

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING	Cabinet	
MEETING	16 January 2020	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
		E 3183
TITLE:	Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy (2019-2024)	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report: Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019/2024 Rough Sleeping Action Plan 2019		

1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 requires the Council to carry out a review of homelessness to inform the production of a homelessness strategy every 5 years. The Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-24 meets this requirement.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet is asked to;

- 2.1** Agree the Strategy.

THE REPORT

The Strategy came to November Cabinet for information. It has since been amended in light of comments and further information gathered during the consultation period and is now brought to Cabinet for a decision.

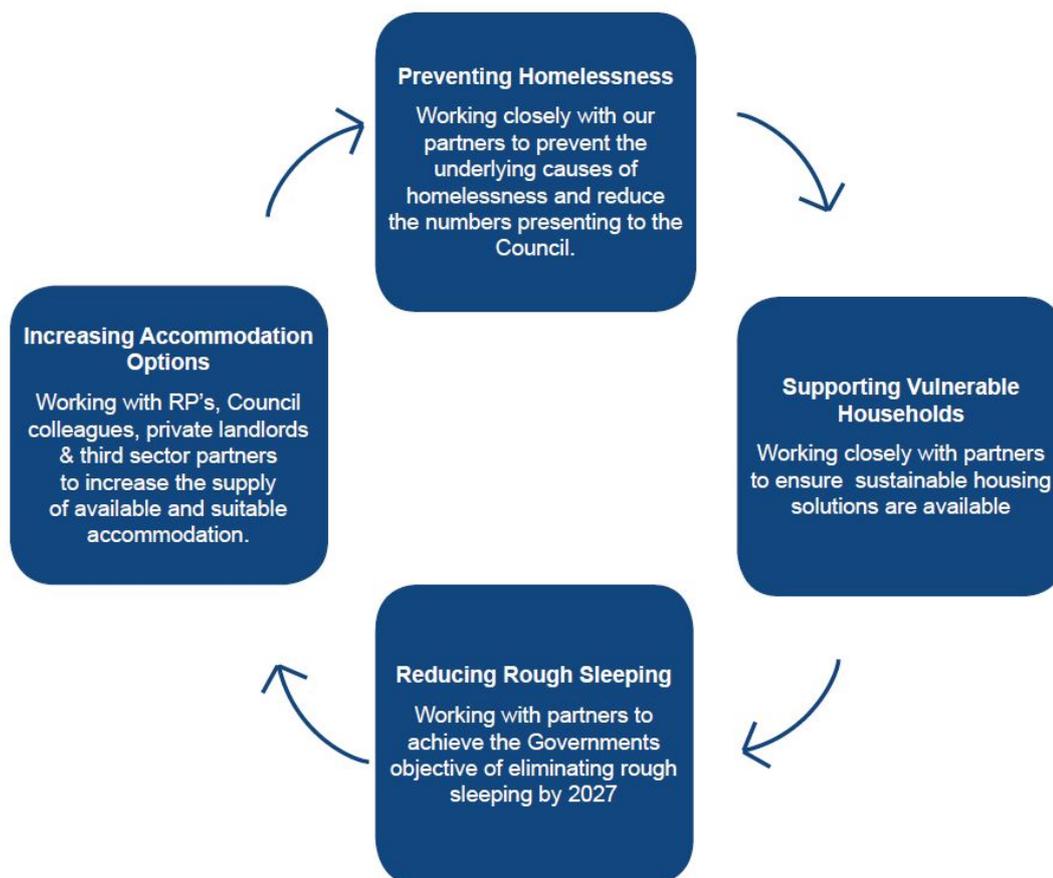
The Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019/24 is wide-ranging, covering all forms of homelessness. It is important to draw a distinction between the different ways homelessness is experienced. Rough sleeping is homelessness in its most visible and damaging form and is often most commonly recognised by the public. As an area regarded as having relatively high numbers of people sleeping rough¹, the Council is focusing on reduction of this number and the attached Rough Sleeping Action Plan addresses this. However, less visible forms of homelessness are of equal importance and this Strategy sets out the local picture and proposes approaches to reducing incidences of need here also.

