Sheffield Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2017-2022

Our Vision: We will minimise homelessness in Sheffield by focussing on early prevention to help people keep their home or move in a planned way to a new settled home.

If a crisis does occur, we will provide good quality housing options and support people to resolve their housing problems in ways that are resilient and long lasting.

Contents   Page

1. Introduction

The Homelessness Prevention Strategy sets out the strategic direction and priorities for Sheffield over the next 5 years. It has been developed by Sheffield City Council in consultation with customers, service providers, and other stakeholders. It supports the Corporate Plan and Housing Strategy 2013-2023, and complements other strategies and programmes that encourages independence and target help at the most vulnerable. All these organisations have signed up to the strategy.

In our last Homelessness Strategy produced in 2010, we said we would focus more on homeless prevention. The **overall** level of recorded homelessness in Sheffield has reduced by nearly 60% against a backdrop of big increases nationally since then. However there was a 4% rise in the number of households accepted as homeless by the Council in 2016/17 and we must prioritise the right actions to address the real risk of further increases. The Strategy takes account of the Homelessness Reduction Act that will be implemented in 2018 that will introduce new duties for the Council.

Significant changes have affected the housing options and support available including cuts to welfare benefits and severe reductions in public sector budgets. There is a continuing shortage of affordable housing and a big increase in the number of private sector tenancies which have less security of tenure than social and owner occupied housing.

People often ask for help with their housing when a crisis is imminent or has already occurred and this limits the options available to them. To get better at earlier prevention, the specialist homelessness services will need to be more proactive before a crisis occurs. We also need to make sure other services including housing, care, education, health and voluntary services take earlier action to respond to and identify the risk of homelessness.

We want to improve co-ordination and collaborative working to help people find lasting solutions to meet their housing aspirations and needs. Public services are moving towards more locality based working and this provides a great opportunity to streamline responses and support more people to remain in their local community.

The Strategy does not set out everything we will do, and we will continue to provide high quality emergency responses where homelessness is unavoidable. We have reviewed performance over the last 5 years, and identified the actions that will make the most difference to improve homelessness prevention.

2. Vision and Strategic Priorities

2.1 Our Vision

We will minimise homelessness in Sheffield by focussing on early prevention to help people keep their home or move in a planned way to a new settled home.

If a crisis does occur, we will provide good quality housing options and for people to resolve their housing problems in ways that are resilient and long lasting.

2.2 Strategic Priorities

We have identified the following 6 strategic priorities that will have the most impact on preventing homelessness. These are explained in more detail in Section 4.5 of this Strategy.

Priority One: Proactively Preventing Homelessness

Many people are already experiencing a housing crisis or problem before they ask for advice from homelessness services. They may have been in touch with other services that may have been able to help or refer them to specialist services earlier. We will get better at reaching people earlier with the right advice, practical help and support to keep their current home or move in a planned way.

Priority Two: Strengthening Partnerships to Support Vulnerable Groups

Some vulnerable groups are at a greater risk of homelessness and of repeated incidence of housing instability. This includes young people, those with complex needs, substance misusers, victims of domestic abuse and some BME communities. There are also groups with very complex needs who may be substance misusers, have mental health issues and contact with the criminal justice system. We will improve our targeted interventions and partnership work to help people find lasting housing solutions. This includes how we assess needs and plan support jointly across agencies and design the specific services that are provided.

Priority Three: Tackling Rough Sleeping

We want to see an end to rough sleeping in Sheffield by doing more to prevent the risk and improve the support that is available. The numbers of people sleeping rough are at low levels compared to other major Cities, but we have seen some increase locally. The main focus currently is on dealing with rough sleeping at crisis point or mitigating the impact. There are a range of services but the activity needs more co-ordination. We will concentrate more on preventing rough sleeping happening and improving the effectiveness of services for entrenched rough sleepers.

Priority Four: Improving Housing Options and Housing Support

We will always try to help people keep their current home but sometimes a move is necessary. We need to improve the range of housing options available to both prevent homelessness and meet rehousing duties. We need more affordable options for young people and for those with complex needs. As well as providing housing, we also want to improve the support available to help people keep their home and live independently.

Priority Five: Addressing Health Needs

Poor health can be both a cause and effect of homelessness. Being homeless can make it more difficult to access health services, have a healthy lifestyle and ultimately reduces life expectancy. A high proportion of people who become homeless have diagnosed mental health and long-term physical health problems. We need to get better at helping people to address their health needs and have access to the right services.

Priority Six: Improving Access To Employment, Education And Training

Having the means to pay for housing is one of the major obstacles to resolving housing problems and increasing choice. There are low levels of economically active or being in education or training amongst groups who have experienced homelessness. To help future resilience and independence we will do more to help people affected by homelessness to enter employment, education and training.

3.0 Background

3.1 Legislation and National Policy

Homelessness is defined in legislation under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996. It includes people with nowhere that it is reasonable for them to live and people who are threatened with losing their home within 28 days. The Council has a number of duties to both prevent homelessness occurring and provide advice and assistance to people who are homeless. A minority of people who make homeless applications are owed temporary and permanent rehousing duties.

