting district wide systems of change through the multi agency Social Inclusion Group. Increasing membership of the group, targeting gaps in attendance and joint funding opportunities.
- Establishing the Winchester District as a Make Every Adult Matter (MEAM) approach area, to design and deliver better coordinated services as a partnership. Delivering on whole systems change through an early intervention, prevention and recovery focused model.
- Explore opportunities to engage with health and mental health services reducing crisis interventions where possible through joint working practices.
- Attend the Hampshire wide Keep Well Collaborative to support and deliver Homeless Health Assessment.
- Reduce duplication of effort through the Social Inclusion Group. Ensuring optimal and effective deployment of resources, assets and skills (right people, right place, and right time) by mapping and carrying out a review of local homelessness services.
- Promoting and achieving safe and thriving civic space to be enjoyed by all (reduce ASB, Crime and vulnerability, raise public awareness, and increase safeguarding).
- To engage with Expert Link to coordinate a local network group containing professionals and those with lived experience to identify local priorities and find sustainable solutions, developing co-created systems and services in partnership.



3. Ensuring sufficient supply of accommodation

- Explore joint commissioning and funding opportunities with partner organisations to increase the supply of housing provision for vulnerable households.
- Increase the supply of local move on accommodation for vulnerable households.
- Introduce a housing company to drive forward the development of mixed tenure affordable housing options across the district.
- Provide an effective, fair and transparent process to access affordable social housing.
- Apply a rapid re-housing response to rough sleeping through a renewed assertive outreach service.
- Establish a Housing First led model of housing provision for those with multiple needs excluded from mainstream accommodation.
- Expand the City Lets scheme through a communication plan to increase the numbers of landlords participating in the scheme.
- Work with our Private Sector Housing team to bring empty properties back into use.
- Introduce a Landlords Forum.
- Promote independence and support the creation of accessible homes for people living with disabilities and those with support needs to access the accommodation and support they need.
- Review the Council's Older Persons Housing Strategy to enable those with care and support needs to have a choice of suitable and affordable accommodation.
- Work in collaboration with partner agencies to ensure those leaving supported housing are tenancy ready and can successfully sustain move on accommodation.
- Support residents with the impact of welfare reform.
- Work with the Council's New Homes Delivery team, developers and Registered Providers to increase a supply of suitable and affordable housing options.
- Pursue co-commissioning of Homelessness Support Services in partnership with Hampshire County Council.



4. Provide the right support and services so that no person needs to sleep rough in Winchester

- Develop support services which are led by an individual's strengths and needs to promote positive engagement and a pathway out of rough sleeping.
- Review the outreach provision to ensure support is targeted to meet the needs of those sleeping out for the first time, those returning to the streets and for single women rough sleeping.
- Promote the MEAM approach bringing together good will, passion and business objectives of services through the Social Inclusion Group. Identify clear joint aims and a framework of support.
- Develop a local peer mentoring support service for those working towards recovery.
- Embed trauma informed principles within staff work practices through an established framework and staff training opportunities.
- Explore the role of local 'navigators' to support different forms of innovative interventions to assist people out of rough sleeping.
- Capture and evaluate outreach intelligence and identify early indicators of rough sleeping to prevent street attachment.
- Reduce street activity through a communication plan and promotion of the alternative giving scheme 'Spare Change for Lasting Change'.
- Engaging members of the public, Council employees and the business community to support those at risk of rough sleeping through increase promotion of the national Street Link service to help identify rough sleeping and hot spots.



Links to other Council Strategies and Polices

The strategy should be considered within context of a range of other housing strategies and policies which are inter-dependent.



Other strategies and polices considered as part of the development of the Strategy.

Strategic Content

The Council Strategy 2017 to 2020

The Housing Strategy 2018 to 2023

National Context

The Ministry for Housing, Communities & Local Government Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

The Childrens Act 2004

The Localism Act 2011

The Challenges

Winchester offers a wide range of homelessness services across commissioned and voluntary agencies. Often a quick fix of putting a roof of someone's head is the desired solution. However, without the right housing offer and support in place this can instead continue the cycle of failed tenancies and repeat homelessness. Identifying and understanding many of the broader social and economic challenges is crucial to the delivery of this strategy, to enable sustainable and long term housing and support solutions.

Affordability: The district has a high quality housing market with average housing prices significantly exceeding both the Central and South Hampshire market areas. The average household incomes in Winchester fall considerably short of the minimum income required for both purchasing and renting on the open market. An average Winchester home costs £402,000, with an income of £60,000 required to buy a property (11 times the average income) for a Winchester resident. Reducing realistic housing options for many and resulting in more households finding themselves living in unsuitable accommodation.

