

Cambridge City Council

**Homelessness & Rough Sleeping
Strategy**

2021-2026

CONSULTATION DRAFT

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Contents

Foreword from Exec Councillor	1
Executive Summary	2
Introduction.....	2
Vision, objectives and priorities	2
National and local context.....	3
Priority 1: Support those at risk of homelessness to remain in their homes where possible	3
Priority 2: Improve access to and range of permanent accommodation	4
Priority 3: Minimise use of temporary and emergency accommodation.....	5
Priority 4: Improve access to and effectiveness of support services.....	6
Priority 5: Prevent rough sleeping.....	7
Priority 6: Break the cycle of chronic and repeat street homelessness and rough sleeping	8
Funding the Strategy	10
Implementing and Monitoring the Strategy	10
Introduction & Purpose	11
Vision, objectives & priorities	13
Corporate objectives	13
Housing Strategy vision and objectives.....	13
Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy objectives and priorities.....	13
Local & national context.....	15
Factors contributing towards homelessness.....	15
High demand and lack of affordability	15
Poverty & Inequality	16
National Policy.....	17
The Homelessness Reduction Act	17
National Rough Sleeping Strategy	17
Welfare Reforms	17
Delivery of new homes.....	18
Care Act 2014	18
Private Rented Sector Reforms	18
Other Local Policy.....	19
Health and Wellbeing Strategy.....	19
Housing Related Support Review & Homelessness Transformation	19
Priority 1: Support those at risk of homelessness to remain in their homes where possible	20

Introduction	20
Preventing loss of private rented tenancy	20
Supporting people to remain with family or friends	21
Preventing loss of social housing tenancy	21
Violence and harassment (including domestic abuse)	22
Impact of Covid-19.....	22
Priority 2: Improve access to and range of permanent accommodation	25
Introduction	25
Making private rented sector housing more attractive as an option	25
Working with private landlords	26
Broadening the range of housing available.....	27
Improving access to social housing	28
Improving access to housing for people on middle incomes.....	28
Lettings policy	28
Priority 3: Minimise use of temporary and emergency accommodation.....	31
Introduction	31
Use of temporary and emergency accommodation	31
Reducing reliance on temporary accommodation.....	32
Priority 4: Improve access to and effectiveness of support services	35
Introduction	35
Improving joint working	35
Homelessness Transformation	36
Priority 5: Prevent rough sleeping.....	38
Introduction	38
Profile of rough sleepers.....	38
Setting targets for rough sleeping.....	39
Early up-front prevention	39
Young people leaving care	39
Prison leavers.....	40
Access to accommodation.....	40
Reducing the ‘pull’ of the streets.....	41
Reconnections policy.....	41
Priority 6: Break the cycle of chronic and repeat street homelessness and rough sleeping	44
Introduction.....	44

Improving hostel capacity	44
Improving suitability of hostel accommodation	45
Access to housing.....	46
Streets to Home service	47
Working with the wider community	48
Funding the Strategy	50
Implementing and Monitoring the Strategy	51
Annexes	52
Annex 1: Links to relevant council strategies, policies and plans	53
Annex 2: Links to key data.....	54
Annex 3: Key partners	55
Annex 4: Glossary	56
Annex 5: Year 1 Action Plan.....	60

Foreword from Exec Councillor

(To follow)

Executive Summary

Introduction

The most visible form of homelessness involves people who are seen living on the streets, but the issue of homelessness is much broader than that, including for example people living in overcrowded or temporary accommodation or who are threatened with eviction. Anyone can become homeless, but issues such as unemployment, poor physical and/or mental health and alcohol and/or substance misuse can increase the risk. As well as the impact on the individuals, there are also recognised costs to the economy.

This new Strategy confirms the council's commitment to preventing and relieving homelessness and rough sleeping, and how we will work with partners to meet our objectives and priorities.

It is an ambitious strategy, written at a time of uncertainty as to the full impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. The fall-out from the pandemic has the potential to put more people at risk of homelessness, and may present challenges to achieving what we set out to achieve. But work with partners in responding to the crisis has also opened the door to exploring new and innovative solutions and different ways of working. Our proposed actions moving forward have been developed in this context.

Vision, objectives and priorities

The objectives of the Strategy are to:

- Prevent people from becoming homeless;
- Where homelessness cannot be avoided, help people to find suitable accommodation;
- Minimise rough sleeping; and
- Ensure that housing outcomes for all residents reflect the Council's vision of 'One Cambridge Fair for All'.

To achieve these objectives, the council will work with partners to achieve the following priorities:

- Support those at risk of homelessness to remain in their homes where possible or to find a new home without an intervening period of homelessness.
- Improve access to a range of permanent accommodation.
- Minimise the use of temporary and emergency accommodation.

- Improve access to, and effectiveness of, support services.
- Prevent rough sleeping.
- Break the cycle of chronic and repeat street homelessness and rough sleeping.

The chapter headings in the strategy reflect these priorities, and a year 1 action plan is at Annex 5.

National and local context

Our objectives and priorities are set within the council's broader strategic objectives, and in the context of other national and local strategies and plans. National examples include the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, the National Rough Sleeping Strategy, and proposed private rented sector reforms.

Issues which are contributing to housing stress and homelessness locally include:

- High demand, a shortage of homes and affordability issues locally across all tenures, particularly although not exclusively affecting those on low incomes.
- Issues such as poverty, inequalities in health and education, and being members of certain minority groups can increase housing pressures and the risk of homelessness.
- How welfare benefits aimed at covering housing costs are set, and major reforms to the welfare system which have been taking place over the last few years.
- Shortage of funding available for new affordable homes.

Priority 1: Support those at risk of homelessness to remain in their homes where possible

Early intervention is essential to helping prevent homelessness.

Although there may be many reasons for homelessness, loss of a privately rented home and family or friends no longer willing to accommodate are the two most common main reasons recorded locally. Other reasons include relationship breakdown, eviction from supported housing, the end of a social housing tenancy, and violence & harassment (including domestic violence). For many people there will be a number of reasons, and some will have multiple and complex needs.

The Strategy highlights a number of services available to help people remain in their homes, including: financial and debt advice; ; work with landlords and letting agencies; work with family and friends with whom the person at risk is living; a tenancy sustainment service for council tenants; and partnership work to tackle anti-social behaviour, harassment and domestic abuse. Work in all of these areas needs to continue to be strengthened.

To support those at risk of homelessness to remain in their homes the council will:

- Continue to recognise the strong links between mental health, substance misuse and homelessness, and work with the County Council to ensure that service design supports tenancy sustainment and homelessness prevention.
- Improve our approach to preventing private sector evictions and to preventing homelessness for people living with family or friends.
- Improve engagement with private landlords, letting agencies, social housing providers and tenants; and promote the importance of those threatened with homelessness seeking help at an early stage.
- Explore further tenancy rescue solutions for private tenants including the potential for targeted grants and loans.
- Review the financial advice services available, to identify any gaps, duplication or problems with accessing services.
- Review the effectiveness of financial advice and tenancy sustainment services for council tenants.
- Seek to set up a working group with other housing providers operating locally, to help agree common policies and approaches and help minimise the number of social housing evictions.
- Continue to work with partners on a 'whole housing approach' to dealing with domestic abuse.
- Improve how we capture reasons for homelessness.
- Improve understanding of what impact of Covid-19 might have on the risk of homelessness, so that we can plan and respond accordingly.

Priority 2: Improve access to and range of permanent accommodation

With high demand and with housing of all tenures (including social housing) in short supply, there is a need to expand the housing options available to those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. This includes looking beyond just social housing as the main tenure of choice, and improving access to other tenures and housing types.

The current approach includes: increasing the supply of social housing through the council's new-build programme; financial advice and support, including our Housing Benefit top-up scheme (HB+) and grants & loans to help people to access the private rented sector; encouraging landlords to lease homes through the council's social lettings agency, Town Hall Lettings; and loans for bringing private long-term empty homes back into use.

To help improve access to and the range of permanent accommodation available the council will:

- Explore how access to homes across a range of tenures might be improved, and how homes might be used more flexibly to meet a wider range of needs.
- Encourage take-up of private rented sector housing options, including out of town lets, through better promotion, considering additional incentives and improving support available.
- Improve engagement and partnership working with landlords, letting agencies and other private owners.
- Consider whether additional incentives may be needed to improve the availability of private rented homes through Town Hall Lettings.
- Review the council's Housing Benefit Plus scheme with a view to making it a more attractive option
- Work with housing providers to explore how better use might be made of existing homes.
- Work with housing providers with a view to increasing access to housing for those with high levels of need, and better alignment of council and other providers' allocations policies.
- Investigate the feasibility of delivering more specialist forms of housing, and homes for people previously on middle incomes who may be at risk of homelessness, through the council's house-building programme.
- Investigate potential for conversion of commercial property to good quality accommodation through the council's housing development programme.
- Review the council's approach to Local Lettings Plans in the context of access to housing for those with high levels of need.
- Review the sub-regional Home-Link Lettings policy with partners to ensure it best serves local authorities' homelessness prevention objectives.

Priority 3: Minimise use of temporary and emergency accommodation

The chronic shortage of permanent housing means there is a need for a supply of suitable temporary accommodation for those for whose cases are being investigated and those waiting for more permanent accommodation. Accommodation for use at

short notice in an emergency is also important. (Issues around hostel accommodation for single homeless people and rough sleepers are dealt with under Priority 6)

Demand for and length of stay in such accommodation has been increasing, and additional use of hotel rooms was necessary during the coronavirus lockdown. Long stays in temporary accommodation are far from ideal for the households concerned, and are financially costly – particularly use of commercial hotels. There is a need to reduce overall reliance on temporary accommodation (through interventions such as those already referred to above) whilst at the same time ensuring sufficient is available to meet needs.

To help minimise the use of temporary and emergency accommodation the council will:

- Further develop our existing plan to reduce reliance on the use of temporary and emergency accommodation.
- Continue work on identifying reasons for the recent increase in use of and length of stay in temporary accommodation, and keep information on demand under regular review.
- Improve our approach to monitoring of pathways through interim accommodation, and regularly review placement decisions to ensure consistency in decision making.
- Get a better understanding of the sizes and types of temporary and emergency accommodation needed.
- Continue to look for alternative ways of providing temporary and emergency accommodation, including for those for whom standard provision is unsuitable.
- Make use of council owned homes where appropriate.
- Ensure that rough sleepers housed temporarily in hotels are moved into appropriate accommodation in a planned way so that they do not end up back on the streets.
- Review the extent to which housing related debt should remain a barrier to being offered a home.

Priority 4: Improve access to and effectiveness of support services

Access to accommodation is only part of the solution in relation to homelessness, with significant numbers of people affected having additional support needs which put them more at risk of homelessness. Mental health support is the most common need, but many will have multiple needs.

The council supports (in some cases financially) a range of other agencies. Examples include those providing: financial advice; drug & alcohol services; support for prison leavers, domestic abuse services; etc.

There is a strong commitment from most partners to work together in this area. However, issues such as lack of resources and gaps in services mean that people all too often fall through the cracks. Areas particularly affected include mental health services, and dealing with homelessness & anti-social behaviour linked to misuse of drugs and alcohol. There is a need to move more towards a 'whole systems' approach across services, agencies and the wider community.

To help improve access to and effectiveness of support services the council will:

- Explore how working arrangements with mental health, substance misuse and social/social care services can be improved, including investigating the potential for some co-location of services and/or development of multi-disciplinary teams.
- Strengthen work with partners to provide a joined-up approach to preventing and tackling drug and alcohol related anti-social behaviour.
- Improve monitoring of the underlying reasons for homelessness, to help inform service design, planning and operation.
- Work to improve collaboration with statutory partners at a strategic level, including working with the County Council and other partners to explore the potential for a fully integrated, multi-disciplinary homelessness service across a range of agencies.