Our strategy takes account of developments in national legislation and policy, including:

- **The Homelessness Reduction Act** received Royal Assent in March 2017 and will make substantial amendments to the existing legislation. This is due to be implemented in April 2018. This is a welcome development as it shows the commitment to tackle homelessness nationally. However, this will have significant resource implications. Councils will have to provide new services for all those affected by homelessness and changes include:

    - A duty to help people to secure accommodation 56 days before they are at risk of losing their current home.

    - Anyone who has been served with a valid section 21 of the Housing Act 1988 notice that the landlord requires possession that expires in 56 days or less will now be classed as "threatened with homelessness".

    - A duty to help people for 56 days following homelessness occurring.

    - Specified public authorities will have to notify the Council of service users who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

    - The duty to provide advisory services is expanded and should cater for different groups who are at more risk of homelessness.

    - Councils will have to carry out needs assessments for all eligible applicants and agree personal plans to help them to secure accommodation.

    - Councils will need to take reasonable steps to prevent homelessness for all eligible applicants.

    - If people do not co-operate or refuse an offer of accommodation from the Council to relieve homelessness the main homelessness duty will not apply. If an applicant does not take reasonable steps agreed in their plan, this can also end the duty.

    - New rights to review are also contained in the legislation.

- **"Making Every Contact Count – A Joint Approach to Preventing Homelessness"** was published by the ministerial working group on homelessness under the Coalition Government in 2012. This set out 10 challenges which it was felt would lead to a gold standard service being delivered by local homelessness services. A number of these challenges have already been met locally, and we will prioritise where we need to make improvements including:

  - ✓ a commitment to preventing homelessness across all council services
  - ✓ Housing Options prevention service to all clients including written advice
  - ✓ support to access education, employment and training
  - ✓ developing a suitable private rented sector offer for all clients

- **No Second Night Out** - the national standard developed by the Government to end rough sleeping. We have adopted this and want to make sure we do more to prevent rough sleeping by working with other South Yorkshire Councils.

  - We have a duty under the Care Act 2014 to prevent needs for care and support. We must provide or arrange for the provision of services, facilities or resources, or take other steps, which we consider will contribute towards preventing or delaying the development of, or reduce, needs for care and support by adults in Sheffield. In performing the duty we must have regard to the importance of identifying (a) services, facilities and resources already available in our area and the extent to which we could involve or make use of them in performing that duty; and (b) adults in the area with needs for care and support which are not being met (by us or anyone else).

    - **Funding of Supported Housing** is currently being reviewed by the Government and this will affect how services are commissioned and funded. Funding from rents and services will be taken out of the welfare system altogether and devolved to Local authorities ro commission with. We will continue to monitor progress of these changes and will ensure that we have a supported housing sector that meets needs and focusses on quality and value for money..

3.2 Homelessness in Sheffield

To help set our priorities we have undertaken a review of homelessness in Sheffield. This is set out at Appendix 1. We have looked at trends over the last 5 years, and considered our performance locally against the national figures. We have consulted with customers, and key stakeholders. We have also completed a Homelessness Health Audit and a Call for Evidence from experts over the last 2 years. Our strong performance on reducing homeless overall puts Sheffield in a good position to improve earlier prevention work and develop our responses to the new legislation.

Our main findings are

3.2.1 Key Changes Since 2010/11

Homelessness Key Facts	2010/11	2016/17
Number of homeless presentations to Council	4,969	1,319
Number of homeless acceptances by Council (eligible, homeless and in priority need)	1,070	438
Numbers of households homeless but not in priority need	1,257	472
Number of Acceptances from 16/17 year olds	59	1
Number of Acceptances per 1000 households	4.65	1.87
Number of Households in Temporary Accommodation (snapshot 31st March)	277	77
Number of Rough Sleepers Official Count	11	15
Number of Homeless Preventions per 1000 households (housing secured for a minimum of 6 months)	8.4	9.11

- Most people found a long term solution to their housing problem, but 17% of all customers presented on 2 or more occasions in a 5 year period. Of these, the majority (57%) were single men aged between18-44 and 30% of these applied 3 or more times.

3.2.2 How Sheffield compares to other areas

- There has been nearly a 60% reduction in homeless acceptances in Sheffield, in contrast to a national increase of over 30% since 2010.

- In the past 12 months homeless acceptances have increased by 4% in Sheffield.

- There were 1.9 homelessness acceptances per 1000 households in Sheffield compared to the Core City average of 3.6 per 1000 and national average of 2.5 per 1000.

- Acceptances from young people under age 25 reduced from 48% in 2011 to 22% of total acceptances 2016. This is now in line with the national figure of 23%.

- 48% of homeless acceptances were from single people or couples in Sheffield in contrast to the national figures of 29%.

