

Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy
2023-2028

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1. Introduction	3
2. Vision and Priorities	4
3. Homelessness In Sheffield	6
4. Delivery of the Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2017-22	7
5. Governance and Delivery	8
6. Links and Interdependencies	9
7. Our Themes and Priorities in Detail	10

Appendices:

1. Legal duties
2. Homelessness review
3. Action Plan 2017-2022 summary of actions completed
4. Consultation

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1. Introduction

The Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy sets out the vision, strategic direction, and priorities for Sheffield for the next 5 years. It has been co-produced with residents, partner organisations and stakeholders. It is a legal requirement of the Homelessness Act 2002 for Local Authorities to publish a new homelessness strategy every five years. The social services authority must provide reasonable assistance.

The strategy supports Sheffield City Council's corporate priorities and is part of the new Housing Strategy 2023/33. It complements other strategies and programmes that support independence and target help at the most vulnerable. It is compliant with key legislation that sets out the Council's duties in respect to homelessness. The strategy must ensure we deliver on the requirements to prevent homelessness, provide support, and ensure sufficient accommodation. These are summarised in Appendix 1.

Information about the local context and the challenges our residents face is provided. The Current Strategy (2017-22) and performance on homelessness has been reviewed to identify our future priorities.

In 2018 the Homelessness Reduction Act gave the Council new duties to prevent homelessness. Other named public bodies are also now required to identify the risk of homelessness and refer people for support. This has significantly increased demand for services. Initially good progress was made on improving homelessness prevention outcomes and our partnership of agencies has been strengthened.

However, since 2020 homelessness has increased nationally and locally. The pandemic has had devastating impacts to our communities, affecting their health, causing social and economic disruption, and widening inequalities in our city¹. More recently, the cost of living has increased steeply, and previous economic downturns suggest the impact of an economic crisis on homelessness presentations will be seen over two or three years.

Over the last ten years Councils have faced a reduction to core funding from the Government of nearly £16 billion². Many of our partners have also experienced cuts to their funding and there is an ongoing need for efficiencies and savings.

When people do need to move, housing options are limited with a shortfall of 902 new affordable homes per annum in the city. Private rents are increasing and are now on average £700 per month³ and there has been a reduction in social housing stock.

Despite this challenging environment we have a very strong commitment across our partnership to make the best use of our resources to refocus on preventing homelessness. We will continue to improve the specialist homelessness services, further strengthen our partnership work and deal with system wide issues that are a barrier to good outcomes. We will continue to provide a strong safety net for people

¹ [\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Sheffield Health and Wellbeing Board, 24/09/2020 15:00](#)

² [5.40 01 Finance publication WEB 0.pdf \(local.gov.uk\)](#)

³ In most cases customers have to pay upfront costs such as a deposit and rent in advance which could cost around £1350- [How much it costs to rent - Citizens Advice](#)

who do become homeless and make sure they have the support they need to move on to permanent and sustainable new homes.

2. Vision and Priorities

In our last Strategy we set out our priorities as

- Proactively Preventing Homelessness
- Strengthening Partnerships to support vulnerable groups
- Tackling Rough Sleeping
- Improving Housing Options and Support
- Addressing Health Needs
- Improving Access to Employment, Education and Training

In reviewing the evidence and progress made, we are confident that the priorities we agreed were correct. However, we now need to update the approach to deal with the context of increases in homelessness, further reductions in public funding, and fundamental system wide issues.

We have developed a vision, 2 over-arching themes and 5 priorities that will be key to transforming the experience and outcomes of those at risk of homelessness, proactively addressing inequalities and dealing with gaps in service provision. Detailed explanations and the commitments we are making with partner agencies to achieve them are set out in Section 7. These will be met by an agreed annual action plan.

2.1 Vision

Everyone in Sheffield should have a place to call home so we will minimise homelessness by focussing on early prevention to help people keep their home or move in a planned way.

We will provide good quality housing advice and options so people can resolve their housing problems in a way that is resilient and long lasting.

We aim to eliminate rough sleeping in the City by improving prevention and making sure everyone has access to suitable emergency housing and a permanent home with the support they need.

Overarching Themes

Our overarching themes will have some specific actions but will also inform all our other priorities.