Priority 5: Prevent rough sleeping

Although homelessness and rough sleeping often overlap, they are not necessarily the same thing. Many homeless people do not sleep rough, and some rough sleepers are known to have permanent homes or at least a temporary bed somewhere. Similarly, people street begging may not necessarily be sleeping rough and some are known to have access to accommodation.

Rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping tend to have multiple and complex needs. Mental health and/or substance misuse issues are often the main ones, but there may also be a number of other contributory factors.

There is a significant flow of new rough sleepers to the streets each year, and targets for maximum numbers of rough sleepers on the streets of Cambridge are being missed. A significantly improved, more joined up approach is needed in this area, with early intervention a critical part of this.

To help prevent rough sleeping the council will:

- Improve our understanding of the nature and causes of rough sleeping in Cambridge.
- Work with partners to understand how prevention activities as a whole can help identify those at risk of rough sleeping, and help to intervene early to prevent the flow of new rough sleepers onto the streets.
- Gain a better understanding of where rough sleepers have come from, develop a more proactive approach to reconnecting rough sleepers to where they came from, and review the offer available to those without a local connection.
- Aim to keep the number of rough sleepers below 10 for any one count, reducing to five through the lifetime of the strategy; and agree additional targets around length of stay and time taken to make a housing offer.
- Work with partners to explore how an emergency accommodation offer can be made available for anyone sleeping rough across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.
- Review the current approach to education around homelessness prevention amongst young people.
- Review the current approach to street begging and anti-social behaviour.
- For people thought to have no recourse to public funds, ensure help is available for those who may wish to apply for pre-settled or settled status.
- Promote and support effective implementation of the young people's assessment and care leaver protocols across all relevant partners.
- Review the prison leavers' protocol and identify how prison leavers' housing needs can be identified and addressed at an earlier stage.
- Work with South Cambridgeshire District Council to help prevent single homelessness within their district.

Priority 6: Break the cycle of chronic and repeat street homelessness and rough sleeping

Once people have started sleeping on the streets there is a high risk of remaining there and being caught in a 'revolving door' of street homelessness and rough sleeping.

Although it does not suit everyone, hostel accommodation has an important part to play in supporting people off the streets and helping them to prepare for a move towards more permanent accommodation. Although the council considers there is enough such accommodation to meet the City's needs, move-on rates are not as quick as they should be, which affects availability for those who are street homeless or at risk of becoming so.

There are a number of reasons for this, including the need to remodel the type of support available for those needing to move on, ensuring that discharge planning starts early, and competition from other authority areas for hostel beds in the City.

Lack of suitable permanent accommodation to move on to is also a major issue, and we need to look beyond social housing as a solution; both to increase capacity and so that other housing register applicants are not unfairly disadvantaged. We also need to better understand what is an appropriate balance locally between hostel and permanent housing provision.

Hostel accommodation also needs to be suitable for those presenting with complex needs.

As well as working with other agencies, the council is keen to work with, and harness the interest shown by, the wider community in dealing with these issues.

To help break the cycle of chronic and repeat street homelessness & rough sleeping the council will:

- Work with providers to help speed up move on from hostels, whilst at the same time reviewing how evictions and abandonments can be reduced.
- Work with providers to review the scope and effectiveness of hostel-based support, particularly in relation to move-on advice.
- Explore whether being excluded from moving on due to previous breaches of tenancy can be prevented.
- Work with sub-regional authorities to help improve City access to existing hostel beds.
- Work with the County Council to assess what balance between hostel and other accommodation might be appropriate going forwards.
- Promote and make private rented housing a more attractive option, to help make it available to a wider range of applicants.
- Review the effectiveness of the Housing First model of permanent provision, and explore whether it should be extended to include private rented sector homes.
- Explore with social housing providers whether there are opportunities for short life or low demand social housing available, including to single sharers.
- Expand the provision of modular homes, and explore other innovative ways of providing accommodation to prevent and relieve single homelessness.
- Continue to seek and make best use of funding opportunities to purchase new homes to accommodate rough sleepers.
- Work with the County Council in considering the need for commissioning longer term supported provision for those for whom mainstream housing with support may not be suitable.

- Work collaboratively on shifting emphasis from mainly a streets-based to more of a home-based service model.

Funding the Strategy

The work of partners is fundamental to meeting the objectives and priorities in this Strategy. Each will, to a greater or lesser extent, have their own funding streams to draw upon.

The main sources of funding for the council itself include council General Fund resources, housing benefit, and various government grants, including those requiring bids for specific projects. The council will continue to take every opportunity to maximise and make best use of resources available.

Implementing and Monitoring the Strategy

A detailed Year 1 action plan is at Annex 5 of the Strategy. Further actions will subsequently be developed around a broad delivery framework for the remaining years of the Strategy.

This is to allow for flexibility as the Strategy moves forward, taking into account changing needs and circumstances and the resources available over time. This approach also reflects current uncertainty around the impacts of Covid-19 on homelessness and rough sleeping and on the resources available to deal with them.

Monitoring and scrutiny will be through the cross-partner Homelessness Strategy Implementation Partnership and the council's Strategic Leadership Team.

Introduction & Purpose

The popular perception of homelessness is where someone has nowhere to live. This is most visible where homeless people are seen sleeping rough on the streets, and government has a national target of ending rough sleeping by 2027. But there are also other forms of homelessness, often hidden from wider public view. These include people living in some form of temporary accommodation or shelter; living in insecure housing – for example where threatened with eviction or staying with family or friends (sometimes known as ‘sofa surfing’); or living in inadequate housing such as in severely overcrowded or poor conditions.

Almost anyone can become homeless; whether it be losing a job, relationship breakdown, fire or natural disaster, anyone is at risk. However, there are a number of underlying factors which can increase the risk further. Lack of or insecure employment, poor physical or mental health, relationship breakdown, drug and/or alcohol problems and leaving institutional care are just a few examples. It is widely expected that one of the impacts of Covid-19 will be increased unemployment, putting more households at higher risk. The problem is likely to be particularly acute for those already on low incomes with little or no savings behind them, and those living in insecure accommodation.

During 2018/19 and 2019/20, the council accepted over 1,600 applications from households who were homeless or at risk of homelessness and to whom the council owed a statutory homelessness duty. During each of those two years just under 160 individuals were counted as sleeping rough on the streets.

Not only is homelessness and rough sleeping traumatic for those experiencing it, a [government evidence review in 2012](#) identified some of the financial costs to the economy. These included provision of benefits and employment programmes, health and care services, costs to the criminal justice system, and grants to and expenditure by local authorities.

Cambridge City Council has, for many years, prioritised the prevention of homelessness and rough sleeping. We have a well-established homelessness and rough sleeping action plan, which has been developed and implemented and kept under regular review in partnership with a wide range of organisations operating locally.

This new Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy outlines our strategic direction and the actions we propose to take to help prevent and relieve homelessness and rough sleeping in Cambridge. It aims to communicate our vision and priorities to partners and the wider public and helps to support broader council ambitions set out

in its other strategies and plans. It also meets the [statutory requirement](#) for each housing authority to have a strategy for preventing homelessness in their district.

Vision, objectives & priorities

Corporate objectives

As well as helping to support national policy, this Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy is also important in helping to achieve three of the council's broader objectives:

- Supporting the economy.
- Promoting health and wellbeing; and
- Tackling poverty and inequality

Housing Strategy vision and objectives

This Strategy also helps support the vision in our [Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy](#): 'Healthy, Safe, Affordable: Homes & Communities for All'. In particular it will contribute to the council wanting Cambridge to be a place where:

- Everyone has access to a suitable home, and residents are able to live as healthily, safely, and independently as possible.
- The housing market functions effectively, providing homes which are affordable to people on all incomes.
- There is a wide and varied choice of good quality, sustainable homes of different sizes, types and tenures, including new provision of council homes, to meet the needs of a wide range of different households and age groups.
- We have strong relationships with residents, developers and partners that enable housing and services to be delivered effectively, and that support innovation where appropriate.

Other relevant council strategies and plans are listed at Annex 1 of this Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy.

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy objectives and priorities

Through this Strategy, the council will deal with homelessness and rough sleeping by working with partners to achieve the following objectives:

- Prevent people from becoming homeless;
- Where homelessness cannot be avoided, help people to find suitable accommodation;
- Minimise rough sleeping; and
- Ensure that housing outcomes for all residents reflect the Council's vision of 'One Cambridge Fair for All'.

To help meet these objectives the Strategy is based around six key priorities:

- Support those at risk of homelessness to remain in their homes where possible or to find a new home without an intervening period of homelessness.
- Improve access to a range of permanent accommodation.
- Minimise the use of temporary and emergency accommodation.
- Improve access to, and effectiveness of, support services.
- Prevent rough sleeping.
- Break the cycle of chronic and repeat street homelessness and rough sleeping.

Local & national context

Factors contributing towards homelessness

There are a number of factors which contribute towards homelessness and how we and our partners are able to respond to it.

High demand and lack of affordability

As our Housing Strategy outlines, high employment levels and strong economic growth bring major opportunities for Cambridge, but also present significant challenges, including high housing costs and a shortage of accommodation which is affordable to local people.

The issue is particularly acute for those on low incomes. Key problems include:

- High demand for and a shortage of social housing for rent. There are currently around 1,600 households on the council's Home-Link housing register. Although this includes some people with relatively low priority for housing, we know that there are also people in housing need who are not registered. For example, those with very complex needs – including some rough sleepers - may not be sufficiently well engaged with services to register; others may decide not to if they feel they have no chance of being housed – e.g. if they have been evicted from previous accommodation or have a housing related debt.
- A mismatch between the profile of social housing applicants and the size and type of housing becoming available for letting.
- Shortage of private rented homes, leading to high rents. This is compounded by a Local Housing Allowance (the amount which housing benefit or the housing element of Universal Credit will cover for housing costs) which -even following recent increases in Local Housing Allowance Rates – is considerably lower than even the lowest rents in Cambridge.
- Affordability of rents on new council and housing association homes. Most new affordable homes for rent are now only available at 'affordable rents' which can be charged at up to 80% of market rents and are higher than social rents. The council's policy has been to request that providers charge no higher than Local Housing Allowance rates to ensure that rents are as affordable as possible. However, even this is unaffordable to some, and under

our existing policy (currently under review), the recent increase in Local Housing Allowance rates may have the perverse effect of social housing rents being increased, making them less affordable to those on low incomes.

Poverty & Inequality

In 2017, Centre for Cities identified Cambridge as the most unequal City in the UK. ¹For example, 2018 income related indicators ²show that average weekly earnings for the lowest 10% of earners were 3.5 times less than the average for all Cambridge employees; and council data shows that in 2017 around 14,000 of Cambridge residents lived in households claiming Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax support through the Council Tax Reduction Scheme. ³

The impact of Covid-19 on jobs and incomes is likely to lead to many more people in Cambridge experiencing economic hardship, including some of those who have previously been relatively well off. It will also exacerbate existing poverty; those who have no credit history or savings to fall back on are likely to be particularly hard hit. The Council's Anti-Poverty Strategy (currently under review) gives more information on the links between poverty and homelessness.⁴

In terms of protected characteristics, evidence from the Cabinet Office identifies that Black and minority ethnic (BAME) people are more likely to experience housing issues in relation to quality of housing, cost of renting as a proportion of income and overcrowding than non-BAME people. ⁵ LGBT research from Stonewall also found that around one in five trans people had experienced homelessness at some point in their lives.⁶

Inequalities in health and educational attainment are also factors.

A full Equality Impact Assessment will be carried out on the Strategy.