- The 3 top reasons now for homeless acceptances in Sheffield are being asked to leave by friends or family/parental eviction (32%), ending of a private sector tenancy (16%) and domestic abuse (11%). Nationally ending of a private sector tenancy is now the most common reason given with family/parental eviction second.

- The incidences of rough sleeping is still low at 15 people in comparison to other major cities but has increased. The increase in rough sleeping overall in Core Cities was 73% compared to 36% in Sheffield.

- Sheffield performs well on use of Temporary Accommodation (TA) at 0.33 per 1000 households in TA compared to the national figure of 3.1 per 1000 households. Bed and Breakfast is now only used in an emergency.

- 70 % of people in TA are single people/couples with no children in Sheffield, compared to the national figure of 26%.

3.3 Consultation Feedback on the Strategy

- Customers told us that they are in agreement with the priorities in this strategy. They said we needed to stop everyone asking them the same questions and we should talk to each other. They would like to get more support in their local community and get help earlier with their problems to prevent homelessness. They want better housing choices and do not think

hostels are right for everybody. They would like more support to help them sustain housing after they have been rehoused.

- Our partner organisations support the priorities in the strategy. They told us that they are committed to proactively working together to prevent the issues that lead to homelessness and we needed to make sure all the right agencies are signed up to the strategy and to improve pathways. They told us we need approaches that respond to the needs of different groups. Our partners recognise that housing is often a presenting issue and lasting solutions need to be delivered in partnership particularly for people with complex needs include drug and alcohol use and mental health concerns.

4.0 Delivering the Strategy

Key to delivering the strategy will be the continued collaborative working between the Council and its partners. However, we recognise we need to strengthen these arrangements both strategically and operationally.

We will

- Convene a Homelessness Prevention Strategy Steering Group with representation invited from all key partners to oversee and monitor the implementation of the Strategy.

- Convene a Homeless Prevention Forum for all key stakeholders to strengthen our existing networks, co-ordinate activity and work collaboratively to increasingly focus on prevention.

- Produce an action plan that will be updated annually and be flexible in responding to any emerging needs or trends. Actions and targets will be agreed with partners who will be asked to make specific commitments on their contribution to the strategy that are relevant to each priority and performance measures will be put in place.

- Report progress on delivering the strategy half yearly to the Lead Cabinet Member responsible for housing and homelessness.

- Ensure value and coherent service provision is achieved by directly delivering and jointly commissioning, were appropriate evidence based services that support our priorities with partners. Services will continue to be commissioned based on evidence of need and best practice. A Strategic Commissioning Plan was approved by cabinet in February 2016..

- Consider the scope for market stimulation in the longer term to address gaps in housing options.

- In recognition that there are some significant unknown issues, for example the outcome of the review of Supported Housing funding, adopt a flexible commissioning strategy and service models.

- Consult service users and other stakeholders to influence service design. We will ensure commissioned and directly delivered services are inclusive and explicitly address equality issues to improve experience and outcomes.

- Enable existing and new partners to work in Sheffield bringing their own expertise, resources and innovative approaches that help to deliver on our priorities.

- Recognise links and dependencies with other relevant strategies and expect strategic leads to recognise the risk of homelessness when developing strategies and plans.

- Develop alternative funding streams as appropriate to complement existing resources. For example as part of the wider work on Public Service Reform we will develop proposal to attract Social Investment to help us accelerate the changes we want to make.

- Strengthen local community based responses to prevent homelessness by including this in local plans and locality based working.

5.0 Homelessness Prevention Strategic Priorities in Detail

5.1 Priority One: Proactively preventing homelessness

One of the most effective ways to prevent homelessness is to speak to people as early as possible about their housing concerns. We have a strong network of advice available in the City including the Council's Housing Options and Advice Service, Private Sector Housing Team and voluntary advice services.

However, we know many people are already experiencing a housing crisis or problem before they ask for advice from homelessness services. They may have already been in touch with other services. We want to get better at reaching people earlier with the right advice, practical help and support to keep their current home or move in a planned way.

Because we will need to work with more people for up to 112 days to meet the new homelessness prevention duties, there is a risk that services will be overwhelmed. So we must make sure responses are both timely and every contact is made to count whether directly to housing or with other services. Some public bodies will have a new duty to refer cases to homelessness services.

The Council reports back to the Government on homelessness prevention activity that enables people who are threatened with homelessness to keep or find suitable housing that will be available for at least 6 months.

Although there is a wide variation in recording methods nationally, benchmarking does give us some insight into how we compare to other areas. Sheffield does relatively well on using Sanctuary Schemes, arranging supported housing, accommodation with friends/family, and making offers of social housing. We do less well on resolving benefit problems, debt advice, and arranging private tenancies and need to improve these.

To build on the services that are already in place we will

- Provide high quality timely advice to all residents on their housing options.

- For people at risk of homelessness, we will agree a written personal plan that sets out the actions they can take and we will take. We will review our casework management system to ensure we can monitor progress and report on the outcomes of advice given.