2.2 Tackling Inequalities

Some of our residents are at a greater risk of homelessness and also face barriers to accessing good quality affordable housing and services. Some Black Asian Minority Ethnic and Refugee (BAMER) communities are over-represented among people who are accepted as homeless and the Race Equality Commission Report in 2022 highlighted inequalities in accessing wider housing in the city. People with mental and physical health issues and disabilities are also at a greater risk of homelessness. Tackling inequality by ensuring fair access to housing, offering appropriate services

and monitoring outcomes for all service users will be critical to the success of the strategy.

2.3 Supporting People through The Cost of Living Crisis

The risk of homelessness has increased due to the effects of the cost-of-living crisis and residents resultant ability to keep or find suitable housing. Most people who become homeless are either staying with friends/family or renting, but we expect to see an increase in problems for people who own their own home and private landlords with mortgages. Making sure our response is inclusive of people who are at risk of homelessness will be essential.

Our Priorities

2.4 Proactively Preventing Homelessness

The homelessness strategy is legally required to prevent homelessness in the district. Many people are already in crisis before they approach a homelessness service, so we are missing opportunities to help them earlier on. We know that some of these people are likely to have been in touch with other services already, so we need 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.

2.5 Improving Services to Support Vulnerable Groups

The homelessness strategy is legally required to secure the satisfactory provision of support for people in the district who are, or may become, homeless or who have been homeless and need support to prevent them becoming homeless again.

From our review we know that there are some gaps in services that will make a real difference to residents to both prevent homelessness but also help them to successfully manage and maintain their home. This includes specialist homelessness services and access to mainstream services that need to be more responsive and adaptive.

2.6 Tackling Rough Sleeping

We want to see an end to rough sleeping in the city. Although we have had relatively low numbers, we have seen an increase over the last year. We are very good at responding to a crisis and now need to put in place earlier interventions. We will be focussing on more effectively addressing entrenched rough sleeping which particularly affects people with complex needs and circumstances.

2.7 Improving Housing Options and Support

The homelessness strategy is legally required to ensure that sufficient accommodation is made available for people who are homeless or at risk. We always try to help people keep their current home but sometimes a move is necessary. We need to further improve the range of housing options available to prevent homelessness and meet immediate and permanent housing duties. We also want to improve the support available to help people in their existing home, or when they move to a new home.

We are committed to providing effective support to those who have been homeless to enable them to resettle, sustain housing, and live independently.

2.8 Strengthening Partnerships and Improving Systems

We rely on strong collaboration between services to make sure people can access the housing advice and other support they need. Over the lifetime of the previous strategy, we have strengthened our partnerships including the establishment of the Homelessness Prevention Forum and our Strategy Steering Group. We now need to build on this further and tackle system-wide issues that are a barrier to homelessness prevention.

3. Homelessness In Sheffield

To set our priorities we have undertaken a review of homelessness in Sheffield. This is set out in Appendix 2. We have looked at trends and considered our performance locally against national data. We have consulted with customers, delivery partners and key stakeholders. We have also completed a self-assessment of our performance on tackling rough sleeping with the government specialist advisers.

A person is legally defined as homeless if they:

- Have no accommodation available in the UK or abroad
- Have no legal right to occupy the accommodation
- Live in a split household due to availability of accommodation for the whole household
- It is unreasonable to continue to occupy their accommodation
- They are at risk of violence from any person
- They are unable to secure entry to their home
- They live in a moveable structure but have no place to put this

Further information on the legislation surrounding homelessness is available in Appendix 1.

Our review shows us that homelessness has increased in Sheffield significantly and the successful prevention of homelessness is low in comparison to other areas. More people are being placed in hotels and dispersed units of accommodation when they are homeless. We are reliant on social housing to meet the duties to provide temporary and permanent homes but there is a shortfall of suitable affordable accommodation. The majority of people are supported to find a sustainable new home but a quarter of people have made more than one homeless application in the last 5 years.

- Since 2018/19 there has been a 9% increase the number of households who approach the Council when they are already homeless and a decrease of 7% in the number approaching when they are at risk of becoming homeless.
- Successful outcomes, where accommodation is secured for at least 6 months, have decreased from 47% to 27%.
- For prevention cases this has decreased by 20% and for relief it is 22%.
- Legal acceptance of the duty to prevent or relieve homelessness has increased by 270% since 2018/19 from 248 to 968 households.
- The use of temporary accommodation (TA) has also increased by 280% - rising from 114 to 430 households.