¹ [Centre for Cities, City Outlook 2017](#)

² [ONS Earnings and hours worked in the UK 2018](#)

³ [Council Tax reduction scheme](#)

⁴ [CCC Anti-Poverty Strategy](#)

⁵ [Cabinet Office Race Disparity Audit](#)

⁶ [LGBT in Britain Trans Report 2018](#)

National Policy

The Homelessness Reduction Act

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017⁷ introduced new legal duties aimed at preventing homelessness, and swiftly relieving homelessness where it cannot be prevented or has already happened.

Although the council has had a long history of proactively helping to prevent and relieve homelessness, the Act has required a number of changes to be made to services and to ways in which the council works with other partners. This strategy aims to continue to build on those changes.

Numbers of people seeking housing or homelessness advice/assistance have shown a marked increase since the Act came into force.

National Rough Sleeping Strategy

The government's Rough Sleeping Strategy aims to halve rough sleeping nationally between 2018 and 2022, and to eliminate it by 2027.⁸ It is intended to support every person who sleeps rough off the streets and into a home, and to prevent rough sleeping from happening in the first place. A number of funding streams are in place to support delivery of the strategy.

Whilst the council fully supports this as an aspiration, with an ongoing flow of rough sleepers into Cambridge from elsewhere it is unlikely that we will be able to fully eliminate rough sleeping in Cambridge. A proposed local target is referred to elsewhere in this Strategy.

Welfare Reforms

A programme of major changes to the welfare system has been taking place recent years, aiming to simplify the system, cut the overall welfare bill and encourage people into work. As a result, many people have had their benefits cut, including those in work. Research carried out for Crisis suggests a link between the national increase in homelessness over the last few years and the roll out of welfare reforms.

⁹

For example, single people under 35 only being entitled to the Local Housing Allowance shared room rate, the impact of benefit sanctions on vulnerable people,

⁷ Implemented from April 2018

⁸ [National Rough Sleeping Strategy](#)

⁹ [Crisis Homelessness Monitor England 2019](#)

and loss of income and through introduction of Universal Credit all increase the risk of people on low incomes becoming homeless.

Locally this has been compounded by the size of the local Broad Rental Market area (BRMA) which does not reflect local private rents. An increase in rates for 2020-21 in response to the Covid-19 epidemic should bring more homes within reach of benefit claimants. However, rates are still below lower quartile rents in the City, and more people are likely to be impacted by the overall benefit cap.

The council continues to work closely with partners to help manage the impacts of reforms.

Delivery of new homes

The government aims to deliver 300,000 new homes per year, with their main priority in relation to affordable housing being to promote low cost home ownership. However, with a severe shortage of housing and high house prices locally, for people on low to middle incomes buying a home is simply unachievable.

The council was successful in securing funding for 500 new council homes as devolution grant through the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority.¹⁰ Building is well under way and discussions are under way for a further delivery programme. However, only limited grant is available and there are restrictions on how receipts from Right to Buy sales can be spent in conjunction with other sources of funding. This impacts on the ability to develop as well as the rent levels which need to be charged to cover costs of development. The Covid-19 crisis may also affect future delivery plans – both for the council and for other developers.

Care Act 2014

Our strategic and operational approach to homelessness is set within the context of the Care Act 2014, which requires public sector services to work in partnership to deliver preventative services which promote well-being in the community.

Private Rented Sector Reforms

Prior to the Covid-19 outbreak, government had started on a series of reforms to support people in the private rented sector. Changes still to be progressed include proposals to abolish no-fault evictions; further measures to deal with rogue landlords; and the introduction of an independent regulator for letting agents.

¹⁰ [Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority.](#)

Other Local Policy

Health and Wellbeing Strategy

Housing is well recognised as one of the key determinants of health and wellbeing.

Consultation has taken place on a draft Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019-2023. Relevant proposed areas of focus include: preventing homelessness and improving pathways into housing for vulnerable people, improving access to mental health services, and embedding a 'Think Communities' approach into place-based working.

Housing Related Support Review & Homelessness Transformation

A county-wide review of housing related support services in 2018 identified a number of gaps in service provision and recommended some redesigning of services.

Further research was commissioned to consider the potential for 'homelessness transformation' across the two areas. Consultation on a housing related support commissioning strategy has taken place, with the main commissioning priorities over the next few years expected to be around services for homeless adults, rough sleepers, ex-offenders and young people at risk of homelessness. The aim is to move away from a predominantly hostel focussed approach to a wider mix of services.

Priority 1: Support those at risk of homelessness to remain in their homes where possible

Introduction

Early intervention is essential to helping prevent homelessness.

During 2019/20 the council recorded over 200 cases where homelessness was successfully prevented, over 40% of which were outside of the statutory 56-day prevention period.

The two most common causes of people becoming homeless in Cambridge— together accounting for almost half of all cases in 2018/19 - are the loss of a privately-rented home, and family or friends being no longer willing to accommodate. Other reasons include relationship breakdown, eviction from supported housing, the end of a social housing tenancy, and violence (including domestic abuse) and harassment.

It is important that people at risk seek help at an early stage, and we need to improve how we get this message across. Personal housing plans are also an important tool in enabling people at risk of homelessness to remain in their homes and sustain tenancies longer term.

Preventing loss of private rented tenancy

According to the Census 2011, around 28% of households in Cambridge were living in the private rented sector. More recent estimates, although less reliable, suggest that this could have risen to around 35%, and possibly more.

Where tenants have problems paying the rent, the council will signpost to services providing financial advice around issues such as entitlement to benefit, budgeting and dealing with debt. Discretionary Housing Payments may also be used to top up benefit payments for a period.

It is important to recognise that most landlords in Cambridge provide a good service and take a responsible approach when dealing with their tenants. However, we need to continue to improve how we engage with landlords, letting agencies and tenants themselves to ensure that they are aware of their rights and responsibilities, and continue to offer them advice and support where they need it.

Priority 1: Support those at risk of homelessness to remain in their homes where possible

Within that context, the council will continue to take a proactive approach where tenants are threatened with eviction. Reasons tenants being required to leave will vary, but the council will negotiate with landlords to try to prevent eviction, or to delay it to give time for the tenant to find alternative accommodation. This includes dealing with quality and safety standards in privately rented homes.

Preventing unlawful eviction is also a priority. For example, a significant proportion of section 21 notices have been found to be invalid when they first come to the attention of the council's housing advice service. The council will continue to challenge invalid notices, working with landlords and tenants to try to resolve the situation; and will continue to develop private rented sector advice and support services.

Enforcement powers may be used, although only as a last resort.

Supporting people to remain with family or friends

In 2018/19, around 1 in 7 households assessed as being owed a statutory prevention or relief duty in Cambridge were homeless or threatened with homelessness on the basis that family or friends were no longer able to accommodate them.

Through its home visiting service, the council negotiates with the parties concerned, and provides and/or signposts to appropriate advice and support to help people to remain where they are for as long as possible. We will continue to develop this role, particularly in relation to mediation between the parties concerned, and the potential for offering incentives to allow people to remain where they are.

At the same time, it is recognised that, in some cases, relationships have broken down to such an extent that it is unreasonable to expect someone threatened with homelessness to remain where they are.

Preventing loss of social housing tenancy

A comprehensive financial and debt advice service is available to council tenants who may have difficulty in paying their rent. In addition, a bespoke advice service for Universal Credit claimants has been introduced, in recognition of significantly higher arrears often occurring amongst that group than amongst other tenants

The council also runs a tenancy sustainment service aimed at council tenants whose tenancy may be at risk due to complex support needs such as mental health issues, local antisocial behaviour or a previous history of homelessness. The scope and effectiveness of this service needs to be reviewed.

Priority 1: Support those at risk of homelessness to remain in their homes where possible

The council enjoys working good relationships with many of the locally focussed housing associations. We need to continue to support better early intervention where someone may be at risk of losing their tenancy, and to improve provision of and access to accommodation. We will build on these relationships, with the aim of reducing evictions through sharing best practice and fostering of mutual support.

In terms of the larger providers with more centralised management and customer services there is a clear need to improve lines of communication to support local homelessness prevention work.

We have been working closely with registered providers in managing the impact of welfare reforms, to help prevent both council and housing association tenants from losing their homes due to issues such as changes in benefit entitlement or switching from Housing Benefit to Universal Credit.

Violence and harassment (including domestic abuse)

The council works closely with partners in dealing with issues such as anti-social behaviour, harassment and domestic abuse. This includes working through both the Cambridge Community Safety Partnership and the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Partnership.

Having already achieved White Ribbon accreditation, we have made significant improvements in our approach more recently in dealing with domestic abuse. As a result, the council has now been awarded accreditation through the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA). We will continue to build on this to help prevent domestic abuse from happening and to ensure that we can respond appropriately when it does.

Cambridgeshire, as one of three project sites nationally, has adopted a government funded 'Whole Housing Approach' to domestic abuse. This aims to enable early identification and intervention, reduce homelessness related to domestic abuse, and enable survivors to remain where they are if they choose, or keep their tenancy status if they relocate.¹¹

Impact of Covid-19

It is not yet clear what the full impact of Covid-19 pandemic will be on the economy and jobs. However, we need to work on the basis that rent repossessions may increase. There is also the risk of a rise in mortgage repossessions, and we need to consider options for early intervention before households reach crisis point.

¹¹ [Domestic abuse Whole Housing Approach](#)

Priority 1: Support those at risk of homelessness to remain in their homes where possible

Impacts on mental health may also lead to increased risk of homelessness – for example, through more evictions from supported housing, or through increased levels of domestic abuse.

We are already aware of issues around how reasons for homelessness are captured. For example, loss of a private rented sector tenancy may be recorded as a main reason for homelessness, but is likely to be driven by other factors such as loss of employment, mental health issues etc. The need to deal with the potential effects of the pandemic increase the importance of improving monitoring in this area. A better understanding of the wider reasons for a household becoming homeless or being threatened with homelessness is important to ensure we respond appropriately to individual cases, and to help with prioritising, developing and improving services.

Supporting those at risk of homelessness to remain in their homes where possible

Moving forward the council will:

Continue to recognise the strong links between mental health, substance misuse and homelessness, and work with the County Council to ensure that service design supports tenancy sustainment and homelessness prevention

Improve our approach to preventing private sector evictions and to preventing homelessness for people living with family or friends.

Improve engagement with private landlords, letting agencies, social housing providers and tenants; and promote the importance of those threatened with homelessness seeking help at an early stage

Explore further tenancy rescue solutions for private tenants including the potential for targeted grants and loans.

Review the financial advice services available, to identify any gaps, duplication or problems with accessing services.

Review the effectiveness of financial advice and tenancy sustainment services for council tenants.

Seek to set up a working group with other housing providers operating locally, to help agree common policies and approaches and help minimise the number of social housing evictions.

Continue to work with partners on a 'whole housing approach' to dealing with domestic abuse.

Improve how we capture reasons for homelessness.

Improve understanding of what impact of Covid-19 might have on the risk of homelessness, so that we can plan and respond accordingly.

Priority 2: Improve access to and range of permanent accommodation

Introduction

This Strategy has already identified a shortage of supply and high housing costs in Cambridge, and that many people are unable to afford market rents. Access to good quality housing that is affordable is critical to both preventing and relieving homelessness.

For many years the main route out of homelessness has been through an often-lengthy wait for a social housing tenancy. Our homelessness review identified that in 2018-19, provision of a social housing tenancy was the second most common successful intervention (second only to provision of supported accommodation - dealt with elsewhere in this Strategy). However, with demand outstripping supply, as well as measures to increase the numbers of social homes for rent it is also important to find other ways into more permanent housing.

One of the priorities in our Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy is around making better use of existing homes, which is particularly important in the context of tackling homelessness.

Making private rented sector housing more attractive as an option

The shortage of social housing means that the private sector represents the only realistically available option for many people.

However, there is often resistance from applicants to taking up private rented sector offers, partly because they want the long-term security of a social tenancy but also because there are limited homes available within the City which are affordable, meaning people have to move further out into neighbouring districts.