- Develop a culture across organisations to work proactively to prevent homelessness and to support people for longer who need help.

- Provide tailored advice for people at greater risk of homelessness including single people, those released from prison, care leavers, former members of the armed forces, people leaving hospital, victims of domestic abuse, people with learning difficulties and mental health issues.

- A disproportionately high number of single people with physical and mental health concerns are accepted as homeless compared to families in Sheffield, and we need to do more to target earlier prevention work at this group.
- Provide better information about homelessness and how to deal with housing issues generally. This includes improving our use of online communication channels to inform individual residents and the wider community.
- Develop a prevention toolkit, training and advice to organisations to help universal and specialist services to respond to the risk of homelessness at an earlier stage.
- Put in place clear pathways, referral routes including for public bodies that will have a new duty to refer cases, protocols and information sharing agreements between services working with customers at risk of homelessness.
- Consider how data and predictive analysis can be used to help target resources to prevent homelessness. This will include developing local community based responses in geographical areas with higher levels of homelessness including specialist advice to locally based universal services.
- Make better use of debt/money advice to improve prevention work.
- Review and develop appropriate Housing Options that support prevention including Private Sector Tenancies, as detailed in Priority Four.
- Better align assessment processes within statutory services and include exploring housing issues where appropriate as a key line of questioning.

5.2 Priority Two: Strengthening Partnerships to Support Vulnerable Groups

Some vulnerable groups are at a greater risk of homelessness and we will improve our partnership work and targeted interventions to meet needs and improve outcomes. There are already excellent examples of joint working and we want to build on this to be more effectively focussed on earlier prevention rather than responding to a crisis.

As well as the Homelessness Prevention Strategy, other key strategies and programmes of work impact on the incidence of homelessness and we need to get better at ensuring these explicitly recognise and address the risk of homelessness.

5.2.1 Families and Young People

Sheffield has performed very well in reducing youth homelessness and amongst families with dependent children:

- Homelessness acceptances for people aged under 25 fell from 525 people in 2011 to 97 in 2016.

- Homeless acceptances fell from 543 to 223 households with dependent children in the same period.

- Homelessness acceptances for young people under 18 fell from 23 to 1

However, when homelessness does occur this can have a significant and lasting impact and we therefore want to do more to improve our focus on prevention.

For young people, it is increasingly difficult to leave home at an early age due to the limited availability of affordable housing. Further restrictions on benefits for most people aged under 21 planned from 2018 will also increase the risk of homelessness. The main reason for homelessness amongst young people is being asked to leave by parents or other family members. Our focus will need to continue to be on helping the family to stay together until the young person can afford to live independently.

However, some young people must live independently at a young age, for example Care Leavers or those who are at risk of violence. We recognise that Care Leavers have particular needs as whilst there are very few presentations from them when they are under the age of 21 years they are over-represented in later life amongst groups who fail to maintain stable housing. There are also a small number of 16/17 years old who become homeless and Looked After by the Council.

There are hidden issues for other groups including the difficulties young LGBT people can face with family relationships and when trying to find a new home. These groups of young people will not always have family support to help them to be successful in their new home. We must therefore make sure the support they need is in place.

For families with children, they now usually keep their current home or settle quickly in to their new home. However, a small number do need additional support particularly if they have complex needs and a previous history of homelessness.

We will

- Continue to work closely with social care and other services to prevent housing problems arising including with the Multi Agency Support Teams, and the Building Successful Families Programme to support families with complex issues.

- Reflect the developments in locality working by reviewing housing support interventions for families to make sure they are streamlined and integrated with other local services focussed on the prevention of a crisis occurring. (Priority 4)

- Work closely with all partners through the Sheffield Safeguarding Hub that provides a single point of access for concerns about vulnerable children, young people and young adults who have complex needs or might be, or are, at risk of harm.

- Increase education work in schools and other young people's services to raise awareness of housing issues and the realities of leaving home at an early age.

- Further integrate housing advice with other young people's services to improve holistic working and seamless service provision.

- Improve the identification of the risk of homelessness and target interventions such as mediation, to support families and young people sustain current housing when it is safe to do so.

- Building on the very successful protocol we have in place for assessing and supporting 16/17 year olds, we will further develop our Housing Support Pathway for all vulnerable people under 25.

- We will review and develop our existing support to Care Leavers and Looked After 16/17 year olds to develop bespoke support and housing options for this group including trainer flats, supported tenancies, staying close to previous residential home or other support. We will develop permanent housing options that include provision within the private rented sector, council stock and registered providers.

- Develop more flexibility in how housing support is given and improve continuity of service for families and young people when they move on to their permanent home. We will positively enable young people to return to the family home where this is appropriate as well as supporting independent living.