- The main reasons for homelessness are being asked to leave by friends and family, domestic abuse, and losing private rented accommodation.
- 60% of lead applicants were white British and 30% from BAMER communities.
- 56% of lead applicants were aged 34 or under.
- Rough sleeping numbers in Sheffield are relatively low at 18 in our last official count in November 2021 but we know this fluctuates.

4. Delivery of the Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2017-22

To implement the current strategy a plan was developed with partners and progress has been made on many of the agreed actions. In 2020 our plans were disrupted significantly by the pandemic, services remained open but modified, and resources were also diverted to support new activity such as 'Everyone In' and 'Covid Hardship Funds'. A summary of the action plan and status of the activity is contained in Appendix 3.

Actions that have not been completed and are still relevant will be carried forward into the action plan for the new strategy.

Key achievements have included

- 'Care leavers protocol', and '16/17-year-old protocol' agreed
- A prevention tool kit has been developed for agencies
- Shelter '[Fobbed Off](#)' - a women-centred services peer research project
- Homelessness Prevention Forum/Strategy Steering Group established
- Multi-agency 'Rehousing Adults with Complex and Multiple Needs' Panel established
- 'Changing Futures' Programme supporting people with complex needs and address system/service barriers
- Review of Housing Support has been completed
- Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme funding for 47 new properties
- 'Everyone In' provided accommodation and support for 190 individuals
- Opened 31 new units of TA for families and people experiencing rough sleeping
- 'Housing First' 30 homes for people who have experienced rough sleeping
- Safe Zones, 25 properties with specialist domestic abuse support
- Sanctuary Scheme - 600 households a year are offered practical support to be safe in their own homes
- Funding to recommission the city's women's refuges (37 self-contained units of family accommodation plus one crash pad) and support
- Improved access to health services for people at risk of rough sleeping including mental/physical health nurses and drug and alcohol outreach services
- Programme to support access to vaccinations for flu and Covid 19 and virtual clinics
- A post funded at DWP includes early intervention, access to a job coach, and help to find work specifically for homeless people
- 'GROW' (Get Real Opportunities for Work) paid 1-year traineeships at Shelter
- 'Thrive', a new accommodation and support service established, to support people with significant health conditions and additional complex needs.

5. Governance and Delivery

This five-year strategy has been co-produced with our partners and customers. A summary of the consultation that has taken place is attached at Appendix 4. We have asked our key partners/stakeholders to sign up to the strategy and a full list of those organisations who have agreed to deliver the strategy with us will be included in the published version.

Consultation

We have consulted widely throughout the development of the strategy over the last year. This included work with customers, internal services, and partner organisations. We started this process by asking what we should prioritise in the strategy and completed this by sharing the draft strategy for comment:

- Customers told us that better communication is needed and that partners need to work together to support them. They said that we should be prioritising suitable accommodation offers and linking people in with wider support.
- 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. Their input is also being used to draft the action plan.

We will continue to develop our well-established partnership and support bids for funding as well as commission services and directly deliver them in the Council. Where relevant we will develop initiatives across the sub-region.

We will include people with lived experience in our Homelessness Prevention Strategy Steering Group which will oversee delivery of the Strategy as well as undertake consultations on specific service development. We will work with the national government on tackling broader policy issues, and we will continue to engage with relevant governance boards such as housing, joint commissioning, health, adult social care, community safety, and children and young people services.

Our data tells us that people living in certain neighbourhoods are more likely to present as at risk of homelessness than in other parts of the city. Therefore, community-based responses will be put in place as appropriate.

A draft action plan is being developed with our partners. The action plan will clearly indicate the lead organisation and decision-making routes to be followed where appropriate, for example in securing funding, commissioning services, or making policy changes. It will be reviewed annually.

Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely Targets will be agreed upon, and a performance report will be presented at the Housing and Policy Committee annually. We will be held accountable for strategy delivery through the Performance and Delivery Board.

5.1 Key Targets to be Achieved Within the Lifetime of the Strategy

Priority 1 Proactively Preventing Homelessness

We will see at least 75% of people when they are at risk of losing their home and we can work with them to prevent homelessness. As we will be seeing them earlier we will aim to successfully prevent homelessness for at least 80% of these people.

Priority 2 Improving Services to Support Vulnerable Groups

We will have reduced the number of repeat homeless cases from 25% to 10%

Priority 3 Tackling Rough Sleeping

We will end rough sleeping in the city. By this we mean it will be 'prevented wherever possible and, where it cannot be prevented, it is a rare, brief, and non-recurring experience'.