The council is committed to doing more to make private rented housing more attractive both to potential tenants and to landlords, including better promotion and ensuring people moving into private rented homes receive the advice and support they need.

Our social lettings agency, Town Hall Lettings (THL), is aimed at encouraging landlords (private and Housing Association) to lease homes to the council to be let to

Priority 2: Improve access to and range of permanent accommodation

those who need them. Any homes let through THL must meet agreed quality and safety standards.

Our Housing Benefit Plus (HB+) scheme offers financial assistance to those on benefits or a low income who, with a little assistance, can be helped to improve their financial situation. It provides a time-limited benefit top-up, in return for which households are expected to engage with financial and employment advice. The aim is that at the end of the top-up period they should be able to afford the full rent without the top-up.

Although this has proved successful in helping both prevent and relieve homelessness, we need to review the offer available through the scheme to improve take-up, and to explore potential for other tenancy rescue options such as targeted financial support to help people remain at home. We also need to review the range of financial support services available from all agencies, to understand where there might be gaps or duplication, and to identify reasons for any issues people might be experiencing in accessing services.

In addition to Housing Benefit Plus and Discretionary Housing Payments, our Access scheme offers interest free loans and, subject to status, grants, to help people meet the costs of entering the private rented sector. We are exploring whether additional incentives – financial or otherwise – might further encourage households to take up a private rented offer.

As well as trying to make out of town lets more attractive, we also need to ensure better support is available for those who have been housed out of the area.

Working with private landlords

With high demand for rental properties there is a reluctance amongst some landlords to accept people on benefits on the basis that they may be at higher risk of not being able to pay the rent.

Town Hall Lettings offers a guarantee to landlords letting homes through the agency that rents will be paid. The council also [offers loans to owners to bring long-term empty homes up to standard](#) so that they can be let through THL. We are now developing a range of additional incentives, including advance rental loans paid directly to landlords, and we need to improve our approach to publicity in this area to try to encourage more landlords to participate.

Whilst we have good relationships with many private landlords and letting agents, there is still a need to improve communication, engagement, and partnership working.

Broadening the range of housing available

The Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy gives more information how the council is increasing the supply of social housing, both through the council's own new build programme and through working with developers and other housing providers.

However, as well as a shortage of supply, there is also a mismatch between the size and type of stock available and the needs of people on the housing register. The council therefore needs to consider diversifying how its own new build homes are designed and used, as well as the use of existing homes.

For example, 80% of demand on the housing register is for one and two bedroom homes, with over half of applicants require one bedroom. However, studios and one-bedroom homes make up only 25% of the council's own housing stock, with 35% being two-bedroom homes.¹²

Because of this, the focus of the council's new build programme to date has been on smaller properties, although providing some larger homes also in recognition of lower turn-over of family homes and the need to create mixed communities.

Moving forward we are exploring the need to provide more specialist forms of housing to help meet the specific needs of homeless people. For example, increasing provision of self-contained accommodation as a stepping stone to a full tenancy, or piloting provision of small blocks with some form of on-site supervision.

Alternative options for use of new and existing homes are being considered. One example is leasing homes to the council's Housing Company for use as Houses in Multiple Occupation. This could include existing council homes and/or market homes delivered as part of the council's development programme. There may also be the potential for leasing short-life and/or low demand homes from other housing association partners.

Potential conversion of surplus commercial property to good quality homes through our Housing Development Agency is another area to be explored; particularly in the context of the potential impact of Covid-19 on future demand for office space.

We are also keen to explore securing some private rented homes to be offered through the Home-Link choice-based lettings system to applicants who may be homeless or at risk of homelessness but not in priority need.

¹² Strategic Housing Key Facts

Improving access to social housing

Some social housing providers have allocations policies which, in effect, can reduce the number of homes available for those with high levels of need. Building on the good relations we have with local providers we need to work with them to try to increase access to housing for those most in need and assess whether we can achieve better alignment between council and housing association allocation policies.

We also need to work with providers to establish whether better use can be made of existing homes, including potential for flexing tenures in some circumstances where that would better meet the needs of the council and of the provider.

This is likely to be more of a challenge in relation to some of the larger and less locally focused associations, with whom we need to improve lines of communication.

Bespoke Local Lettings Plans (LLPs) for particular developments, both council and housing association, can also have the effect of reducing the number of areas where those with high needs can be housed.

We need to review the council's own suite of Local Lettings Plans to understand the overall impact across the City and whether a change in approach is required. We have also identified in our Housing Strategy the need to develop a Local Lettings Plan framework to try to achieve greater consistency of approach between the council and other providers, and to ensure LLPs are not overly restrictive.

There is also the need to review how we implement the policy in relation to applicants with outstanding debts being excluded from an offer of a social housing tenancy.

Improving access to housing for people on middle incomes

One of the potential impacts of Covid-19 on the economy is that households previously on middle incomes could become more at risk of homelessness. We need to consider how the council's own development programme might be able to help in providing private sector accommodation at sub-market levels, as well as at market rents to help cross-subsidise the wider new affordable housing programme.

Lettings policy

The council is part of a sub-regional lettings policy which operates across six different neighbouring councils. Under the policy, homeless applicants to whom the

councils owe the 'main' homelessness duty are awarded Band A (urgent need) priority.

Having a consistent policy which suits the needs of all partner authorities is inherently challenging, as needs in Cambridge are clearly different to those of some of the other districts. For example, as already highlighted the council is increasing the range of alternative housing options in addition to social housing; and rough sleeping is also a particular issue for the City.

The council will review the current policy and its impacts and consider whether being part of the current sub-regional approach is the best way of meeting local needs going forwards. Examples of issues to consider include: the priority given to statutorily homeless applicants on the register compared with the priority given to other groups including those at risk of becoming street homeless; how local connection criteria are applied; whether more priority should be available for multi-generational households or house-sharers; whether the offer to middle-income households should be improved; and whether those willing to take up a private rented sector offer should be awarded a higher priority banding.

Improving access to and range of permanent accommodation

Moving forward the council will:

Explore how access to homes across a range of tenures might be improved, and how homes might be used more flexibly to meet a wider range of needs.

Encourage take-up of private rented sector housing options, including out of town lets, through better promotion, considering additional incentives and improving support available.

Improve engagement and partnership working with landlords, letting agencies and other private owners.

Consider whether additional incentives may be needed to improve the availability of private rented homes through Town Hall Lettings.

Review the council's Housing Benefit Plus scheme with a view to making it a more attractive option.

Work with housing providers to explore how better use might be made of existing homes

Work with housing providers with a view to increasing access to housing for those with high levels of need, and better alignment of council and other providers' allocations policies.

Investigate the feasibility of delivering more specialist forms of housing, and homes for people previously on middle incomes who may be at risk of homelessness, through the council's house-building programme.

Investigate potential for conversion of commercial property to good quality accommodation through the council's housing development programme.

Review the council's approach to Local Lettings Plans in the context of access to housing for those with high levels of need.

Priority 3: Minimise use of temporary and emergency accommodation

Introduction

The chronic shortage of permanent housing means there is a need for a supply of suitable temporary accommodation for those to whom a homelessness duty is owed. This is made available for households whose cases are being investigated and for those waiting for more permanent accommodation.

Accommodation for use at short notice in an emergency is also important.

The council currently has access to just over 100 units of temporary accommodation in Cambridge, the majority of which is owned by the council with the remainder leased from a housing association.

There are also times where use of commercial hotel accommodation is necessary. For example, in emergencies where somewhere to stay is needed outside of business hours, or where no suitable temporary accommodation is available.

Use of single homelessness and rough sleeping hostel accommodation is dealt with elsewhere in this strategy.

Use of temporary and emergency accommodation

Following introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 56-day homelessness duty period the numbers of people needing to be housed in temporary accommodation peaked in 2019/20, with families making up the largest proportional increase. The Covid-19 lockdown has since led to a fall in numbers, although this is expected to rise again following lifting of the temporary suspension of court proceedings. Rough estimates suggest that the council could see an increase in demand in the order of around 20% over pre-lock down numbers.

Length of stay has also increased, with some households waiting more than the statutory 56 days before being rehoused.

There are occasions when use of commercial hotels is unavoidable, which sometimes means people having to be located outside of Cambridge.

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the council also secured temporary use of a number of hotel rooms to take rough sleepers off the streets. A clear plan will be

Priority 3: Minimise use of temporary & emergency accommodation

needed to move people out again and into appropriate accommodation, with necessary support, so that they do not end up back on the streets.

There is a need to reduce overall reliance on temporary accommodation. However, for those times where it is required, we will continue to look for appropriate solutions, such as leasing arrangements with other providers, and use of council-new build properties.

We also aim to make flexible use of the council's existing social housing stock in meeting need for temporary accommodation.

We also aim to get a better understanding of the sizes and types of temporary housing needed, to ensure that the available accommodation is suitable for those who need it.

Reducing reliance on temporary accommodation

Living in temporary accommodation of any sort is far from ideal for the households concerned, particularly where children are involved or where people have complex needs. It is also costly for the council, particularly the use of commercial hotels. Use of such accommodation is, to a large extent, determined by demand, and work is under way to try to understand reasons for the recent rise in demand for and length of stay in temporary accommodation.

Priorities dealt with elsewhere in the strategy, such as supporting people to remain in their homes, better access to permanent accommodation, and understanding how the current lettings policy may be impacting, are all important in trying to reduce reliance on temporary housing. In addition, the council needs to consider and/or enhance the use of other solutions, such as direct lets to homeless households outside of the Home-Link choice based lettings system, and reviewing the extent to which housing related debt should remain a barrier to being offered a home.

We also need to monitor the speed of decision making on homelessness cases. and how quickly we are able to bring an interim accommodation duty to an end. In addition, we need to keep decisions to place people in interim accommodation under regular review to ensure consistency of decision making.

It is also important to ensure that benefit claims are processed as swiftly as possible.

Although the council aims to minimise use of temporary accommodation in general, reducing use of commercial hotels is particularly important. This could potentially require, at least in the short term, an increase in provision of non-commercial

Priority 3: Minimise use of temporary & emergency accommodation

temporary housing, particularly following the increased use of hotels in response to Covid-19.

Although we need to reduce use of commercial hotels overall, we also need to explore opportunities for bringing in different types of commercial provision; in particular for high need households for whom standard provision is unsuitable.

Minimising use of temporary and emergency accommodation

Moving forward the council will...

Further develop our existing plan to reduce reliance on the use of temporary and emergency accommodation.

Continue work on identifying reasons for the recent increase in use of and length of stay in temporary accommodation, and keep information on demand under regular review.

Improve our approach to monitoring of pathways through interim accommodation, and regularly review placement decisions to ensure consistency in decision making.

Get a better understanding of the of the sizes and types of temporary and emergency accommodation needed.

Continue to look for alternative ways of providing temporary and emergency accommodation, including for those for whom standard provision is unsuitable.

Make use of council owned homes where appropriate.

Ensure that rough sleepers housed temporarily in hotels are moved into appropriate accommodation in a planned way so that they do not end up back on the streets.

Review the extent to which housing related debt should remain a barrier to being offered a home.

Priority 4: Improve access to and effectiveness of support services

Introduction

Whilst access to accommodation is essential for preventing and relieving homelessness, it is only part of the solution.

A significant proportion of households and individuals seeking housing advice and facing homelessness have a need for some form of additional support if their issues are to be addressed. Our Homelessness Review identified that of 1078 presentations in 2018-19, around two thirds were recorded as having support needs. Mental health support was the most common one recorded as a primary need, but many will have had multiple needs. Lack of appropriate support for such individuals or households increases their risk of being made homeless for the first time or becoming caught in a cycle of homelessness.