5.2.2 Adults with Complex and Multiple Needs

Some adults with complex and multiple needs are at an increased risk of repeated periods of homelessness. They may have limited rights to rehousing if they have been found intentionally homeless or are not in priority need. They may have previously lived in supported housing and or social housing/private tenancies they could not sustain. As well as housing issues, they will often have frequent contact with the criminal justice system, mental health, social care, and voluntary services. They will often have mental and physical health concerns and issues with substance misuse. We know women with complex and multiple needs can be less visible and harder to reach.

The current process of assessing and meeting needs has not proved effective for this group and we are undertaking a review of arrangements in partnership with customers and key stakeholders. We have already begun to change our approaches for example we have recently commissioned a Housing First service.

We will:

- Improve the earlier identification and information sharing about people with complex and multiple needs, including those that may be less visible, that are at risk of homeless and provide targeted advice and support in collaboration with other services to keep their current home.

- Jointly commission cross sector, innovative and holistic responses to put in place lasting solutions for customers who experience a recurrence of housing instability. This will include developing more flexible and longer term support interventions for people who need ongoing help to maintain their housing.

- Make sure there is one joined-up plan that helps people to meet their needs and goals building on the existing key worker model and multi-agency working to both achieve and sustain stability.

- Review the multi-agency panels that currently plan support to adults with complex needs to streamline responses, improve effectiveness and outcomes.

- Develop initiatives with voluntary and independent services where they can be more effective in engaging with individuals/families and support funding bids that enable this.

5.2.3 Domestic Abuse

Domestic Abuse is the third highest reason for homeless acceptances in the City and the majority of those affected are women with children. This reflects the findings of the recent needs assessment that shows over 94% of users of Domestic Abuse Services are women, 60% have children and 23% report they live with their perpetrator at the start of their support.   Violence from other family members is also an issue for young men who present as homeless and some young men are at risk of forced marriage. It is also a growing issue in relation to adult child on parent domestic abuse.

Reducing Domestic Abuse is a multi-agency priority and housing has a key role in both providing a safe place to live and taking action against perpetrators. We have commissioned a Sanctuary Service and are working with specialist domestic abuse providers to improve responsiveness and to simplify pathways.

The Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy is being reviewed and we will make sure our actions complement this particularly with a focus on prevention.

We will:

- Improve the earlier identification of the risk of domestic abuse and use the DASH tool to ensure we offer the right to tenants in our role as housing providers.

- Review the provision of housing support for male victims of domestic abuse.

- With partner services review how we consider risk in relation to domestic abuse in family relationships.

- Ensure our practice recognizes coercive control and patterns of previous behaviour in assessing homeless applications.

- Ensure we understand that some victims will not have felt able to report to the police

- Review our processes and outcomes for people who are awarded homelessness and domestic abuse priorities in collaboration with Children and Young People's Services, to ensure we are effective in helping people to move to a settled new home.

- Review how we use our existing powers to support victims to stay in their own homes where appropriate.

5.2.4 Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Households

Locally and nationally, BME communities are over-represented among homeless people accounting for 33% of homelessness acceptances. The 3 top reasons for homelessness presentations for BME households are evictions by families/friends (30%), leaving asylum seeker accommodation (12%) and domestic abuse (10%) We must therefore prioritise addressing the disproportionate risk and impact of homelessness by both ensuring fair access to housing and targeting prevention activity.

We will

- Review our housing options and advice services to make sure they are fully accessible and responsive to the needs of the whole community:

- Improve our partnership work with community organisations and specialist services to provide targeted interventions for communities at greater risk of homelessness.

- Improve homeless prevention work for refugees leaving accommodation for asylum seekers.

- Ensure housing support schemes specifically address the support needs of BME communities.

- Ensure all actions taken to deliver our priorities set out in this strategy are specifically designed to be inclusive and address equality issues for BME groups disproportionately affected by homelessness.

5.2.5 Substance Misuse

Homelessness is intrinsically linked with substance misuse for many. While not the sole cause, chaotic use of substances can severely impact on an individual's ability to access and keep safe and appropriate housing options. It also leads to higher risk of eviction from tenancies for various reasons. Being of No Fixed Address (NFA) increases the likelihood of complexity in a client of substance misuse treatment's life which in turn makes recovery more difficult to achieve. In Sheffield in 2015/16, only 2% of non-opiate drug treatment clients reported a housing issue at their 6 month treatment review, compared to 14% nationally. However, locally, in 2015/16, 19% of opiate users in treatment at their 6 month treatment review reported a housing issue, the same proportion as nationally (this equates to around 380 individuals in the city). In addition, people in opiate treatment in Sheffield in treatment for longer than 6 months report NFA levels higher than the national average – 14% compared to 11%.

We will:

- Work with Sheffield Drug and Alcohol Co-ordination Team in order to ensure homeless prevention strategies and substance misuse strategies complement one another.

- Ensure all individuals presenting as homeless and citing substance misuse issues are referred straight to treatment using local pathways.

- Work with tenants at risk of losing their property with substance misuse issues in order to reach solutions that will prevent loss of home and stabilisation and eventual ceasing of substance misuse.