Priority 4 Improving Housing Options and Support

We will have no one in B&B/Hotel Accommodation

We will have an additional 150 units of Temporary Accommodation

Our private rented offer will be expanded to that of comparable cities, in the region of 600+ tenancies.

We will implement the Housing Related Support Review and improve successful outcomes from 70% to 85%⁴

Priority 5 Strengthening Partnerships and Improving Systems

We will have a fit for purpose information sharing system

We will have increased Duty to Refers made at Prevention Stage from 18% to 60%

6. Links and Interdependencies

Other key strategies, commissioning plans and programmes of work affect how we can effectively address homelessness. It is important that these explicitly recognise and address the risk of homelessness and identify and fill gaps in services.

The following Strategies and Policy reviews will be key:

Allocation Policy Review

We are in the process of reviewing our Allocations Policy. A key driver in this review is ensuring that our Allocations Policy is fit for purpose and supports us in meeting our duties to those in housing need. In doing so we will ensure that people with reasonable preference, including those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, have fair access to social housing.

⁴ A successful outcome is defined as setting up or maintaining a stable home environment, achieving better health and well-being, developing the skills and confidence to be able to live independently and avoid tenancy or other housing problems which can lead to homelessness

Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy and the Domestic Abuse and Safe Accommodation Strategy

Domestic Abuse is one of the top three reasons for someone losing their home and therefore we need to ensure the best customer outcomes and address the issue holistically.

Drug and Alcohol Strategy

Drug and alcohol issues are a key support need for many of our customers which can be key to recovery and tenancy sustainment.

Housing Strategy

The Housing Strategy pulls together all strategic housing work. The Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy will be a key sub strategy.

Review of Housing Related Support

Implementing this review will improve the outcomes for those who need support to maintain tenancies.

Specialist Accommodation Assessment

This assessment will determine the needs for specialist accommodation in the city including the type, location and quantity. Identified housing need in the assessment will inform further development plans

SCC Stock Increase Programme

The Stock Increase Programme details the Councils programme of delivery to provide temporary accommodation and general needs housing.

South Yorkshire Housing Prospectus

This prospectus details the commitments from Registered Providers across the city to address homelessness prevention and provide new homes in the city

Adult Health and Social Care Strategy/Children and Families Strategies

Many of the people who are most at risk of homelessness also require support from social care services and it is therefore critical that these are aligned with the homelessness prevention strategy to ensure holistic and appropriate responses.

7. Our Themes and Priorities in Detail

7.1 Theme One: Tackling Inequalities

We recognise that access to the housing market and support services are not equal across the city. Our priorities are intended to be inclusive, but we will ensure we explicitly address equality issues in the action plan that will deliver the strategy. The

homelessness and support services must meet the diverse requirements of our residents. In doing this, we will recognise and address intersectionality for example, where people are affected by inequalities due to race and gender discrimination, so that our responses are effective and appropriate.

We will make sure services are designed and delivered to be accessible and appropriate and this includes ensuring that the workforce at all levels reflects the local community. To get this right we will involve people with lived experience in co-production of services and consult them throughout the lifetime of the strategy on our action plan. We will analyse the data we collect on the different reasons why people with protected characteristics become homeless and whether the outcomes for all groups are comparable or if there are disparities that need to be addressed.

7.1.2 Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic and Refugees (BAMER)

The Sheffield Race Equality Commission report 2022 highlighted both national and local racial disparities in access to housing⁵. The census data from 2011 shows racial inequalities in Sheffield with over 38% of Sheffield's Black, Asian, and minority ethnic communities living in areas within the 10% most deprived areas in the country⁶. The commission also highlighted issues of overcrowding and a greater level of Black, Ethnic and minority ethnic people living in the private rented sector (3 times the level of their white counterparts) which is less secure than other tenures. This reflects wider inequalities in accessing housing which needs tackling.

Our data on homelessness presentations shows an over-representation of some BAMER communities compared to their overall profile in Sheffield. We will consult affected communities about what changes need to be made to our services to improve their experience and outcomes. We will increase links with the BAMER community, and raise the profile of homelessness risks, prevention, and support. This will help us to provide a culturally sensitive housing and support offer, remove barriers to accessing this support (including language barriers) and increase positive outcomes for these households.