Public service cuts over recent years have taken their toll in terms of preventative services and are thought to be a key contributor to the numbers of people with high level and/or multiple support needs becoming homeless or sleeping rough.

Improving joint working

Working closely with partners is key to helping people avoid homelessness, or at least the worst effects of homelessness. Under the Homelessness Reduction Act 'duty to refer', partnership working is now effectively a statutory requirement.

The council involves and supports – in some cases financially - a whole range of organisations in dealing with homelessness, including statutory agencies, contracted services, other housing providers and the voluntary sector. Single homeless and rough sleeper support, drug & alcohol services, supporting prison leavers, and services for those experiencing or at risk of domestic abuse are just a few examples. It is also important to ensure that people can access more generic services, such as those providing services such as: financial advice; access to education, training and volunteering/employment opportunities; and cultural & leisure activities.

The council has a long history of partnership working in relation to homelessness, with a strong commitment across most partners to work together. However, there is still significant need for improvement. All too often issues such as gaps in services, lack of resources, inadequate working protocols and absence of rapid referral routes can lead to people falling through the cracks. In some cases, duplication of services also needs addressing.

Mental health and substance misuse support is a particular area where working needs to become more joined up. Another area is in dealing with homelessness and anti-social behaviour linked to misuse of drugs and alcohol.

It is important that all partners, including the council as the housing authority, have clearly defined roles and a clear and agreed direction of travel in relation to preventing and tackling homelessness. Building on the improved understanding gained through our response to Covid-19, we need to review how non-commissioned voluntary services can be more effectively integrated with statutory and commissioned services.

Collaboration at a strategic level needs to be improved – particularly amongst statutory services – to ensure that those with a complex range of needs can receive the support they need. A list of key partners is at Annex 2.

Homelessness Transformation

The homelessness Trailblazer service has taken joint working a step further forward over the last few years. Part of a multi-agency partnership across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, involving public, private and voluntary sector partners, it helps prevent people from becoming homeless by helping them to help themselves before they hit crisis point. Its main aim is to make homelessness the ‘unacceptable outcome.’¹³

However, more of a ‘whole system’ approach across services, agencies and the wider community will be needed if we are to achieve maximum effectiveness around homelessness prevention.

As a result of the recent county-wide Homelessness Transformation research (referred to previously in this Strategy) one of the recommendations the councils involved are exploring is the feasibility of having a fully integrated multi-disciplinary homelessness service across a range of agencies. Any proposals in this area would require full commitment to joint working from multiple partners, potentially including some co-location of services.

A key element of this from Cambridge City Council’s point of view will be to ensure that the City’s needs, as well as those of the wider Cambridgeshire and Peterborough area, can be appropriately met.

¹³ [Cambridgeshire & Peterborough homelessness Trailblazer](#)

Improving access to and effectiveness of support services

Moving forward the council will...

Explore how working arrangements with mental health, substance misuse and social/ social care services can be improved, including investigating the potential for some co-location of services and/or development of multi-disciplinary teams.

Strengthen work with partners to provide a joined-up approach to preventing and tackling drug and alcohol related anti-social behaviour.

Improve monitoring of the underlying reasons for homelessness, to help inform service design, planning and operation.

Work to improve collaboration with statutory partners at a strategic level, including working with the County Council and other partners to explore the potential for a fully integrated, multi-disciplinary homelessness service across a range of agencies.

It will be important to engage not only partner agencies but also service users and the wider community in designing any new services.

Priority 5: Prevent rough sleeping

Introduction

As previously highlighted, prior to additional hotel accommodation being provided in response to Covid-19, rough sleeping had become a growing and more publicly visible issue over recent years.

However, homelessness and rough sleeping, although often overlapping, are not necessarily the same thing. There are many people who are homeless who do not sleep rough, and some rough sleepers are known to have permanent homes, or at least a bed in a hostel or other temporary accommodation.

Similarly, street begging involves individuals who may or may not be sleeping rough, again some of whom are known to have access to accommodation.

The council has had a long-standing target of keeping rough sleeping numbers to less than 10 (as measured by street counts now carried out six times a year). However, 33 were identified in the autumn 2019 count. 166 separate individuals were recorded as sleeping rough in Cambridge between April 2019 and March 2020, against a target of less than 135.

Our Homelessness Review identified that well over half of rough sleeping individuals identified in Cambridge over the period of a year appear to be new to the streets that year.

This is a complex area with no single solution. It is essential that we do all we can to promote early intervention to enable people to access accommodation and appropriate support and other services to reduce the risk of them moving onto the streets.

Profile of rough sleepers

Rough sleepers and people at risk of rough sleeping tend to have multiple and complex needs, with a high proportion of rough sleepers in Cambridge having severe mental health problems and/or alcohol and substance misuse issues, including use of Class A substances. National research also shows that they tend to have higher rates of long-term physical health and mental health problems compared with the general population.¹⁴

¹⁴ Public Health England [Inequalities of homelessness blog](#)

Other National research also identifies life experiences, threat of violence or abuse and lack of family and/or other support as just a few of the potential contributory factors.¹⁵

Street homelessness disproportionately affects males, those who have experienced trauma, and those leaving institutional settings such as care and prison leavers. Although unlike some other areas there appear to be relatively few street homeless people in Cambridge who have been in the armed forces.

Around 1 in 5 Cambridge rough sleepers using Covid-19 hotel provision were identified as foreign nationals, many of whom were thought to have no recourse to public funds. However, our targeted work with those from the European Economic Area (EEA) has shown that it is possible to help those willing to work with us to find employment or otherwise gain pre-settled or settled status, allowing them to continue to live and work in the UK and access healthcare and any social security benefits they may be eligible to claim. We will build on the insights gained from this exercise so that we can assist any potentially eligible rough sleepers.

Setting targets for rough sleeping

As previously stated, it is unlikely that we will be able to completely eliminate rough sleeping in Cambridge by 2027 in line with government aspirations. We propose a local target of less than 10 rough sleepers picked up in any one count by 2022, moving to less than five throughout the lifetime of this Strategy. We also need to agree targets for average duration of rough sleeping in a period, and how long it takes to make a housing offer.

Early up-front prevention

To help young people to understand the implications and risks of leaving home without alternative accommodation being available, the council has formerly supported a programme of education within local schools, colleges and specialist young persons' accommodation. We now think that a better approach is to target those likely to be at highest risk, and to better engage both young people and parents/carers at an early stage before the risk of homelessness arises.

There is also a need to improve how those at risk of rough sleeping are identified to help prevent the flow of new rough sleepers onto the streets.

Young people leaving care

There is a strongly recognised link between rough sleeping and having been in local authority care. In Cambridge in 2016 just under 1 in 5 rough sleepers were found to

¹⁵ St Mungos, [On My Own Two Feet](#)

have been in care at some point in their childhood. This broadly reflects earlier national research which estimated a figure of around 1 in 4.¹⁶

It is essential that partners work effectively together to manage the transition between care and independence. There is a joint protocol between Cambridge City and Cambridgeshire County Councils for the assessment of 16 and 17 year olds, and we are also in the process of finalising a joint accommodation pathway protocol for care leavers.

For these protocols to be effective, they need strong and sustained commitment on all sides, and we need to ensure that they become fully embedded in the practice of all partners.

Prison leavers

Homelessness prevention visits are made to people due to leave prison, but by the time the council is aware of someone being discharged it is often too late to provide effective homelessness prevention support. We will continue to work with the Police & Crime Commissioner and with prison and probation services to improve the approach to prison discharge, including considering extending the use of video links to carry out virtual housing assessments (introduced in response to Covid-19), and reviewing and revitalising the existing discharge protocol.

We also need to explore how links with each of the local prisons can be improved, and how individuals' housing needs can be identified and addressed at an earlier stage.

Access to accommodation

There is no statutory requirement to provide temporary accommodation for single people not classed as in priority need. This, combined with a shortage of suitable housing, means that people with no place to stay are at risk of moving onto the streets. The council's Single Homelessness Service assists single people not in priority need but at risk of homelessness and rough sleeping to quickly gain a secure home. So far, the scheme has assisted over 500 single people into private rented sector housing, but as highlighted elsewhere in this Strategy, lack of appropriate and affordable accommodation remains a challenge. The council has submitted a bid for government grant to purchase additional homes to support this group and will continue to seek opportunities to access funding for this purpose.

¹⁶ Randall, G and Brown, S, Helping rough sleepers off the streets: A report to the Homelessness Directorate, ODPM, 2002.

In terms of short-term accommodation, there is a need to explore county-wide how an emergency accommodation offer can be made available for anyone sleeping rough across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

Reducing the ‘pull’ of the streets

As mentioned previously, some people who live on the streets already have access to accommodation. For many people it is difficult to understand why people would ‘choose’ to live on the streets as opposed to living in settled accommodation or taking up a hostel place.

National research has identified that as well as ‘push’ factors (such as eviction or abandonment - e.g. through poor housing conditions or threat of violence/abuse) other ‘pull’ factors are also influential. This may include a sense of community on the street, compared with boredom and isolation living alone. A recurring theme was the absence of both informal support (from family and friends) and formal ongoing support.¹⁷

Local consultation has also identified that one of the benefits of living on the street is the ability to raise money through begging.

We need to improve public awareness of alternative ways of giving – including through Cambridge Street Aid, which funds individually tailored grants to help people to move off the streets.¹⁸

We need to work with public health to try to tackle the root causes of begging, which are often related to drug and alcohol dependency issues. We also need to work with the police and other partners to explore how enforcement against begging and street-based anti-social behaviour can be improved in parallel with improved provision of accommodation and health and support services.

Reconnections policy

The council has for many years had a policy of reconnecting rough sleepers to the places where they came from.

However, although many local rough sleepers are helped into accommodation, there appears to be no noticeable downward trend in rough sleeper numbers. Data suggests that over the last two years, over half of the individual rough sleepers counted in the City had started rough sleeping in Cambridge that year for the first time. Cambridge as a well-renowned city attracts people from across the region, the country, and indeed the world, some of whom sadly end up sleeping on the streets. People gravitating from South Cambridgeshire is a particular issue, and we need to

¹⁷ St Mungo Trust: [On My Own Two Feet](#),

¹⁸ [Cambridge Street Aid](#):

work closely with South Cambridgeshire District Council to help prevent single people in that area from becoming homeless.

We need to find new ways of engaging with individuals to get a better understanding of where rough sleepers are coming from so that we can improve our approach for reconnection within the context of duties under the new Homelessness Reduction Act.

We need to review our offer to rough sleepers who do not have a local connection, to agree a workable reconnection programme tailored towards more local neighbouring partner authorities.

Preventing rough sleeping

Moving forward the council will...

- Improve our understanding of the nature and causes of rough sleeping in Cambridge.
- Work with partners to understand how prevention activities as a whole can help identify those at risk of rough sleeping and help to intervene early to prevent the flow of new rough sleepers onto the streets.
- Gain a better understanding of where rough sleepers have come from, develop a more proactive approach to reconnecting rough sleepers to where they came from, and review the offer available to those without a local connection.
- Aim to keep the number of rough sleepers below 10 for any one count, reducing to five through the lifetime of the strategy; and agree additional targets around length of stay and time taken to make a housing offer.
- Work with partners to explore how an emergency accommodation offer can be made available for anyone sleeping rough across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.
- Review the current approach to education around homelessness prevention amongst young people.
- Review the current approach to street begging and anti-social behaviour.
- For people thought to have no recourse to public funds, ensure help is available for those who may wish to apply for pre-settled or settled status.
- Promote and support effective implementation of the young people's assessment and care leaver protocols across all relevant partners.
- Review the prison leavers' protocol and identify how prison leavers' housing needs can be identified and addressed at an earlier stage.
- Work with South Cambridgeshire District Council to help prevent single homelessness within their district.