- Complete the local substance misuse screening tool with all homelessness presentations in order to identify substance misuse as quickly as possible.

5.2.6 Other Vulnerable Groups

There are other people who are particularly vulnerable to homelessness and we will need different approaches. This includes victims of Modern Slavery, and people with no recourse to public funds such as failed asylum seekers and economic migrants. This can be quite small numbers of people but they can have more limited options and sometimes are "invisible" to the services.

We will

- Improve awareness of Modern Slavery being a potential cause of homelessness and make sure people can access the right support and services.

- Make sure our advice is inclusive, and target information at groups who may be unable to access public funding about their options and support reconnection where this is appropriate

- Liaise with voluntary services who are working with groups who cannot access support from publically funded services.

- Assist Council services who support people who are ineligible for homelessness assistance under other statutory powers to source suitable accommodation.

5.3 Priority Three: Tackling Rough Sleeping

We want to see an end to rough sleeping in Sheffield by doing more to prevent the risk and having better options available. There are a range of services offering support including advice, accommodation, day services, and outreach work. Whilst this means there is a lot of help available and some information sharing, the activity is not currently well co-ordinated currently. The main focus is on dealing with rough sleeping at crisis point or after it has occurred mitigating the impact.

The government defines rough sleeping as people sleeping or bedded down in the open air and people in buildings or other places not designed for habitation. A long term rough sleeper is defined as someone who has been identified as sleeping rough on at least 50 occasions over a 5 year period.

People who become entrenched in rough sleeping are more likely to have complex mental and physical health needs and shortened life expectancy. Most have previously been involved in programmes of support and have lost permanent and supported housing.   Supporting entrenched rough sleepers will link to our work under Priority 2 to improve partnership work for the most vulnerable to homelessness.

Despite an increase in numbers in our official count from 11 to 15, we have relatively low levels of rough sleeping compared to other major cities. This number does fluctuate, and 4 of the 15 people in our last official count were known to have accommodation available to them. 200 people a year present as homeless due to rough sleeping.

There is a link between rough sleeping and street begging. However, the majority of people who are prolific beggars are known to have accommodation. Our "Help us Help" publicity will continue to provide information to individuals and the public about what services are available to support people and how they can help.

We will

- Work with other South Yorkshire Councils to improve the service offer and outcomes in the sub region over the next 2 years including support to people leaving institutions.

- Improve the joining up of the statutory, commissioned and voluntary services that are working with rough sleepers to co-ordinate activity, share information and collaborate on initiatives.

- Develop more targeted prevention activity to reduce the number of new rough sleepers.

- Improve the provision of advice, needs assessment and access to emergency housing in the evenings and at weekends focussing on prevention.

- Improve the identification and support of women rough sleepers

- Help people with entrenched patterns of rough sleeping more holistically through better collaborative working and support tailored to their individual needs.(links to Priority 2 and 4)

- If people have come from another area we will reconnect them back to their local community where they have support unless there is a good reason why they cannot return.

- Provide good information to the public about rough sleeping and how they can help if they have concerns.

5.4 Priority Four: Improve housing options and housing support

We will always try to help people to keep their current home or to have a planned move, but sometimes an urgent move is necessary. We will give realistic advice on housing options in these circumstances. Housing providers in all tenures are key to ensuring we can help people to find and keep their new home. We will continue to provide resettlement services e.g. Shelter's homeless prevention and resettlement service to prevent problems escalating and to ensure underlying problems are addressed to ensure there is long term housing stability for the household.

Sometimes, tenancy failure occurs after rehousing and we want to do more to prevent this. 60% of all of homelessness acceptances are from people aged over 25, and they often have a history of previous housing instability and housing related debt which affects the options available.

We need to improve the range of housing options available to both prevent homelessness and meet rehousing duties. The changes to benefits, and the uncertainty about the funding of housing support, means that some of our existing provision may be unsustainable going forward.

To reflect the changing environment and to better meet needs, we will address the following areas:

5.4.1 Temporary Accommodation (TA)

The Council has a duty to provide emergency housing for people who may be eligible, homeless and in priority need of housing if they have nowhere else to stay. Approximately 7% of all presenting households are offered temporary accommodation and the average stay is between 6-8 weeks. In a snapshot in 2016, 141 children were living in temporary accommodation.

TA is currently provided by using a mixture of in-house Council and commissioned services as well as using supported housing. This is a complicated arrangement for providing under 100 units of accommodation across 3 sites, and there is very limited access out of office hours, so Bed and Breakfast is still used in emergency. The units used were built as general needs housing, require updating, have limited accessibility and are difficult to manage as emergency short term housing.

We have completed a review of TA and concluded that:

We will

- Continue to reduce the number of fixed units to reflect the current reduction in demand and our plans to improve prevention outcomes for single people who are the main users of TA.

- Develop plans for a new scheme to replace the existing provision that will be fit for purpose for all customers. This will also provide emergency

assessment places to eliminate the use of Bed and Breakfast Accommodation.