7.1.3 LGBT+

The LGBT+ community is a diverse group that disproportionately faces disadvantages. We have some local data on this, but we need to better understand the challenges this community faces and tailor our response so that we are not creating barriers to people approaching or accessing assistance. We also know that there are those who are hidden homeless due to discrimination against this group and that there are hidden issues relating to Domestic Abuse from parents for young LGBTQ+ people. Our systems need to be inclusive, and we need to work with the community to ensure that support is accessible.

7.1.4 Mental and Physical Health Issues and Disabilities

People with mental and physical health issues and disabilities are also at a greater risk of homelessness. These are the two highest support needs for people who present

⁵ [504.7 REC Report\(accessible\) \(sheffield.gov.uk\)](#)

⁶ https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2022-07/rec-final-report_1.pdf

to us as homeless. In 2021/22 62% of people presenting to us said they had support needs surrounding mental health and 39% said they had needs surrounding physical health or disability. We need to work closely with health colleagues to ensure that our services and support are accessible to these residents.

7.1.5 Care Leavers

Evidence also suggests that care leavers face inequalities including in their access to housing. There are some gaps in the data on the links between the number of people who have experienced both care and homelessness however, the latest data from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) found that nationally 26% of the homeless population had spent time in care (Ministry for Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2020)⁷. We need to work closely with colleagues to ensure that our services and support are accessible to this group.

7.2 Theme 2: Supporting People Through the Cost-of-Living Crisis

The cost-of-living crisis is one of the greatest challenges currently facing people across the city, with the rise in the cost of fuel, food prices and costs of housing all increasing. Deprivation, poverty, and low income are key barriers to accessing and maintaining affordable and suitable housing. The impact of the crisis will be disproportionately felt by those who are already struggling financially and who are therefore at a greater risk of homelessness. Evidence suggests that those suffering from domestic abuse are being disproportionately affected by the crisis which is preventing them from fleeing⁸ and cases of domestic abuse, including from adult family violence, may increase due to financial struggles. We will ensure that early intervention is in place and that we appropriately utilise the homelessness prevention fund to support people where costs are preventing them from moving. We also expect to see a rise in people affected by increases in mortgage payments and we need to be able to respond to this. We recognise that privately rented tenants are some of the most at risk of homelessness as rents increase and we will target support to them and landlords to prevent homelessness. There is also likely to be an increased risk of people sleeping rough due to rising unaffordability of living costs, we will target support appropriately to prevent the crisis from causing this to happen.

The Council with its partners will implement a coordinated response for communities and our vulnerable groups that need it most. Homelessness services will be involved in planning and delivering this to ensure that the response is inclusive of people who may be at risk of homelessness. This will include supporting people to maximise their household income and address housing problems early.

Good quality and timely advice will need to be readily available and accessible to everyone who needs it. As the cost-of-living crisis evolves it will be a priority to gather data and intelligence on the effects and who is most likely to be at risk, including how this is affecting homelessness levels and reasons for loss of home. This will enable

⁷ [The-care-experience.pdf \(childrensocialcare.independent-review.uk\)](#)

⁸ [With the cost of living crisis preventing women from fleeing abuse, the government must act now to support survivors. - Women's Aid \(womensaid.org.uk\)](#)

the response to be targeted. We will work with other social housing providers to support tenants and local residents with practical help.

7.3 Priority 1: Proactively Preventing Homelessness

To meet our legal duties, our homelessness strategy must deliver on preventing homelessness in the district.

Although we successfully prevent homelessness in many cases, most people who directly approach or are referred to SCC Housing Options and Advice Service are already homeless. This is very stressful and disruptive and negatively affects all aspects of life. As there is such a high demand for housing, people may have to stay in temporary accommodation for long periods and will have little choice about their new home. Furthermore, people who aren't eligible for temporary accommodation from the Council can be at risk of staying in unsuitable housing or situations.

Many people have been in touch with other services and organisations when they are at risk of becoming homeless, but we have not taken preventive action. Most of the work undertaken is about dealing with a crisis and finding short-term and permanent housing.

So, over the next 5 years we want to become one of the best performing cities on homelessness prevention which will mean opening over 75%⁹ of cases at the prevention stage and successfully preventing homelessness in at least 80%¹⁰ of these cases.

