

Cambridge City Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy (2021 – 2028)

Local Action Plan

July 2026 – March 2028

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Introduction & context

This two-year plan outlines Cambridge City's delivery priorities for preventing and responding to homelessness between June 2026 and March 2028. It supports the Council's updated Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, using the strategy's six priorities as the framework for action.

The plan should be read within the context of the Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy, which sets the broader context for housing supply, affordability, social housing and access to the private rented sector. It also links to local partner arrangements led by Cambridgeshire County Council, Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA), the ICB and NHS partners, housing providers, the voluntary and community sector; and the Cambridge Homelessness Charter.

This plan will be delivered during a period of uncertainty and change, with the region progressing through Local Government Reorganisation and transitioning to new unitary authorities and geographical footprints. Actions and delivery areas have therefore been prioritised with this in mind, and the plan is deliberately practical and selective.

The plan should be read in conjunction with the accompanying long-term rough sleeping partnership plan, which outlines the activity addressing this specific area of homelessness in more detail, set to be published in December 2026.

Principles and values

This action plan is grounded in the local Charter to End Homelessness, including the shared ambition for Cambridge to be "a city where everyone has somewhere to call home", and to make homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring. The plan recognises the Council has statutory duties and a clear leadership role, but that ending homelessness also depends on the wider city working together around common priorities.

The Charter has six pillars of change: Data, Information, Housing, Support, Health and Employment. These pillars should guide our approach and help ensure this is a city-wide plan for prevention, recovery, independence and sustained routes out of homelessness.

The Council and partners will focus on practical action, shared ownership, lived experience, evidence, dignity and accountability. Charter partners will be invited to contribute to and own relevant actions, and the aim is to use Cambridge's civic assets in a focused way to deliver the plan's priorities.

Strategy and priorities

Cambridge City's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy is organised around six priorities. These continue to provide the framework for the city's approach to homelessness and rough sleeping, with the recent strategic review (Feb 2026) evidencing where we need to focus during the remaining years of the strategy's timeline:

Strategic priority	Prioritised review recommendation (2026 – 2028)	Rationale from the review
1. Support those at risk of homelessness to remain in their homes where possible	Pilot use of predictive analytics to identify and support early at-risk households, focused on PRS sustainment and financial shocks	The review found that Cambridge has strong crisis-response services, but that demand is increasing and prevention outcomes are inconsistent, particularly for single people and households affected by PRS insecurity, rent arrears, financial shocks and repeat presentations. Without stronger early intervention, more households are likely to reach crisis point and enter temporary accommodation or relief duties.
2. Improve access to a range of permanent accommodation 3. Minimise the use of temporary and emergency accommodation	Test a refreshed PRS access model with revised incentives, risk-sharing and clearer landlord offer	The review found that move-on options are constrained, social lettings are declining and the private rented sector is becoming harder to access. This limits the Council's ability to prevent and relieve homelessness and creates blockages across temporary accommodation, supported housing and rough sleeping pathways. Temporary accommodation use has increased and longer stays create pressure for households, the Council and the wider homelessness system. TA pressures are closely linked to reduced prevention success, limited move-on and insufficient accommodation options for people with higher needs.
4. Improve access to and effectiveness of support services	Test enhanced homelessness prevention approaches within the Housing Related Debt Policy, including early debt resolution, affordable repayment arrangements and integrated support pathways	Lived experience research highlighted how debt and UC overpayments are barriers that stop move-on, even when people are ready. Professionals emphasised the need for flexible prevention funds and practical problem-solving to stop escalation into TA/relief.
5. Prevent rough sleeping	Embed and enhance existing discharge-to-housing pathways from prison, hospital and care settings	Rough sleeping will be addressed through a separate long-term rough sleeping plan where required, but the wider homelessness system still has a key role in preventing rough sleeping. This includes earlier intervention, stronger discharge and transition pathways, improved access to accommodation and better support for people at risk of street homelessness.