- Use dispersed properties and supported housing to complement the fixed accommodation scheme so we have greater flexibility if demand changes and to meet individual needs for example for working households or those with their own furniture.
- Improve the planning and continuity of support to customers leaving Temporary Accommodation to help them successfully resettle. (links to Priority 2)

5.4.2 Social Housing

In Sheffield, we have mainly relied on social housing to meet urgent housing needs and this will continue to be important as social landlords have specific responsibilities to provide housing for vulnerable people. Approximately 80% of customers left temporary accommodation following the offer of social housing compared to the national figure of 64%. As part of our statutory duties, we also give a reasonable preference to people who are homelessness but not in priority need - this does not give them a guarantee of social housing but does give them priority over other people. We provide support to people who have a rehousing priority to help them find a new home through the Choice Based Lettings system.

However, there is a shortage of social housing and it is not available in all areas of the City. We are committed to building new homes in the social rented sector but demand will continue to exceed supply. We have a limited number of properties that are large enough for bigger households. For younger people affected by benefit changes, social housing providers do not offer shared/studio accommodation currently. The ending of lifetime tenancies in social housing and benefit changes, may also affect the extent to which social housing can be relied on to meet urgent needs.

We will:

- Give realistic advice to all residents about the social housing in the City and support them to find housing in a planned way via Choice Based Lettings.
- Prioritise homeless households for social housing and improve pre-tenancy partnership work to improve successful outcomes.
- Build on the work already undertaken by social landlords to improve tenancy sustainment at a local community level. This includes identifying the risk of homelessness and targeting support at vulnerable households.
- Review our approaches to providing shared housing and smaller units that will be affordable for single person households in the social housing sector.

5.4.3 Private Rented Housing

Since 2014, the Council has been able to meet the full rehousing duty by offering private rented properties. Under the new homeless legislation, the

circumstances in which we can help an applicant find a private sector tenancy will expand. The Council and Nomad currently have schemes that arrange private rented tenancies to prevent homelessness.

Realistically, we will need to further expand access to private rented housing for people owed homeless rehousing duties and other groups in housing need. This will help us provide meaningful options for people that we must help under the new Homeless Reduction Act. It enables us to offer more choice of property type and areas as well as recognising that not everybody is looking for a lifetime home.

This does have challenges as finding enough properties can be difficult due to the issues with benefits and the market is now very competitive as more people rent privately overall. The lower security of tenure is also an issue as the loss of an Assured Shorthold Tenancy is one of the main reasons for homelessness.

We will:

- Improve access to the good quality private rented sector housing to expand choices and provide affordable options for single people. This includes supporting both tenants and landlords and developing new approaches that are attractive to all parties.

- Co-ordinate how we work with private sector landlords and developers to maximize the use of resources and opportunities for all vulnerable people in the City.

- We will focus more on tenancy sustainment and timely advice to prevent a housing crisis arising in private sector working positively with landlords and tenants to improve successful outcomes.

5.4.4 Housing Support

The Council commissions housing support services that help people to develop independent living skills in specialist accommodation schemes or in their own homes across all tenure. Some services aim to prevent homelessness or resettle after a period of homelessness and some offer support to people with bespoke needs.

The budgets available locally for housing support have reduced by 50% in the last 5 years and the Government has reviewed and is consulting on other funding arrangements. Changes to benefits will pose challenges to the viability of schemes going forward. Many of the service providers locally combine public funding with significant charitable funding and volunteer input.

Despite limited resources, the physical condition of some supported accommodation has been improved and new provision developed. The proportion of floating support compared to accommodation based services has increased and new services have been introduced. However overall the current position is that floating support has reduced by 31% since 2014 and accommodation based support by 19% since 2014.

Since 2014 our Housing Support Pathway has managed access and move on to schemes for homeless people. We have found in reviewing outcomes for 2016/17:

- Over 65% of customers have a positive outcome on leaving supported housing.

- Only 50% of referrals to the schemes were successful. 12% were referred in error or did not meet the eligibility criteria. 38% were not successful either because the customers decide not to take up a place or the service provider does not accept the referral.

- Main reasons for declining a referral are support needs are considered too high or risks to self or others.

- Move on can also be difficult for people with very complex needs. We need to address any gaps in service provision.

Thinking and practice is changing in the delivery of housing support models. This includes considering how to provide more tailored responses, supporting people in their local community, achieving long term housing stability and how to provide psychologically informed environments.

There will continue to be a place for supported short term housing particularly in an emergency or in specialist provision for high needs and we know there are some gaps in services. However, as we become more successful at prevention the balance between hostel type provision at the point of housing crisis and preventive support provided in general needs housing will continue to alter. We will review our support model when Government proposals are clarified.

We also want to make sure that we are making the best use of resources and do not duplicate efforts. Although all social landlords have a range of measure in place to support tenancy sustainment, 50% of floating support customers are social tenants. Housing and other agencies are increasingly adopting key worker approaches and we must be clear about roles and responsibilities.