We need to embed a preventive approach across the whole system. Our advice must be accurate and timely with a better range of housing options to prevent homelessness occurring. Backlogs of work have built up in services during the pandemic and the funding available has reduced. Therefore, we need to make sure we make every contact count, enable self-service for people who can do this, streamline assessment and information gathering and focus on customer excellence. There is a good network of services that give independent housing advice and should ensure good signposting and referral routes between services to avoid duplication.

Whilst there are many reasons why people can be at risk of homelessness, the main reasons are being asked to leave by friends and family, domestic abuse and losing a privately rented property. We expect this to increase due to the cost-of-living crisis and we must improve our services to help people more effectively in these situations. We will improve our targeted information to groups at a greater risk.

7.4 Priority 2: Improving Services to Support Vulnerable Groups

Our homelessness strategy must secure the satisfactory provision of support for people in the district who are or may become homeless or who have been homeless and need support to prevent them becoming homeless again.

⁹ In 2021/22 Leeds opened 68% of cases in prevention.

¹⁰ In 2021/22 in Leeds 84% of preventions ended in secure accommodation being found.

Some vulnerable groups are at a greater risk of homelessness and we will improve our targeted interventions to meet their needs and improve outcomes. Homelessness legislation recognises some circumstances when a person has a heightened risk of homelessness. These are:

- leaving prison or youth detention accommodation
- leaving care of a children services authority
- leaving hospital
- victims of domestic abuse
- experiencing mental illness
- Armed Forces veterans

Although for some of these groups there are limited numbers in Sheffield, we will review our arrangements to improve our targeted advice and support to them.

There are already excellent examples of joint working in Sheffield, and we want to build on this to be more effective by focussed on earlier prevention rather than responding to a crisis.

We recognise that we will not always be able to prevent homelessness occurring and the services we offer to people at this very difficult time for them must be more effective to prevent repeated homeless applications.

7.4.1 Families and Young People

Sheffield has performed very well in reducing youth homelessness but we recognise the risk of this increasing in the current economic circumstances. Our focus will need to continue to be on helping the family to stay together until the young person can afford to live independently or make a planned move where this is not possible. We will improve early education and information about housing for young people.

However, some young people must live independently at a young age for example care leavers and those at risk of abuse and violence. There are also a small number of 16/17 years old who become homeless and are looked after by the Council. We already have excellent arrangements in place for care leavers and we will continue to work in collaboration with children's services for this group. Our joint protocol will be reviewed annually.

The number of families who become homeless has been increasing and some need additional support, particularly if they have complex needs and a previous history of homelessness. As the number of cases with dependent children is increasing, it is harder to secure accommodation to either prevent, relieve, or meet main housing duty resulting in more families staying in Temporary Accommodation/Hotels.

7.4.2 Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic and Refugees (BAMER)

Locally and nationally, BAMER communities are over-represented among homeless people¹¹.

¹¹ Page 5 of appendix 2 shows that

Ethnicity (Excluding Not Known)	Total Sheffield Population (2011 Census)	2021-2022 Assessments	Difference
White	84%	65%	-19%
Asian / Asian British	8%	12%	4%
Black / Black British	4%	12%	8%
Other Ethnicity	2%	6%	4%
Mixed	2%	5%	3%
Gypsy or Irish Traveller	0%	0%	0%

We must therefore prioritise addressing the disproportionate risk and impact of homelessness by both ensuring fair access to housing and targeting prevention activity.

7.4.3 Domestic Abuse (DA)

Domestic Abuse (DA) has increased as a reason for presenting and becoming homeless particularly during the pandemic. It is currently the second highest reason for people presenting to us as homeless. In 2021 domestic abuse became an automatic priority need¹². We know that it disproportionately affects female households, and we will ensure that suitable support is available to them. We will continue to provide a multi-agency response to prevent DA from leading to homelessness and this strategy will work to complement the Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy. We will continue to support victims to remain in their homes where it is safe to do so through target hardening and the Sanctuary Scheme. The Council are in the process of becoming accredited with the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance and in doing so are taking a stand to ensure we deliver safe and effective responses to domestic abuse.

7.4.4 Improving Access to Health Services

Health conditions can be both a causal factor of homelessness and can be affected by the loss of home. Of the people who have presented to us over the last four years, around 59% listed mental health and 38% listed physical health as one of their support needs. 60% of the users of Drug and Alcohol Services report housing problems. It is therefore crucial that we continue to work with all agencies and organisations responsible for health and care services when there is a risk of homelessness or it is the presenting issue. The mental health social work function has been brought back into SCC which will be used as an opportunity to improve assessing and meeting the needs of people with mental health issues.