Strategic priority	Prioritised review recommendation (2026 – 2028)	Rationale from the review
6. Break the cycle of chronic and repeat street homelessness and rough sleeping	Increase high-intensity and step-down supported housing, alongside stronger move-on pathways (e.g. tenancy sustainment)	The review identified a recognised gap in supported accommodation for people experiencing multiple disadvantage, alongside a lack of step-down and move-on options. Without this capacity, people with multiple and complex needs can remain stuck in unsuitable settings, cycle through crisis services, or be unable to move on from rough sleeping, temporary accommodation or supported housing.

A small number of additional actions have been identified to reflect national expectations and grant conditions, as well as additional local priorities or opportunities. See Annex A for full details.

Local governance, monitoring and reporting

Cambridge benefits from a mature network of homelessness partnerships, operational forums and joint working arrangements. These arrangements provide strong foundations for delivery and have been recognised as a key strength of the local system. The homelessness review also identified opportunities to strengthen strategic leadership, accountability and coordination:

Governance element	Role
Cambridge City Council Leadership Team & Cabinet Member for Safety, Wellbeing and Tackling Homelessness	Provide strategic leadership, approve priorities, oversee performance; and ensure homelessness remains a corporate priority
Homelessness Strategy Steering Group	Multi-agency strategic oversight group chaired by the Council's Assistant Director Housing & Health. Meets quarterly and oversees delivery of Strategy and Action Plan, monitors performance against local targets, resolves barriers to delivery and promotes shared accountability across partners. Maintains formal links with the Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy governance arrangements, Health & Wellbeing Board, Community Safety Partnership, Safeguarding Partnerships and lived experience structures to ensure alignment across related strategies and programmes
Homelessness Forum/ Charter Partnership	Wider stakeholder engagement forum bringing together statutory services, housing providers, voluntary and community organisations, experts by experience and wider civic partners. Supports collaboration, challenge and shared learning
Lived Experience and Changing Futures structures	Provide challenge, insight and coproduction around service design, implementation and review, particularly for people experiencing multiple disadvantage

Governance element	Role
Streets to Home Partnership and Long-Term Rough Sleeping Partnership arrangements	Coordinate operational and strategic responses to rough sleeping, including delivery of the long-term rough sleeping partnership plan
Sub-regional and thematic partnerships	Support delivery of specific pathways and wider housing market challenges
Council scrutiny and review	Receive performance updates, review progress against targets and provide democratic accountability for delivery of the Strategy and Action Plan

Partnership working

Preventing and reducing homelessness in Cambridge depends on effective partnership working. Whilst Cambridge City Council has a clear leadership and statutory role, no single organisation can address the causes and consequences of homelessness alone.

Cambridge already benefits from a strong network of partnerships and joint working arrangements. Partners will continue to support a shift towards earlier intervention and prevention. This will include improving identification of at-risk households, strengthening referral pathways, promoting the Duty to Refer and preparing for the Duty to Collaborate; and coordinated move-on planning and tenancy sustainment. Partnership working is particularly important for people experiencing multiple disadvantage, and this is outlined further in the accompanying long-term rough sleeping partnership plan.

The Council and partners will continue to strengthen pathways for people leaving public institutions, reflecting the national ambition that nobody should leave prison, hospital or care into homelessness. Existing protocols and partnership arrangements will be reviewed and strengthened where required, with a focus on early identification, coordinated discharge planning, information sharing, accommodation pathways and ongoing support following transition. Partnership arrangements will make best use of the city's collective resources, expertise and assets; whilst ensuring experts by experience continue to shape the design, delivery and improvement of local services.

Implementation and delivery approach

This plan uses a range of delivery/ implementation methods depending on the action:

- “Business as usual” – actions picked up during ongoing service improvement and delivery activity
- Traditional projects or task and finish groups – time-limited partnership group/ structure set up to coordinate delivery of the action and associated outcomes. May require a business case then pilot/ implementation, or could support delivery of “quick wins” in shorter timeframes
- Test and learn approach – Useful for dealing with complex, high-risk challenges where there's uncertainty and evidence gaps. Iterative cycles of testing changes in practice, reviewing what is happening and what we are learning, then deciding what to continue, adapt, stop or scale

The table in Annex A outlines which method will be used for each action.