Priority 6: Break the cycle of chronic and repeat street homelessness and rough sleeping

Introduction

Once people have started sleeping on the streets there is a high risk of remaining there and we need to improve approach to stopping people getting caught in the 'revolving door' of street homelessness and rough sleeping.

Rough sleeping tends to last longer than other forms of homelessness and is much more likely to be cyclical. One London study in 2017-18 found that one-in-six people sleeping out in the capital in that year had returned to the street after a gap of at least a year.¹⁹

In Cambridge, although the majority of rough sleeping appears to involve those new to the streets in the last year, there are also significant numbers who have either returned to the streets or are 'entrenched' as rough sleepers.

Improving hostel capacity

Although hostel accommodation does not suit everyone, it has an important part to play in supporting people off the streets and helping them to prepare for the move towards more permanent accommodation.

Around 345 beds are available in the city in hostels and dispersed 'move-on houses'. This is a significant number for a relatively small city, and we think adequate to meet the needs of the local rough sleeper population; although we need to better understand what is an appropriate balance locally between hostel and permanent housing provision.

However, there is an issue around the rate at which hostel places become available for new rough sleepers. Residents are expected to move on within two years, but a number stay for longer. Also, for some, two years may be too long to remain in an institutional setting.

While there are exceptions, the usual route into a mainstream homelessness hostel is through Jimmy's assessment centre. Slow rates of move-on from hostels affect the rate at which rough sleepers can move from Jimmy's which in turn affects the rate at which people on the street can get a bed in Jimmy's.

¹⁹ St Mungo Trust: [On My Own Two Feet](#).

Priority 6: Break the cycle of chronic and repeat street homelessness and rough sleeping

More post-hostel accommodation and promoting and making private rented sector alternatives more attractive are needed if we are to move people through the hostels more quickly. We will also develop additional home-based support for people leaving hostels who feel they are still not wholly ready to live independently.

We need to work with providers and other partners to help people move on more quickly. As well as advice and support to the services concerned, more challenging move-on target times are likely to be needed, as well as improvements in how progress through the system is monitored. There is also a need for better up-front information for residents and support workers on the range of accommodation and support options available to them.

Move-on discussions with individuals need to start as soon as possible after they have moved into a hostel and their position has stabilised. A 'Streets to Home approach' as proposed below could play a major part in this, to ensure that hostel discharges are well planned and accompanied by appropriate treatment and support.

South Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire District Councils currently have equal access, with Cambridge City, to hostel places in the City. With high levels of need just within Cambridge itself we need to consider the potential for reciprocal accommodation arrangements with other districts and support them to help increase hostel capacity with their own districts.

Although it is important to move people on, it is just as important to avoid unplanned move-ons wherever possible, including through abandonment or eviction. Whether being excluded from moving to more permanent accommodation due to previous breaches of tenancy can be prevented also needs to be explored. We need to work with accommodation providers to review how incidents of eviction and abandonment can be reduced.

We need to work with the County Council to weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of hostel accommodation compared with other housing options, to consider what balance of provision should be available moving forward.

Improving suitability of hostel accommodation

We need to ensure that the supported housing available to individuals is suitable to for those presenting with complex needs. We will work with partners to review the scope and effectiveness of support provided in hostels, including in relation to move-on advice.

We also need to work with the County Council in considering the need for commissioning longer term supported provision for those for whom mainstream housing with support may not be suitable.

Access to housing

As highlighted earlier, expanding access to homes that are affordable is an important part of the solution to preventing homelessness and keeping people off the streets.

The council has been working with partners on a Housing First model of accommodation for those with complex needs who are rough sleeping or have a history of repeat homelessness. It offers a more permanent alternative to hostel and move-on accommodation and aims to provide stable accommodation so that intensive home-based support can be provided. National research has also identified it as being a more cost-effective solution than hostel provision.²⁰

The first Housing First homes have started to be let, and a review of the project will be needed to understand how successful it is – for both individuals and the wider community - and whether the programme should be expanded.

Housing First homes are currently being delivered through the council's own house-building programme and through direct lets to existing council and housing association homes, but we also need to consider whether private rented sector homes could also be used.

However, there is the danger of street homelessness being seen as a clear route to a social housing tenancy, making prevention more challenging. Research on the views of hostel residents has identified that most want social housing rather than a private rented tenancy; and, as mentioned, uptake of private rented housing when leaving hostel accommodation tends to be low.

The effect of our current approach to Home-Link applicant banding and moving towards more homes offered through Housing First is that around 20% of one-bedroom homes and 10% of all homes available through Home-Link are being let to single people with a street homeless background. Although it is important that housing is provided for this group, it does mean that others are having to wait much longer for a home, and it also presents challenges in achieving mixed and balanced communities to help meet our broader strategic housing objectives.

As previously stated, we need to improve provision and promotion of the private rented sector and make it a more available and attractive option. This will be particularly important in the context of the need to speed up move-on from hostel accommodation. The aim should be towards a position where social housing is available only to those for whom the private rented sector would be unsuitable.

There is also a clear need to look at new and more innovative ways of providing accommodation for this group.

²⁰ Pleace & Bretherton, [The cost effectiveness of Housing First in England 2019](#)

Priority 6: Break the cycle of chronic and repeat street homelessness and rough sleeping

The council has supported partners in the delivery of six modular units on Newmarket Road which are now occupied, with a further three sites identified. The search for additional land is continuing, and the council is planning a further 17 modular homes on its own land.

Time taken to get modular homes through the planning process has been an issue, and we need to look at whether an 'off the shelf' planning brief can be developed to help speed up the process.

We want to investigate opportunities to work more collaboratively with other housing providers on projects to help prevent and tackle homelessness in addition to provision of social housing tenancies. This includes exploring whether there are opportunities for making use of any short-life and/or low demand social housing properties available – for example to single sharers or for general needs housing - through Town Hall Lettings.

We also need to explore the potential for self-build and/or self-managed co-operative housing models for people who have been on the streets.

Streets to Home service

A major focus up to now has been on providing services, such as day centre facilities, health services, education & skills development, welfare checks etc, to those living on the streets. There are also many informal voluntary and church-based services offering food, clothing and bedding to those living a street-based lifestyle. Rather than simply supporting people to remain on the streets, a major shift in approach is required if the cycle of street homelessness is to be tackled effectively.

The council is working with Cambridgeshire County Council and other partners to commission a comprehensive 'streets to home' service with the aim of helping people rapidly off the streets and into accommodation. A link worker will be required to lead on resettling individuals and ensuring they receive the support they need to get back on their feet. Ensuring that routine homelessness assessments are carried out for all rough sleepers will need to be part of that process, as will a review of the Jimmy's Cambridge allocations policy.

Once settled, new types of support services will be required which are tailored to individuals' needs, to help prevent people from returning to the streets.

To be successful this will depend on close collaboration with partners, including health and social care related support services, the voluntary sector, businesses and the wider community. We will also need to work closely with existing street-based services and with service users themselves to identify what role they can play in designing and facilitating this shift in approach.

Working with the wider community

There has been considerable interest from the wider community in trying to deal with the problem of street homelessness and rough sleeping.

The community group It Takes a City, along with other informal voluntary support services, have helped to enable a strong and collaborative approach to getting people off the streets in response to the coronavirus pandemic. We need to build on this positive work, working with the community to help find more permanent housing solutions for rough sleepers and to help shape and implement new ways of working.

Moving forward, there are clear opportunities to capitalise on local skills and experience to help provide the kinds of home-based support which may not be available through other channels; such as befriending, mentoring and skill-sharing.

It is also important to continue to increase public awareness of the issues involved and how they can help in keeping people off the streets.

Breaking the cycle of chronic and repeat street homelessness and rough sleeping

Moving forward the council will:

- Work with providers to help speed up move on from hostels, whilst at the same time reviewing how evictions and abandonments can be reduced.
- Work with providers to review the scope and effectiveness of hostel-based support, particularly in relation to move-on advice.
- Explore whether being excluded from moving on due to previous breaches of tenancy can be prevented.
- Work with sub-regional authorities to help improve City access to existing hostel beds.
- Work with the County Council to assess what balance between hostel and other accommodation might be appropriate going forwards.
- Promote and make private rented housing a more attractive option, to help make it available to a wider range of applicants.
- Review the effectiveness of the Housing First model of provision and explore whether it should be extended to include private rented sector homes.
- Explore with social housing providers whether there are opportunities for short life or low demand social housing available, including to single sharers.
- Expand the provision of modular homes, and explore other innovative ways of providing accommodation to prevent and relieve single homelessness.
- Continue to seek and make best use of funding opportunities to purchase new homes to accommodate rough sleepers.
- Work with the County Council in considering the need for commissioning longer term supported provision for those for whom mainstream housing with support may not be suitable.
- Work collaboratively on shifting emphasis from a mainly streets-based towards more of a home-based service model.

Funding the Strategy

As has already been highlighted throughout this Strategy, the work of partners is fundamental to meeting the proposed objectives and priorities; and each will, to a greater or lesser extent, have their own funding streams to draw upon.

For the council itself, the main sources of funding for dealing with homelessness and rough sleeping are a combination of its own resources together with government grant. The following is a list of what is currently available to support our work around homelessness and rough sleeping.

- Council General Fund resources
- Housing Benefit (for stays in bed & breakfast and Cornerhouse temporary accommodation)
- [MHCLG flexible homelessness support grant](#)
- [MHCLG Homelessness Reduction Grant](#)
- [MHCLG Rough Sleeping Initiative Grant](#)
- [MHCLG Covid-19 rough sleepers contingency fund grant](#)

Many of the government grants available for homelessness and rough sleeping require submission of bids for particular projects which meet the specific aims of that grant funding pot. The council will continue to work with partners to assess whether any funding which comes available can be used effectively to help meet the objectives in our Strategy, and to bid for funding where appropriate.

The full financial impacts of Covid-19 on local and national government spending, and funding available to other partners are not yet fully understood. This may of course pose risks to the extent to which some of our objectives can be met, at a time when a further increase in homelessness and rough sleeping is also highly likely. This makes it more important than ever that we take every opportunity to maximise and make best use of any resources available now and in the future.

Implementing and Monitoring the Strategy

This Strategy will be accompanied by a detailed action plan for year 1 of the Strategy, which will be outcome focused, with clear targets for delivery. (See Annex 5).

Detailed actions for subsequent years will be developed on an annual basis, based on a broader delivery framework. This approach is to allow flexibility in exactly how the objectives and priorities outlined in the Strategy are to be achieved, accounting for changing needs and circumstances and the resources available over time. This is particularly important in the current context of uncertainty around the full impact of Covid-19 on homelessness and rough sleeping and on the funding available to tackle the issues involved.

Implementation of the Strategy will require close partnership working across a wide spectrum of partners.

Achievement against the action plan will be monitored on an ongoing basis through the cross-partner Homelessness Strategy Implementation Partnership. An annual outcomes report will be scrutinised by the council's Strategic Leadership Team.