Our partnership has good representation from health services and there is a strong commitment to work together to increase the number of people accessing health services and receiving appropriate treatment as part of a wider support plan. We work closely with the Health Inclusion Team (HIT) who support families and children in temporary accommodation and asylum seekers.

¹² s.189(1)(e) Housing Act 1996 as inserted by s. 78 Domestic Abuse Act 2021

7.4.5 Other At Risk Groups

There are other people who are particularly vulnerable to homelessness who will need different approaches. We know that these people can either be invisible to services or have limited access to public support. Sheffield is a City of Sanctuary, and it is important that we continue to work closely with agencies to support refugees leaving accommodation and asylum seekers.

7.4.6 Access to Education, Employment and Training

Having the means to pay for housing is one of the major obstacles to resolving problems and increasing choice. We know from case records and partners across the city that there is a high dependence on benefits and low levels of being economically active or being in education or training. Finding work can be difficult, but more so with no settled address, few qualifications, a history of health issues, previous offending history or a poor employment record. Since the previous strategy, we have built close links with the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) and the Lifelong Skills and Learning Service, which has helped with income maximisation and supporting people into training and employment. We will build on this in the next 5 years with regard to both specialist service offers and access to mainstream support.

7.5 Priority 3: Tackling Rough Sleeping

Department of Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) define rough sleeping as:

‘People sleeping in the open air (such as on the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations, or “bashes” which are makeshift shelters, often comprised of cardboard boxes).’

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.

Rough sleeping is the most visible form of homelessness and can have a dangerous, frightening, and isolating impact on people. In comparison to some other major cities of a similar size, Sheffield currently has low levels of people experiencing rough sleeping¹³ however we are fully committed to having zero people experiencing rough sleeping by 2024/25. By this we mean ‘prevented wherever possible and, where it cannot be prevented, it is a rare, brief and non-recurring experience’.

We have a very strong response when rough sleeping has occurred, but we need to do more to focus on prevention. Most people are helped into accommodation very quickly but people with complex needs are more likely to experience longer and repeated periods of rough sleeping. Some people are not included in official counts, but we know they are roofless or staying in unsafe accommodation. This includes women undertaking sex work at night. We want to work across the partnership to ensure that we provide safe spaces for women in this situation to engage with support.

We will plan a three-year programme to co-ordinate the partnership to focus on eliminating rough sleeping by focussing on earlier prevention, maintaining a strong safety net and effective recovery. We will also ensure quick and effective intervention is available to prevent entrenched rough sleeping. We will address gaps in provision

¹³ In 2021's annual headcount Sheffield had 18 rough sleepers. Other core cities of similar size include: Liverpool:20, Nottingham:23, Manchester:43, Bristol: 68

for the most complex and vulnerable groups to ensure mainstream and core service offers are inclusive of those who are at risk of rough sleeping.

With funding from the Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme, the Council and other social housing partners are putting in place move on accommodation with support to help people transition smoothly from the streets to settled accommodation. People with lived experience will be involved in the design of all new build elements and the support offered. We will continue to bid for further funding from the newly launched Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme.

We have established a successful Housing First programme working with 30 of the people with the most complex circumstances in the city offering housing and intensive support. We will be expanding this by a further 20 properties and would aim to see this expanded to other social housing providers.

There is a link between rough sleeping and street begging. However, in Sheffield we know that many of the prolific beggars are known to have accommodation. Our “Help us Help” initiative will continue to provide regular information to individuals and the public about what services are available to support people and how they can help.

7.6 Priority 4: Improving Housing Options and Support

Our Homelessness Strategy must secure that sufficient accommodation is and will be available for people in the district who are or may become homeless. It must also ensure that quality and accurate advice and information is given to customers.

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 improving access to good quality housing to expand choices and provide affordable options. We need to improve the range of housing options available to both prevent homelessness and meet rehousing duties.

To inform this work, we will conclude our Specialist Accommodation Assessment to understand the type and location of specialist housing¹⁴ required. This will be used to inform the Council’s Stock Increase Programme, and work with housing providers and developers to address the housing needs in the City. The provision of new housing will be addressed via capital development programmes and commissioning plans and will not be duplicated in the action plan for this Strategy.