Local targets

This section outlines Cambridge's local targets for improving outcomes over the course of this action plan. These have been developed using local baseline data, recent trends and comparison with similar areas, and reflect the level of ambition required to deliver meaningful improvement. The table of actions (Annex A) outline how we will work with partners to achieve these targets. The targets emphasise directional change. This ensures transparency about the scale of change expected, whilst recognising performance is influenced by wider factors beyond the control of any single organisation. Progress against these targets will be reviewed regularly as outlined in the governance section.

Cambridge will maintain a strong focus on preventing the use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation for families and will monitor usage, duration and system pressures through regular reporting. If Cambridge reaches the national threshold requiring a formal B&B Elimination Plan, or if reliance on B&B accommodation begins to increase significantly, the Council and partners will work with MHCLG advisers to develop a targeted improvement plan in line with national guidance.

Metric	Baseline [Date]	Year 1 target [Date]	Year 2 target [Date]	Direction
Rate of households in temporary accommodation with children per 1,000 households	0.18 per 1,000 [Sept 2025]	0.17 per 1,000 [Sept 2026]	0.15 per 1,000 [Sept 2027]	↓ 17% reduction
Number of people sleeping rough on a single night	26 [Autumn 2025]	22 [Autumn 2026]	17 [Autumn 2027]	↓ 35% reduction
% duties where homelessness was prevented or relieved	42.9% [Jul to Sept 2025]	46% [Jul to Sept 2026]	50% [Jul to Sept 2027]	↑ 7.1 percentage point increase
% duties where homelessness was prevented or relieved for households experiencing multiple disadvantage	22.2% [Jul to Sept 2025]	30% [Jul to Sept 2026]	38% [Jul to Sept 2027]	↑ 15.8 percentage point increase
Number of people sleeping rough over the month who are long-term*	24 [Nov 2025]	20 [Nov 2026]	16 [Nov 2027]	↓ 33% reduction
Number of families in B&B over 6 weeks	0 [Sept 2025]	0 [Sept 2026]	0 [Sept 2027]	Eliminate / maintain zero

*More detailed activity to support this metric is included within the accompanying long-term rough sleeping partnership plan

Annex A – Action table

Priority area	Action	Milestone	Owner(s)	Delivery Mechanism	Relevant Metric(s)
Pilot use of predictive analytics to identify and support early at-risk households, focused on PRS sustainment and financial shocks	Develop and validate a PRS risk identification model using LIFT and local data	Risk cohort established by Dec 2026	Cambridge City Council & South Cambridgeshire Council	Traditional	% duties where homelessness was prevented or relieved
	Pilot proactive prevention support for high-risk households and evaluate impact	First pilot completed by Jun 2027		Test and learn	
	Agree future operating model	Scale-up decision and business case completed by Mar 2028	Charter Data Pillar Task & Finish Group		
Test a refreshed PRS access model with revised incentives, risk-sharing and clearer landlord offer	Complete review of the Access Scheme and Townhall Lettings offer, including landlord feedback and benchmarking against comparable authorities	Revised offer agreed by March 2027	Cambridge City Council Charter Housing Pillar Task & Finish Group	Traditional	% duties where homelessness was prevented or relieved
	Pilot a refreshed landlord package including consideration of revised financial incentives, tenancy sustainment support, landlord retention measures, property improvement support and differentiated service offers	Pilot launched by June 2027 with agreed landlord recruitment and retention measures			
	Evaluate impact on PRS supply, tenancy sustainment and homelessness prevention outcomes and agree future model	Evaluation completed and future model agreed by March 2028			
	Deliver an updated and targeted landlord engagement and marketing campaign focused on priority property types and under-represented landlords	Landlord engagement campaign refreshed and implemented by October 2026	Cambridge City Council	Business as usual	
Test enhanced homelessness prevention approaches within the Housing Related Debt Policy, including early debt resolution, affordable repayment arrangements and integrated support pathways	Review and refresh the Housing Related Debt Policy to strengthen homelessness prevention, tenancy sustainment and early intervention approaches	Revised policy agreed by October 2026	Charter Housing Pillar Task & Finish Group	Business as usual	% duties where homelessness was prevented or relieved
	Pilot enhanced debt-resolution pathways for households at risk of homelessness, including affordable repayment arrangements, debt advice, income maximisation support and prevention-focused use of Housing Related Debt Panel discretion	Pilot launched by March 2027		Test and learn	
	Evaluate outcomes and embed successful approaches into business-as-usual practice, including joint working arrangements across Housing Advice, Financial Inclusion, Revenues and debt advice partners	Future operating model agreed by March 2028			