Annexes

Annex 1: Links to relevant council strategies, policies and plans

[Corporate Plan](#)

[Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy 2019-2023 plus annexes](#)

[Anti-Poverty Strategy 2020-2023](#)

[Empty Homes Policy](#)

Progress against previous Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Action Plan *Link to be added*

[Home-Link Lettings Policy 2018](#)

[Community Safety Plan](#)

[Anti-Social Behaviour Policy](#)

[Local Lettings Plans](#)

[Homelessness Review 2019](#)

Annex 2: Links to key data

[Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Review 2019](#) (Cambridge City Council)

[Strategic Housing Key Facts](#) (Cambridge City Council)

[Sub-regional Housing Market Bulletins](#) (Cambridge sub-region)

[Government Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Statistics](#)

[Homelessness Monitor](#) (Crisis)

Annex 3: Key partners

(NB this list is not exhaustive)

Cambridgeshire County Council
Public Health England, East of England
Cambs HIA
Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Clinical Commissioning Group
Cambridge Access Surgery
Addenbrooke's Hospital
Cambridgeshire & Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust
South Cambridgeshire District Council and other Cambridgeshire districts
Peterborough City Council
Cambridgeshire Police
Probation
Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire Community
Rehabilitation Company. (BeNCH CRC)
Cambridge City Council Housing Development Agency
Citizens Advice Bureau
Change Grow Live
P3
St Giles Trust
Department of Work & Pensions
Cambridge Ethnic Community Forum
Disability Cambridgeshire
CHS Group
Jimmy's Cambridge
Cambridge Women's Aid
Homelessness Strategy Implementation Group
Emmaus
Wintercomfort
Cambridge Cyrenians
Link UP
YMCA
Riverside
Centre 33
Break
Counting Every Adult
Registered Housing Providers operating locally
Residents' Associations

Annex 4: Glossary

Affordable Rent	<p>Rented housing provided by Local Authorities and Private Registered Providers of social housing to households that are eligible for Social Rented housing. Affordable Rent is subject to rent controls that require a rent of no more than 80% of the local market rent (including service charges, where applicable).</p> <p>Some existing Social Rent homes may be converted to Affordable Rents in agreement with Homes England.</p>
Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST)	<p>A tenancy can be an AST if all of the following apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the rental property is private • the tenancy started on or after 15 January 1989 • the property is the tenant’s main accommodation • the landlord does not live in the property <p>Circumstances where a tenancy cannot be an AST are detailed on the Government’s website</p>
Broad Rental Market Area (BRMA)	<p>A geographical area defined by government for the purposes of setting Local Housing Allowance rates. The Cambridge BRMA covers a wide area, including Ely & Littleport, Newmarket, Haverhill, Huntingdon, St Neots, etc and surrounding areas. The result is that, up until recently, Local Housing Allowance rates for Cambridge have been significantly lower than private rents in the City.</p>
Choice based lettings	<p>The scheme under which Council and Housing Association rented homes are let. Applicants (including existing tenants who want a transfer) bid for properties which become available. The Councils are part of a sub-regional CBL scheme – Home Link.</p>
Duty to refer	<p>Under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, named public bodies have a duty to refer users of their service who they have reason to believe are homeless or threatened with</p>

	becoming homeless within 56 days, to a local authority of the service users' choice.
Homelessness Prevention	Duty under the Homelessness Act 2017 to provide people with the ways and means to address their housing and other needs to avoid homelessness.
Homelessness Relief	Duty under the Homelessness Act 2017. Where an authority has been unable to prevent homelessness but helps someone to secure accommodation.
Home-Link	Home Link is the choice-based lettings scheme (see above) through which Council and Housing Association homes are let across the Cambridge sub-region.
Housing Associations	Independent societies, bodies of trustees or companies established for the purpose of providing low-cost social housing for people in housing need on a non-profit-making basis. Any trading surplus is used to maintain existing homes and to help finance new ones
Housing Benefit	State payments to cover housing costs for those on low incomes. Being phased and replaced with Universal Credit for most people of working age.
House in Multiple Occupation	A property rented out by at least three people who are not from one 'household' (eg a family) but share facilities like the bathroom and kitchen. Sometimes called a 'house share'.
Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates	LHA rates are set by government, and used to assess the level of housing benefit (or housing element of Universal Credit) to be paid to tenants renting from private landlords, depending on the area in which they live and the size of their household. LHA rates are set at the 30th percentile of rents in the local Broad Market Rental Area (BRMA) – see above.
Local Lettings Plans	A set of guidelines and/or criteria governing which households can be allocated accommodation in a specific designated area.

Main homelessness duty	A 'main homelessness duty' is owed where the authority is satisfied that the applicant is eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and falls within a specified priority need group. The priority need groups and what the duty involves are detailed on the Government website
MHCLG	Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government
Right to Buy	Scheme introduced by the Housing Act 1980 which enables secure Local Authority tenants (and some assured Housing Association tenants) to buy their rented home at a discount.
Rough sleepers	<p>Rough sleepers are defined for the purposes of rough sleeping counts and estimates as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • people sleeping, about to bed down (sitting on/in or standing next to their bedding) or actually bedded down in the open air (such as on the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments) • people in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations, or 'bashes'). <p>It does not include people in hostels or shelters, people in campsites or other sites used for recreational purposes or organised protest, squatters or travellers.</p> <p>See the Government website for more information</p>
Section 21 notice of seeking possession	<p>A notice served on a tenant with an assured shorthold tenancy (other than where the tenant has broken the terms of the tenancy) in order to end the tenancy Can be served, either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After a fixed term tenancy ends – if there is a written contract; or • During a tenancy with no fixed end date (a 'periodic tenancy') <p>Requirements, and circumstances where a section 21 notice cannot be used are detailed on the Government website.</p>

<p>Social Housing</p>	<p>Includes housing provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. It should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet the needs of eligible households including availability at a cost low enough for them to afford, determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices • Include provision for the home to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households or, if these restrictions are lifted, for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative Affordable Housing provision.
<p>Social Rent Housing</p>	<p>Rented housing owned by local authorities and Registered Providers, for which guideline target rents are determined through the national rent regime. It may also be owned by other persons and provided under equivalent rental arrangements to the above, as agreed with the local authority or with the Homes England.</p>
<p>Social Rent</p>	<p>The rent charged for social rented housing. (Differs from Affordable Rent) - typically around 60% of an open market rent.</p>

Annex 5: Year 1 Action Plan

Objective	Priority	Actions	Commentary	Completion by	Target (if applicable)	Lead service / Lead role
Objective 1: Prevent people from becoming homeless.	Priority 1: Support those at risk of homelessness to remain in their homes where possible or to find a new home without an intervening period of homelessness.	Action 1A: Continue to provide and further develop specialist private rented sector support and advice, especially in the area of section 21 notices.	Our 2019 homelessness review showed the loss of a private tenancy to be the second largest cause of homelessness. Preventing the loss of a private sector home will be a priority throughout the period of this plan.	Ongoing throughout the period of the plan.	Fewer than 1 in 10 people presenting with a section 21 notice go on to lose their home.	Housing Advice Service / Senior Housing Officer.
		Action 1B: Develop and launch a publicity campaign to encourage people facing homelessness to seek advice at an early stage.	Following the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act there was an increase in the number of people seeking early advice, but many people leave it too late. The evidence is that we can better prevent homelessness the earlier action is taken.	Ongoing throughout the period of the plan.	Fewer than 1 in 10 people presenting with a section 21 notice go on to lose their home.	Corporate Strategy / Housing Advice Service / Policy and Performance Unit.
		Action 1C: Continue to develop the homelessness prevention officer role especially in the area of mediation when someone is asked to leave accommodation by family or friend.	The 2019 homelessness review showed that being asked to leave accommodation by family or friends is the single largest reason why people approach the Council for advice. The number and proportion of in this category has risen significantly during the Covid outbreak. Negotiating	Ongoing throughout the period of the plan.	Year 1: Achieve a reduction in the proportion of people presenting as being asked to leave by friends or family who go on to become homeless.	Housing Advice Service / Senior Housing Officer.

Objective	Priority	Actions	Commentary	Completion by	Target (if applicable)	Lead service / Lead role
		Analyse on a regular basis the numbers of people on the housing needs register being accommodated by friends or family.	(where appropriate) an extended stay while a new home is found has been shown to be an effective homelessness prevention method.		Year Two: set a numerical target.	
		Action 1D: Explore range of incentives to encourage people required to leave by family or friends to remain in their current accommodation. (Link to Action 1F).	Incentives may include priority access to financial assistance to move on or enhanced Home-Link priority in return for there being no intervening period of homelessness.	Recommendations in Q.2 Implement as able during 2021-22 and 2022-23	Year 1: Achieve a reduction in the proportion of people presenting as being asked to leave by friends or family who go on to become homeless. Year Two: set a numerical target.	Housing Advice Service.
		Action 1F: Reconsider and revise work being undertaken with young people in the greatest risk order to improve their understanding of housing availability and choices.	This activity will target young people in pupil referral units, those undergoing counselling and those in specialist young persons' accommodation.	Q.4	Complete review Q.4 2021-22 with any recommended activities implemented in Year Two.	Housing Advice Service / Commissioned Young Persons' Services / Schools and Colleges.
		Action 1G: Explore (with a full cost-benefit analysis) setting up a private sector tenancy rescue scheme making loans or grants to	The proposed scheme would be limited in scope, working with private sector tenants in temporary difficulty due to, for example, the loss of a job.	Feasibility report Q.2.	Cost-Benefit analysis completed end Q.2.	Housing Advice Service / Town Hall Lettings.

Objective	Priority	Actions	Commentary	Completion by	Target (if applicable)	Lead service / Lead role
		tenants in arrears to assist them to remain in their home.	If scheme can be shown to provide a cost-effective alternative to becoming homeless, implement for 1 year trial period.	If positive, implement in Q.3.		
		Action 1J: Work with partner housing associations to understand eviction rates and causes between associations and between housing associations and City Homes.	Consider what may be taken (if any) in the light of review and our proposed local social housing provider group (Action 2H)	Review carried out during Q.2.	Review document completed Q.3.	Housing Advice Service / City Homes / Housing Associations
		Action 1K: Carry out a review of the range of financial support services including internal Council services and contracted, voluntary and on-line assistance with a view to understanding potential duplication, gaps and causes of failure to timely access.	In the light of review make recommendations, consult and implement.	Complete Q.4.	Review complete Q.4 and recommendations implemented Year 2.	Housing Advice Service / Revenue and Benefits / City Homes
		Action 1L: Analyse how effectively our 'Tenants at Risk' panel is in working, with a particular focus on our work with housing	In the light of review make recommendations, consult and implement.	Complete Q.4	Introduce any changes agreed in Q1 Year 2.	Housing Advice Service / Revenue and Benefits / City Homes / Safer

Objective	Priority	Actions	Commentary	Completion by	Target (if applicable)	Lead service / Lead role
		association partners. (Link to Action 2L).				Communities / Housing Associations
		Action 1M: Review the effectiveness and scope of the Council's tenancy sustainment service.	In the light of review make recommendations, consult and implement.	Complete Q.4	Introduce any changes agreed in Q1 Year 2.	Housing Advice Service / Independent Living Service / City Homes.
		Action 1N: Ensure that the Council remains ahead of the housing and homelessness implications of the Covid virus, including developing an understanding of the economic implications for working and formerly-working households.		Ongoing throughout year.		Housing Advice Service / Housing Strategy / City Homes / Town Hall Lettings.
	Priority 2: Support access to a range of long-term, affordable accommodation.	Action 2A: Launch a publicity campaign to encourage private landlords to more readily offer accommodation to people approaching the Council for assistance.	Campaign launched in April 2020. There has since been an increase in landlord interest and in homeless households securing privately-rented housing.	Ongoing throughout the period of the plan.	A 10 percent increase in each category (single persons and families) in the number of PRS homes secured relative to 2020-21.	Corporate Strategy / Housing Advice Service / Town Hall Lettings.
Action 2B: Introduce more-generous HB Plus rules including increasing the maximum top-up available		HB Plus (paying a top-up allowance on top of housing support benefits) has made a significant contribution to allowing low-income households to access and retain privately-	Introduce Q.4.	Set enhanced target for Year Two.	Housing Advice Service / Town Hall Lettings / Cambridge Housing Society / Wintercomfort.	
Objective 2: Where homelessness can't be avoided, help people find						

Objective	Priority	Actions	Commentary	Completion by	Target (if applicable)	Lead service / Lead role
suitable accommodation		and extending the period for which it is available.	rented accommodation and improve financial wellbeing. This action will aim to build on that success.			
		Action 2C: Introduce further range of incentives for private landlords including lump-sum advance rent payments.		Review and propose in Q.1.	A 10 percent increase in each category (single persons and families) in the number of PRS homes secured relative to 2020-21.	Housing Advice Service / Town Hall Lettings.
		Action 2D: Introduce further incentives to encourage homeless households, and in particular families, to take up a private sector offer.	The Council already offers a range of tenant incentives. Action 2D will examine the efficacy of current incentives and consider others such as removal and related expenses, or the retention of local connection if accepting a home outside the city.	Review and propose in Q.1. Implement in Q.2	A 10 percent increase in each category (single persons and families) in the number of PRS homes secured relative to 2020-21.	Housing Advice Service / Town Hall Lettings.
		Action 2E: Provide 17 modular homes for single homeless people	This element of the modular homes programme will be delivered in combination with Hill, the Council's development partner, and Jimmy's Cambridge which will own and manage the homes. (Link to Objective 3: minimise rough sleeping)	Three-stage programme. Complete final stage by Q.1.	Homes occupied by end Q.1.	Housing Advice Service / Housing Development / Jimmy's Cambridge.