It should be noted that whilst national and local homelessness levels have increased over recent years, the approach taken in the Bath & North East Somerset area has meant that the need to use temporary accommodation is dramatically lower than both our neighbouring local authority areas and across England. Bath & North East Somerset remains among the 30 lowest ranked local authorities for use of temporary accommodation in England.

By implementing the Homelessness Reduction Act, working with anyone in housing difficulty as early as possible and promoting the Duty to Refer across our partnerships, the Housing Options & Homelessness team have achieved successful outcomes for 48% of households coming forward for help in 2018. A successful outcome is defined as homelessness averted or ended.

The Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy proposes the following framework for tackling homelessness:

¹ In 2018 B&NES was in the top quartile of English local authorities for both the quantum and rate of rough sleeping.
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Working within the above framework, the following key priorities are proposed:

	What we will do	Why we are doing it	What needs to happen
1	Increase access to private rented sector accommodation	Move-on from all supported housing and temporary accommodation has slowed down. Increase in rough sleeping levels and impact on Council budgets for temporary accommodation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult with landlords to find out what would persuade them to work with us. • Consider how existing resources (eg Home Turf Lettings, Turnkey) can be further developed, using social investment and capital grants, to increase the pool of property available to homeless people traditionally excluded from the private rented market. • Investigate and pilot an incentives scheme for estate/lettings agencies securing private rented sector accommodation. Use Payment by Results model. • Investigate purchase of properties for lease to Third Sector agencies.
2	Improve the temporary accommodation offer and reduce duration of all	Use of all temporary accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Act on recommendations of the Review of Temporary Accommodation 2019.

	What we will do	Why we are doing it	What needs to happen
	stays, particularly B&B.	and duration of stays is increasing. TA stays are known to have negative impacts on health, wellbeing and educational outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve throughput – cut void times and move people on to long term housing more quickly. • Reduce use of out of area B&B placements. • Establish units of Dispersed temporary accommodation outside Bath.
3	Improve likelihood of successful tenancies	Even with support some tenancies fail. We need to reduce the incidence of evictions from all tenures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure tenancy training is appropriate and current. Review with training providers. • Establish a pathway through training to long-term accommodation • Improve awareness of work & training opportunities – increase incomes. • Ensure that formerly-homeless or otherwise vulnerable people are able to integrate into the local community by improving links to community navigation services, via for example the Wellbeing College, Wellbeing Options or social prescribing.
4	Improve accommodation options for vulnerable women who sleep rough or are at risk of sleeping rough.	Whilst the numbers of women in Rough Sleeper Counts are consistently lower than men, the numbers are significant. The support needs and levels of complexity amongst women rough sleeping are known to be higher than men.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review current provision for suitability for vulnerable women, eg Housing First • Consider options for development of gender-specific provision. • Identify and earmark resources to deliver units of accommodation and support for women and couples.
5	Improve our understanding of the pathway into and through homelessness services.	There is little shared or common data on use of advice and support services around homelessness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a Task & Finish group to agree a data set for all Homelessness Partnership members. • Develop a better understanding of the causes of homelessness in our rural areas. • Quarterly reports to Homelessness Partnership on trends and outcomes. • Drive service developments and improvements to housing pathways. • Improve the quality of funding bids through better data.