Housing Need: Demand for social housing remains high, with 1278 households on the housing register. One bedroomed accommodation remains the highest demand with 802 households in housing need (as at April 2019). During 2018, 581 properties were let across the district.

Private Rented Sector: There are fewer homes within the sector that are affordable for households on lower incomes facing homelessness. The gap between Local Housing Allowance and the average rent has significantly grown over the years. Around 40% of residents do not have the means to rent a two bedroomed property with the average monthly rent of £1,196 per month.

Move on accommodation: Lack of affordable move on accommodation from supported housing provision.

Funding cuts: Homelessness Support Services provided by Hampshire County Council will be reduced by £1.8 million, the potential change to services as a consequence is a reduction in spend on lower level and move on supported housing and community support. This will mean that those with less critical support needs will need to seek help from alternative sources with changes take effect this year from 1st August 2019.

Welfare Reform: An increase in evictions due to the viability of some households being able to remain living within the private rented sector. The Social Sector Size Criteria and Universal Credit have contributed to increasing social housing rent arrears causing barriers for households to sustain and secure accommodation.

Government Funding Grants: The delivery of the strategy remains reliant on central government homelessness grants which are reviewed and awarded on an annual basis affecting the ability to forecast budget income and expenditure to achieve the strategy aims and objectives.



1278

HOUSEHOLDS ON
THE HOUSING REGISTER



581

PROPERTIES LET
ACROSS THE DISTRICT

Resources

The delivery of homeless prevention services is supported by Government grants allocated specifically to help the Council fulfil its obligations under the national homelessness agenda.

The Council have had confirmed funding of the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant for 2019/20 of £154,479 for the purpose of supporting the Council toward the expenditure lawfully incurred by preventing and dealing with homelessness. A further £26,560 has been awarded as part of the New Burdens Funding associated with the Homelessness Reduction Act.

The previously awarded Homelessness Prevent Grant is now received by the Council as part of core funding. Although the grant figures for future financial years have not been announced, by reporting quarterly returns the service demonstrates the need for continued funding.

The Council's temporary accommodation stock sits within the Housing Revenue Account. Expenditure associated with the provision is recovered through the Council's rental and service charge regime.

The delivery of the strategy is supported by corporate and housing grant funding opportunities. 2019/20 grant has been allocated to the CAB to support UC claimants to navigate the application process, sustaining tenancies, reducing the risk of evictions and empowering claimants to take ownership of their UC benefit. Grants are awarded to the Trinity Day Centre and Winchester Nightshelter to support the Council's rough sleeping pathway and aim to eradicate rough sleeping.

Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) receives a £100,000 top-up grant from the Council's Housing Revenue Account. Providing our customers with short term financial assistance to sustain tenancies and reduce the threat homelessness. The award is reviewed annually and agreed depending on budgetary demands.

A successful joint North Hampshire bid submission secured a rough sleeping Initiative grant of £204,500 across North Hampshire (Winchester, Hart, Rushmoor and Basingstoke). The grant will provide training and reflective practice for staff and 1:1 therapy sessions for clients at risk of homelessness through an 18 month programme.

A further successful joint bid submission in partnership with Test Valley Borough Council secured a Private Rented Sector Access Fund of £177,000. The funding will enhance the current City Lets scheme through the provision of a tenant and landlord liaison officer. The Officer will work directly with the DWP to trouble shoot welfare benefit issues and provide tenancy ready programmes for vulnerable households at risk of homelessness through an 18 month programme.

ROUGH SLEEPING
GRANT OF

£204,500

SECURED ACROSS
NORTH HAMPSHIRE

PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR
ACCESS FUND OF

£177,000

SECURED IN PARTNERSHIP
WITH TEST VALLEY
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Monitoring and Review

This strategy is for a five year term but will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains relevant and responsive to change. Some of the objectives and actions in this strategy are short term and will be achieved quickly. Others will take longer to realise.

It is important to understand that there are many outside influences that mean the needs of our communities will change over time. The Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy must respond to these changing trends and needs as they arise.

Publication

A copy of the Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019–24 is available on the Council's website www.winchester.gov.uk and upon request as a hard copy at the Council's offices. Any request for versions in Large Print and Braille should be made in writing to:

Housing Services
Winchester City Council
City Offices
Colebrook Street
Winchester
SO23 9LJ
Email: homelessness@winchester.gov.uk