We will

- As a landlord, the Council aims to integrate seamless housing management and low/medium housing support through our Housing + model to promote early prevention, minimise duplication and make the best use of available resources. We will explore with other social landlords adopting a similar approach so our limited additional resources can be targeted at higher needs, specialist accommodation based or floating schemes and private sector tenants.

- Commission services that are progressively aligned to support homeless prevention at an early stage to help more people to stay in their current home or have a planned move rather than manage a crisis. We may need to continue to fund some existing services whilst we develop and implement earlier prevention services.

- As keyworker models have developed in social care, housing and other agencies, ensure there is no duplication of support between services and that support plans are joined up.

- Review the effectiveness of our Housing Support Pathway to make sure we are getting the best and consistent outcomes for customers in placements and move on to sustainable permanent housing.

- Address gaps including single sex accommodation, longer term services for older people with complex needs, and ensure an appropriate range of young people's services.

- We have reviewed the High Support Service for families and have moved this to a dispersed model delivered in general needs housing. We will review the need for our other accommodation based schemes for families as we increasingly focus on early prevention and supporting families within their local community.

5.5 Priority Five: Addressing Health Needs

We want to improve health outcomes as poor health can be both a consequence and cause of homelessness. Being homeless can make it more difficult to access health services, have a healthy lifestyle and reduce life expectancy. Our data shows that the proportion of homeless people with diagnosed mental health problems (63%) is over double that of the general population and that almost all long-term physical health problems are more prevalent in the homeless population than in the general public.

In recognition of this and that people facing homelessness have some of the worst health outcomes in the City, the joint Chairs of Sheffield's Health and Wellbeing Board have signed the Homeless Health Charter. This commits the Board to identify health needs and encourage the Council and the CCG to commission local health services for inclusion. In seeking to improve health outcomes we need to focus on prevention of homelessness and helping to address the impacts of being homeless.

We conducted a Homeless Health Needs Audit in 2015 with over 300 users of supported housing services. This has given us a detailed insight into health needs and emphasised the importance of partnership action in the City to address the social determinants. The findings from the Audit led to twelve recommendations that have informed the development of this Strategy. More details can be found at

https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/.../sheffield/...health/publichealthstrategyandreports/Shef...

The audit concentrated on single people and we have more work to do on understanding the health impacts for families with children locally.

The actual numbers of people accepted as homeless due to mental or physical health issues has fallen from 241 in 2011 to 117 people in 2016. However, the proportion of people accepted as homeless for these reasons has increased from 19% to 31%.

Issues such as brain injury and trauma, substance misuse and mental health problems can make it more difficult to cope with housing and other related problems. Untreated and unsupported mental health issues can lead to unstable housing and people not reporting poor housing conditions which can lead to homelessness.

The responses to our Call for Evidence; Preventing and Responding to Homelessness (2015), emphasised the importance of psychological interventions to achieve better outcomes. Both housing and mental health service providers have said they need to work more closely together to support customers who are at risk of homelessness.

We will

- Commission local health services that are inclusive of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

- Improve access to appropriate primary health care and treatment programmes to reduce hospital admissions and use of Accident and Emergency services.

- Improving understanding within health and housing services of homelessness and ensure appropriate referral routes are in place to enable early prevention. (Links to Priority 2)

- Provide the right, care support and housing on discharge from hospital or care settings to make sure people leaving institutions have appropriate accommodation to move to. (Links to Priority 2 and 4)

- Work with public health and CCG to identify interventions that will be of the most use to client groups and promote this with service providers.

- Work with all agencies and organisations including those wider than health and social care to ensure that both health and housing are well linked to best service the people and the community they are in.

- To work with local landlords including commissioned and non-commissioned supported accommodation providers to move people into general needs tenancies in a timely manner.

- Work to understand and address the health impact of homeless children

5.6 Priority Six: Improving Access to Employment, Education and Training

To help future resilience and independence it is essential to help customers to enter employment. People at risk of homelessness must be supported to improve their own financial situation, and be valued for the contribution they can make to the local economy and community.

Having the means to pay for housing is one of the major obstacles to resolving problems and increasing choice. Our case records and the Health Audit show that there is a high dependence on benefits and low levels of being economically active or being in education or training amongst groups who have experienced homelessness.

Finding work or housing can be much more difficult with no settled address, few qualifications or a history of health issues, previous offending history and a poor employment record. In the Homeless Health Audit, 54% reported they were unable to undertake training, volunteering or employment due to a health problem. Only 21% said they had access to guidance on work or training and only 9% were in employment (this is better than the national figure of 6%).

We will:

- Develop targeted opportunities to assist people in to work, education and training to tackle dependence on benefits and public services. This can be through increasing both voluntary and paid work opportunities.

- Include support into education, training and work within the service specifications when we commission housing services.

- Provide practical tailored support to individuals such as help with travel costs and work clothes.

- Ensure apprenticeship and traineeships are inclusive of people who have experienced homelessness.

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