Annex A – Action table

Priority area	Action	Milestone	Owner(s)	Delivery Mechanism	Relevant Metric(s)
Embed and enhance existing discharge-to-housing pathways from prison, hospital and care settings	Implement improvements arising from the sub-regional prison release protocol review and embed the new prison housing advisor function	Revised prison pathway operational by March 2027	Sub-regional multi-agency group	Business as usual	% duties where homelessness was prevented or relieved
	Strengthen implementation of existing hospital discharge arrangements, including promotion of referral pathways, ward engagement and exploration of co-location opportunities at Addenbrooke's	Enhanced hospital discharge pathway operational by March 2027	Transfer of Care Hub Meeting		People sleeping rough on a single night
	Review performance and outcomes across prison release, hospital discharge and care leaver pathways, and identify any further improvements required	Annual pathway review completed by March 2028	Multi-Agency Steering Group		People sleeping rough who are long-term
Increase high-intensity and step-down supported housing, alongside stronger move-on pathways (e.g. tenancy sustainment)	Strategic planning for Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act including supported housing needs assessment, strategy and delivery plan	Local strategy published by March 2027 Implement first year of the delivery plan by March 2028	Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Authorities	Traditional	People sleeping rough who are long-term % duties where homelessness was prevented or relieved for those experiencing multiple disadvantage Households with children in temporary accommodation
	Develop and mobilise 8-bed high intensity support scheme at The Victoria Project (TVP)	Scheme live by March 2027	Riverside/ Cambridge City Council		
	Review and expand Housing First provision in partnership with Cambridgeshire County Council, including exploration of Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) funding opportunities	Review completed and growth plan agreed by December 2026 Implementation by March 2028	Cambridgeshire County Council/ CPCA		
	Develop and evaluate a social investment proposition for Greater Cambridge Impact Fund, including a Housing Pathways Fund model, to support delivery of high-needs housing, Housing First and move-on accommodation	Complete feasibility assessment and options appraisal for social investment by Dec 2026 Develop full investment proposition and secure partner commitment by Sept 2027 Investment-ready programme established by March 2028	Charter Housing Pillar Task & Finish Group		

Annex A – Action table

Priority area	Action	Milestone	Owner(s)	Delivery Mechanism	Relevant Metric(s)
System improvement actions	Develop and publish new policy for ensuring the suitability of temporary accommodation following an assessment, including procuring sufficient units of temporary accommodation and allocating them	Publish Dec 2026	Cambridge City Council	Business as usual	Households with children in temporary accommodation Families in B&B over 6 weeks
	Pilot and implement AI-enabled case recording and workflow tools to increase frontline capacity, improve record quality and support more consistent service delivery	Complete pilot by March 2027 and agree business case for wider implementation Implement AI-enabled case recording across homelessness services and relevant housing functions by March 2028	Cambridge City Council		NA
	Implement a new homelessness governance and accountability framework aligned to the Duty to Collaborate, Local Outcomes Framework and MHCLG's local performance and accountability toolkit	Establish new multi-agency Homelessness Strategy Steering Group by Dec 2026	Multi-Agency Steering Group		
	Develop an outline outcomes and investment framework for homelessness and rough sleeping services, covering commissioned services, grant-funded provision and partnership-funded activity, to inform future investment decisions and support transition through Local Government Reorganisation	Mapping of current investment, activity and outcomes completed by December 2026. Framework agreed and applied to 2027/28 funding Recommendations provided for successor arrangements by September 2027	Cambridge City Council	Traditional	NA

Annex A – Action table