

Southampton Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2018-2023 - “Preventing Homelessness together”

Homelessness is not having a legal right to occupy a home that you call your own, or your home is unsuitable to live in. People become homeless for lots of different reasons, and can be at risk of homelessness at different stages in their lives. Homelessness is about more than just rough sleeping, people can be homeless for a variety of reasons including if they are staying with friends or family, ‘sofa-surfing’, in a hostel or B&B, squatting, living in unsuitable conditions or at risk of losing their home due to end of a private tenancy, domestic abuse, financial circumstances, or other challenges. Homelessness is closely linked to poverty, and has a negative impact on a range of outcomes including health and education.

Homelessness is a growing national issue, and Southampton City Council is committed to continuing to prevent homelessness across the city. This strategy is about more than rough sleepers, it’s about preventing all forms of homelessness, with a priority for families, to ensure children and young people get a good start in life.

Key facts and figures:

- **4,750 people sleeping rough across England, an increase of 169% since 2010.**
- **More than 78,000 households, including over 120,000 children, are housed by Local Authorities in temporary accommodation.**
- **2.5 people per 1,000 households in Southampton are homeless, compared to 2.4 nationally.***
- **55% of people who are homeless in Southampton are aged 25-44.**
- **29 people slept rough in Southampton on a single night in November 2017.**
- **9,800 applicants in housing need requiring social housing are currently on the Southampton Housing Register.**

This is the city’s fourth Homelessness Prevention Strategy, and it sets out the city’s priorities for supporting some of our most disadvantaged residents, building on the successes of our past joint working with partners across the private, public and voluntary sectors. This strategy sets out our vision and how we will work together to achieve our priorities.

This strategy is supported by the Southampton Strategic Assessment: [Homelessness Prevention Review](#).

*Homelessness ‘acceptance rate’ – numbers of applicants presenting themselves as homeless to the local authority who are accepted as falling under the definition of statutory homeless.

Our Priorities	Why this is important?
Early Intervention to stop people becoming homeless or having to sleep rough	Not having a decent home has a negative impact on all areas of people lives, from health, to achievement at school and ability to work. We want to help people who are at risk of becoming homeless, and help prevent them becoming homeless. We know that preventing homelessness through early intervention is essential to improving outcomes for people, and is more cost effective overall compared to intervening at the point of crisis.
Providing support to people who are homeless to address their needs and avoid repeat homelessness	It is important that people who are homeless have the right support to access and sustain accommodation. We want to make sure that people have the support they need to move on from homelessness and avoid becoming homeless again in future. This means assisting people as soon as possible if they do become homeless, and helping them to address the personal or structural causes of their homelessness.
Provide adequate temporary accommodation for short periods only	We want to make sure that the quality of temporary accommodation for people experiencing homelessness is good, and that it is used only for short periods. This means making minimum use of bed and breakfast and providing temporary accommodation in the city which reflects the diverse needs of homeless people, with support packages in place which encourage a return to a settled home.
Maximise access to affordable and appropriate homes in the city	The risk of homelessness can be increased by a lack of affordable, suitable and settled accommodation. We want to make sure that there is a mix of housing options to meet the needs of vulnerable people in the city. This means making sure that new affordable properties are being built, and working with private sector landlords and housing associations to provide a wide range of affordable, accessible and appropriate options for our residents to buy and rent.

Our successes:

- Southampton City Council currently manage roughly 148 family units of temporary accommodation across the city
- Southampton City Council commission an additional 153 bed spaces for single adults, young people and young parents who are homeless, with support.
- Southampton has a higher rate of cases where positive action, such as mediation and intervention, was taken to prevent households becoming homeless, compared to the England average.
- There was a 24% decrease in homelessness acceptances in Southampton between 2012/13 - 2015/16. This is better than the national average, which saw a 38% increase in the same period. However, latest figures indicate that this has risen again in Southampton, with latest figures close to the national average.
- The number of young people referred for Housing Related Support (HRS) has decreased from 140 in 2012/13 to 97 in 2016/17.
- The average length of stay in bed and breakfasts in 2016/17 was 11.6 days, which is much shorter than the statutory limit of 6 weeks.
- 146 people were offered a bed and support to secure other accommodation through our Severe Weather Emergency Provision between November 2017 and March 2018.