Objective	Priority	Actions	Commentary	Completion by	Target (if applicable)	Lead service / Lead role
		Action 2F: Purchase and site a further 10 modular homes for single homeless people.	This project is the subject of an application to the MHCLG for part-funding and is unlikely to go ahead without this input. Any homes realised will be for rough sleepers or those at risk of sleeping rough. (Link to Objective 3 minimise rough sleeping)	Complete final by Q.1.	Homes occupied by end Q.1.	Housing Advice Service / Housing Development / City Homes.
		Action 2G: With City Homes and housing association partners, seek to make use of miscellaneous and short-life properties (including low-demand three-bedroom homes for use as accommodation for two single sharers) for private rental through Town Hall Lettings. Homes may be for rough sleepers or general needs.	Seek to extend the existing council 'supported shared' scheme to local housing association partners. Seek to expand on existing models developed with Hundred Houses Society, Cambridge Housing Society and Aldwyck Housing Association. (Link to Action 2L)	Ongoing throughout year as opportunity arises.	Five further shared homes in Year 1 (subject to assessment of demand for and suitability of the earlier shared schemes).	Housing Advice Service / Town Hall Lettings / Housing Associations / City Homes.
		Action 2H: With development and environmental health colleagues seek suitable empty homes and empty commercial properties for			Ongoing as opportunity arises.	Housing Advice Service / Housing Development / Environmental Health Service.

Objective	Priority	Actions	Commentary	Completion by	Target (if applicable)	Lead service / Lead role
		conversion into housing for people in need.				
		Action 2I: Purchase 10 one-bedroom flats for single homeless people.	This project is the subject of an application to the MHCLG for part-funding and is unlikely to go ahead without this input. Any homes realised will be for rough sleepers or those at risk of sleeping rough. (Link to Objective 3 minimise rough sleeping)		Homes occupied by end Q.1.	
		Action 2J: Carry out a full review the Council's Lettings policy.	Terms of reference to include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Considerations of building mixed and balanced communities. ▪ Review the sub-regional partnership . 	On the basis of findings make proposals in Q.4.	Conduct wide-ranging consultation and make final proposals for implementation in 2022-23.	Housing Advice Service / Housing Strategy / City Homes / Sub-regional partners.
		Action 2K: Review our housing offer to middle-income households unable to afford to become home owners but earning above the Lettings Policy threshold.	Terms of reference to include a review of the role Cambridge City Housing Company may play in providing private sector accommodation at sub-market and also market rents (as a means of generating income for cross-subsidy).		Review complete Q.4.	Housing Advice Service / Housing Strategy / Housing Finance.
		Action 2L: Establish a high-level Cambridge Social	Terms of reference to include:		Establish in year	Housing Advice Service / City Homes

Objective	Priority	Actions	Commentary	Completion by	Target (if applicable)	Lead service / Lead role
		Housing Providers' Group to include City Homes and all housing associations with stock in Cambridge.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allocation and housing management policies, including debt and anti-social behaviour. Common front on housing initiatives (e.g. Housing First; anti-social behaviour). Better integration of services (e.g. homelessness prevention; debt advice; domestic violence). Pet policy. 			/ Housing Associations.
		Action 2M: Consider with housing association partners whether low-demand shared ownership homes might be switched to sub-market PRS.			Establish feasibility by Q.4.	Housing Advice Service / Housing Associations.
		Action 2N: Establish a private sector provider group.	<p>Landlord group should include both individual landlords and letting agents.</p> <p>Better contacts with private-sector providers has been attempted on previous occasions</p>		<p>Research and proposals in year.</p> <p>Establish in Year 2.</p>	Housing Advice Service / Town Hall Lettings.

Objective	Priority	Actions	Commentary	Completion by	Target (if applicable)	Lead service / Lead role
			with limited success. This action will include research into what will make the group want to better engage with the Council.			
		Action 20: Establish a high-level group of decision makers and policy-formers within housing, health, law enforcement, social services, mental and physical health services with a view to establishing both bipartite and multipartite working agreements.	<p>This action arises from an understanding that housing is an important but singular element in the provision of welfare to people who often have a complex range of needs.</p> <p>This action will seek to embed the role of the Council as the housing authority within a framework of mutual responsibilities and obligations across the local statutory sector. Its focus will be on practical collaborative arrangements which officers in the field will understand and apply on a day-to-day basis.</p>	This is a complex and ambitious area of the homelessness and rough sleeper strategy which will only progress in relation to the degree of commitment of partners. Year 1 will consequently be a scoping exercise with a target for completion set accordingly.		Housing Advice Service / County Council Adult and Children Services / Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Trust / Clinical Commissioning Group / Cambridgeshire Police / Cambridge and Peterborough Foundation Trust /
	Priority 3: Minimise the use of	Seek to keep people in existing accommodation whenever possible. (Refer to				

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	temporary and emergency accommodation	Actions 1A, 1B, 1C, 1D, 1E, 1G, 1H, 1I and 1L).				
		Activity 3A: Review demand quarterly to ensure a sufficiency of temporary accommodation from social and specialist providers keeping use of hotel accommodation to a minimum.		Continuous throughout the year. Written report each quarter.	Year 1: Return the use of hotel accommodation to the average for the period 2015-16 - 2017-18. Seek to reduce further in Year 2.	Housing Advice Service / Temporary Accommodation Manager / Senior Housing Advisors
		Action 3B: Capitalise on contacts made as a result of the Covid effort to gain alternative emergency accommodation (including market purchase) especially for high needs households for whom standard provision is unsuitable.		Q.1	Year 1: Return the use of hotel accommodation to the average for the period 2015-16 - 2017-18. Seek to reduce further in Year 2.	Temporary Accommodation Service
Objective 4: Minimise rough sleeping.	Priority 4: Improve access to and the effectiveness of support services.	Action 4A: With County Council colleagues investigate, propose and consult upon the creation of a 'streets to home' service for rough sleepers.		Q.2	Consultation complete Q1.	Housing Advice Service / County Council / Homelessness Partnership
		Action 4B: Set out the scope of the streets to home	Subject to member approval	Q.3	Subject to member approval introduce invite organisations to tender in Q.2.	Housing Advice Service / County Council /

Objective	Priority	Actions	Commentary	Completion by	Target (if applicable)	Lead service / Lead role	
		services and the outcomes required.			and introduce service in Q.3.	Homelessness Partnership	
		Action 4C: Set up a working group to include social services, mental and physical health services to agree a common approach in cases of rough sleepers and single homeless people with complex mental and physical health needs. Agree a protocol and a procedure document	(Link to Action 20)		Complex needs protocol by Q.3.	Housing Advice Service / County Council Social Services / Health Service / Public Health England	
		Action 4D: Building on the understanding gained during the Covid outbreak of the effectiveness of non-commissioned voluntary services, establish how the sector can be integrated with statutory and commissioned support to enhance value, scope and depth. Link to Action 4A (streets to home service).	Work with non-commissioned voluntary sector organisation to agree that activities are fully integrated into the streets to home concept, with a consequent decline in on-street support.		Q.4	Housing Advice Service / Homelessness Partnership / Non-Commissioned Voluntary Services	
		Action 4E: With housing providers, review the scope and effectiveness of support provided in hostels,	Review potentially led by County Council commissioners.		Q.4	Review completed Q.4 and implemented Year 2.	County Council / Housing Advice Service / Hostel Providers

Objective	Priority	Actions	Commentary	Completion by	Target (if applicable)	Lead service / Lead role
		especially in the area of move-on advice and support.				
	Priority 5: Prevent rough sleeping.	Action 5A: Review present approaches to begging and anti-social behaviour as a precursor to developing an enforcement strategy.	Terms of reference to include how to balance a sympathetic and tolerant approach alongside active discouragement.	Enforcement strategy Q.4		Housing Advice Service / Police / Safer Communities / Public Realm Enforcement
		Action 5B: Financially secure Cambridge Street Aid.			Financial strategy by Q.4. Prepare report to take to committee in 2022.	
		Action 5C: In addition to current rough sleeper targets set targets for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the average duration of rough sleeping in a period; and ▪ the average time from verification of rough sleeping to the offer of a home. 	Current measures are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ T1: Fewer than 10 rough sleepers on any count. ▪ T2: Fewer than 135 individuals in year. 		T3 (average duration of rough sleeping per quarter) and T4 (average period between street and offer) agreed during Q.1 and Q.2 and incorporated into streets to home service	

Objective	Priority	Actions	Commentary	Completion by	Target (if applicable)	Lead service / Lead role
					specification (link to Action 4B).	
		Action 5D: With Jimmy's Cambridge, review allocation policy.	Consider in the light of proposed 'streets to home' service.	Q.3	Review completed in Q.3 in order to inform streets to home service specification. (Action 4B)	County Council / Housing Advice Service / Homelessness Partnership.
		Action 5E: Review offer to non-connected rough sleepers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review our present practice regarding what constitutes a connection to Cambridge and use of Jimmy's in relation to non-connected rough sleepers. ▪ Review access to Second Tier hostels in Cambridge (link to Action 5D) 	Q.3	Review completed in Q.3 in order to inform streets to home service specification. (Action 4B)	County Council / Housing Advice Service / Homelessness Partnership.
	Priority 6: Break the cycle of chronic and repeat street homelessness and rough sleeping.	Action 6A: Undertake a thorough analysis of the nature and causes of rough sleeping in Cambridge using the 'Flow, Stock, Return' model			Review completed in Q.3 in order to inform streets to home service specification. (Action 4B)	Housing Advice Service / Homelessness Partnership / Policy and Performance Unit
		Action 6B: Carry out a critical review of the HF1 project.	Review will undertake a broad impact assessment. (See Objective 4)	Q.3.		County Council Housing First Service / Housing Advice Service / City Homes

Objective	Priority	Actions	Commentary	Completion by	Target (if applicable)	Lead service / Lead role
						/ Housing Associations.
		Action 6C: Implement Housing First 2 (HF2) programme.	Progress the Housing First 2 model of purpose-built custodian-assisted accommodation.		Cluster 1 (Ventress Close) – Q.1 Cluster 2 (Mill Road) – Q.3	Housing Advice Service / Housing Development / City Homes.
		Action 6D: Carry out a critical review of the pilot HF2 project with particular focus on the custodian service.			Q.4.	County Council Housing First Service / Housing Advice Service / City Homes / Tenancy Sustainment Service (lead).
		Action 6E: Carry out a review of the Hostels Allocation and Resettlement Panel (HARP).	To consider in particular: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of awards. • Integration with PRS and novel single homelessness offers (e.g. modular homes). Link to review of housing allocation policy Action 2J).	Review completed Q.2.	Any agreed actions implement by Q.3.	Housing Advices Service Partnerships Manager

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