	What we will do	Why we are doing it	What needs to happen
6	Identify new funding sources to ensure new rough sleeper provision continues	Whilst our success rate of securing additional funding in B&NES is high, better data would enhance bids further. Pressures on LA budgets; RSI funding not guaranteed after March 2020.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Source new funding streams • Work more closely with the CCG, Virginicare and Public Health to identify common outcomes and funding opportunities. • Improve readiness to submit bids for funding.
7	Improve use of supported housing.	We have high relatively rough sleeper numbers. We need to create capacity in accommodation based services to enable move-on from Manvers Street hostel. There have been vacancies at some supported housing due to not enough people deemed ready/suitable or being too high-risk.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providers to collaborate on moves between supported housing to create vacancies at Manvers St Hostel • Offer of additional support from floating support and outreach services to ensure stability.
8	Agree a partnership approach to working with rough sleepers unable to access public funds (known as No Recourse to Public Funds – NRPF)	NRPF a thread through all rough sleeper work. It is an issue for providers, who provide support via voluntary donations. It also impacts on Safesleep provision/rough sleeping levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with regional/national/government bodies to identify best practice. This has already started and will be further developed. • Agree criteria for access to services that does not discriminate but that ensures best use of resources
9	Investigate the extent and nature of homelessness, poverty and the impact of Continuous Cruising requirements on local 'liveaboard' communities.	We have evidence of hardship, including rough sleeping, from outreach services working with people living on the waterways. We also know that the requirement to move on a regular basis negatively impacts on health, employment and educational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support providers, health commissioners and Housing Services to identify service gaps and blockages; collaborate on best practice in working with 'liveaboard' residents;

	What we will do	Why we are doing it	What needs to happen
		outcomes; a combination of these factors can lead to homelessness.	
10	Continue to develop affordable housing that meets the needs of homeless people.	Increasing numbers of households on housing register/in supported housing/TA.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate purchase of empty properties for use as social housing. • Promote shared options across all tenures.
11	Work with service users and providers to identify creative prevention approaches	To reduce repeat homelessness rates.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve early warning mechanisms that improve partnerships between accommodation and support providers – without compromising privacy • Support and accommodation providers to develop trauma-informed ways of working. • Look at options for specialist women’s services. • Work with criminal justice partners to deliver on national policy for offenders on release.
12	Improve the focus and impact of services	The service user voice tends only to be heard by individual agencies. A more strategic approach to hearing of lived-experiences is needed if we are to make any significant and effective change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish new service user feedback methods that enable real change in and across services and in our strategic approaches • Look at how the Homelessness Partnership can include the voice of service users in its routine work • Financial resources will be needed to underpin newly-developed approaches. Homelessness Partnership to consider how this might be secured.
13	Address the increase in mental health and substance misuse needs amongst homeless people.	Increases in the numbers of people living with both poor mental health and substance misuse issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with Health and Public Health commissioners, service providers and users to identify gaps • Secure resources for a dual diagnosis outreach and in-reach service.

3 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 It is a requirement of the Homelessness Act 2002 to review homelessness every five years and produce a strategy to address its causes and impacts. This document fulfils this requirement.

4 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

- 4.1 Delivery of several actions under the Strategy, particularly around reducing rough sleeping, will be contingent on continued allocation of targeted funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government for this purpose. In 2019/20, this allocation was £360,160 and covers outreach provision, including mental health specialist support, a winter shelter, a rough sleeping prevention service working at the Emergency Department of the RUH, a rough sleeping co-ordinator and multi-agency support at the winter shelter.
- 4.2 Confirmation of allocation for 2020/21 is anticipated in January 2020. Indications given by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government are that the same or a slightly higher allocation can be expected, but this cannot be assumed. In the unlikely event that this is not confirmed, work will begin with contracted providers to plan for any necessary service reductions or terminations. All services are contracted directly by Housing Services and are subject to 3 months' notice

5 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 5.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

6 CLIMATE CHANGE

- 6.1 A small number of people approaching the Council because they are homeless are initially placed in B&B outside Bath & North East Somerset, principally in Bristol. By acting on the recommendations contained within the Review of Temporary Accommodation (referenced in the Strategy and priorities), this number will reduce. Provision within Bath & North East Somerset will reduce travel between the two cities. This will not only improve outcomes for those vulnerable individuals by making access to support easier, it will also contribute to the Council's targets around carbon neutrality and climate change.
- 6.2 Proposals within the same review to locate Dispersed Temporary accommodation units outside Bath would also contribute to carbon targets by reducing distances travelled to work and school for families accommodated in this type of accommodation.

7 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 7.1 None.

8 CONSULTATION

- 8.1 This report has been cleared by the s151 Officer and Monitoring Officer.
- 8.2 The Homelessness Partnership was involved in the identification of actions to be included in the Strategy and was consulted on the full document.

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Background papers	<i>None</i>
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