In 2018 the city launched the Southampton Homelessness Charter and Street Support website, setting out a commitment from partners across the city to make Southampton a city where no-one needs to sleep rough or beg: <https://streetsupport.net/southampton/>

Our challenges:

- National evidence shows that rough sleeping is often associated with alcohol, substance misuse and complex mental health needs. In Southampton, hospital admissions for both alcohol and poisoning by illicit drugs are higher than the national average.
- The numbers of people sleeping rough in Southampton is higher than the national average (0.20 per 1,000 household compared with Southampton 0.28 per 1,000 household) but similar to other South East cities.
- The most common reasons for homelessness in Southampton is the end of a private rented Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST), rising 140% from 43 acceptances in 2015/16 to 103 in 2017/18 – a situation that is common across many other areas.
- Increasing housing costs across the county contributes to increasing levels of homelessness. Southampton has less housing which is considered ‘affordable’ to local residents than England as a whole, but is more affordable than the wider Hampshire area.
- Nationally, advice services indicate that some landlords may be increasingly reluctant to rent to benefit claimants due to the changes introduced with welfare reforms, which could put more pressure on housing supply.
- Local Housing Allowance (LHA) does not cover the average cost of rent in Southampton, for example LHA for a one bedroom property is £506 but the average rental amongst the lower priced properties is £550.
- People with dependent children make up the largest ‘priority need’ group of people who are homeless in Southampton.
- Southampton has a higher proportion of children living in poverty (30.3%) than the England average (27.3%).

Priorities	What are we going to do?
Early Intervention to stop people becoming homeless or having to sleep rough	Continue to focus resources on preventing homelessness and develop plans that provide relevant solutions, using evidence and good practice guidance where informed.
	Continue to provide people affected by welfare reforms with access to advice services.
	Continue implementing Southampton's Floating Support Service which aims to help manage and develop skills, such as dealing with problems with your housing, completing forms, managing debt and improving budgeting skills.
	Strengthen early planning for those young people leaving care or institutions to ensure they don't become homeless.
	Develop a citywide approach that reflects the needs of both people who are homeless as well as the expectations of residents, businesses and visitors for a welcoming city centre.
Providing support to people who are homeless to address their needs and avoid repeat homelessness	Deliver day time support, so that people who sleep rough have access to health and support services, as well as other basic needs to help them back into settled accommodation.
	Continue to deliver an intensive support approach for vulnerable people with complex needs who are sleeping rough.
	Promote information and guidance to help more people access health care, manage budgets, benefit and financial advice and support people dealing with domestic abuse.
	Return homeless young people to the family home where it is appropriate and safe to do so, including after the provision of temporary or respite accommodation.
	Reduce the number of people sleeping rough, in line with government targets, through the provision of an outreach service that encourages people who are sleeping rough into services.
	Support the Beds, Begging and Business partnership, through the Homelessness Charter, to ensure a citywide response to rough sleeping, and make Southampton a city where no-one needs to sleep rough or beg.
Provide adequate temporary accommodation for short periods only	Ensure that temporary family accommodation is of good quality, located within the city and used for time limited periods to reduce uncertainty.
	Provide a range of temporary accommodation that reflects the diverse needs of people who are homeless, and that is responsive to those in need.
	Ensure bed and breakfasts are used as a last resort only.
	Avoid placing young people under 21 in adult accommodation.
Maximise access to affordable and appropriate homes in the city	Increase the supply of social or other affordable housing, including building more council owned properties, informed by research and evidence on the affordability of housing for our residents.
	Actively seek innovative opportunities to maximise homes in the city with a range of accommodation options to meet the diverse needs of our residents, such as modular homes on development sites.
	Ensure that homelessness priority for social housing is balanced against other housing needs so that incentives to homelessness are not created.

Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

- The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 placed new legal duties on councils to ensure that everyone who is homeless or at risk of homelessness has access to meaningful help, irrespective of their priority need status, as long as they are eligible for assistance.
- If an applicant is threatened with homelessness, the council must take reasonable steps to help them avoid becoming homeless. This is known as 'The Prevention Duty' and once triggered will continue for 56 days.
- If an applicant is homeless, the council must take reasonable steps to help all homeless eligible applicants to secure accommodation for at least six months. This is known as 'The Relief Duty' and once triggered will also continue for 56 days.
- This is the first homelessness strategy to be informed by the new ways of working outlined in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and measured by the new method of collecting Statutory Homelessness statistics (H-CLIC).

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/13/contents/enacted>

How will we measure success?

- Timeliness of notifications from public authorities and other partners of households threatened with homelessness.
- Average length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation.
- Number of households where homelessness is prevented or relieved.
- Number of people accepted as intentionally homeless.
- Number of people who are sleeping rough as measured by the national count.
- Number of homeless people accessing support and advice.
- Number of affordable and appropriate homes available in Southampton.

Measures will be monitored and benchmarked against comparator areas to track performance and trends.

How does this link with our other strategies?