7.6.1 Temporary Accommodation (TA)

Approximately 30% of all presenting households are offered temporary accommodation and the average stay is between 17 weeks. In a snapshot in October 2022, 483 children were living in temporary accommodation¹⁵.

The current range of TA currently provided in schemes and in dispersed properties is not sufficient to meet needs. We therefore rely on hotels to fulfil our statutory duty. The

¹⁴ Defined in point 5.5 of [Policy statement on rents for social housing \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/106482/policy-statement-on-rents-for-social-housing.pdf)

¹⁵ Figures from 28th October 2022

schemes were built as general needs housing, require updating, have limited accessibility and are difficult to manage as short-term housing.

The use of hotels creates significant funding pressures for the Council and creates uncertainty for the households. The use of dispersed Council properties for TA also reduces the number of properties available for those on the Housing Register.

We aim to eliminate the use of B+B type accommodation and to improve the range of TA options by completing a programme of new purpose-built accommodation over the next 5 years. We will also look to provide good quality private sector accommodation for TA to meet the needs of households where we do not have available social housing that meets their requirements.

7.6.2 Social Housing

In Sheffield, we have mainly relied on social housing to meet urgent housing needs, and this will continue to be important. However, there is a shortage of social housing, and it is not available in all areas of the City. There are currently 913 households with a priority need and 8,713 active bidders. There are over 20,000¹⁶ households on the Council register for social housing. For those actively bidding the average waiting time is over 2 years. We will be reviewing the allocation policy and lettings outcomes to make sure that people are being given fair access to social housing and our duties are effectively met.

We are committed to building new homes in the social rented sector, but we know that 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. As homelessness increases it is increasing in difficulty to fulfil all needs via social housing and we will need to make better utilisation of private sector housing.

7.6.3 Private Rented

There is low utilisation of the Private Rented Sector which can be used for TA prevention, relief and discharge of the full housing duty. To address this, widening access to good quality and affordable private sector housing is critical. This will enable us to offer more choice of property type and areas as well as recognising that not everybody is looking for a lifetime home.

The Council and Nomad both have schemes that arrange private rented tenancies, and we will look to expand this type of provision. These schemes have good records of sustaining tenancies but do not have the numbers of properties available that are needed.

Expanding this offer is challenging as the rent levels are increasing and there is a scarcity of private rented properties. We will continue to only use private rented properties that meet all the relevant standards and have been checked by the Council's Private Sector Housing Service.

¹⁶ As at 31/03/2022-20,741 were on the register

Recognising that around 24%¹⁷ of tenancies are in the private rented sector, we also need to improve advice and tenancy sustainment service and work with landlords to support tenants to remain where they are where this is suitable and safe to do so.

7.6.4 Housing Support

The Council commissions housing support services that help people to develop independent living skills in either specialist accommodation schemes or in their own homes regardless of their tenure. We rely on Supported Housing to fulfil both homelessness and care duties.

Reductions in Government funding to local authorities has substantially reduced the budget from £19.7 million in 2010 to £7.5 million currently. Many of the service providers locally combine public funding with significant charitable funding and volunteer input.

The current model was designed when the Council had far more stock and the pathway assumed ready access to social housing on completion of the support plan. This is no longer realistic, and we must change the focus to preventing the loss of home and creating more multi-tenure move on options.

We have reviewed the current model and will be implementing the findings in the next few years. The current arrangements work well for most service users but around 30% have negative outcomes due to the complexity of their circumstances, and gaps in housing provision and wrap around support. We will commission and directly deliver services that are progressively more focussed on prevention and meet customer requirements. We need to have more flexibility to meet individual needs where these cannot be met in schemes or in the current dispersed models.

The Council also provides in-house housing support services to tenants via our Housing+ for low needs, and a Floating Support Service for people with higher needs. We will work with other social Housing Providers to adopt similar approaches so that our limited additional resources can be targeted at those with the most complex needs and private sector tenants.

We will be reviewing the provision of Floating Support Services as part of our review of Early Help across the city.

7.7 Priority 5: Strengthening Partnerships and Improving Systems

We recognise the importance of having a strong partnership in the city across statutory, voluntary, faith and community services. The partnership needs to reflect the complexity and diversity of the needs of people who are at risk of losing their home. A nuanced response is required where there are gaps in the service and we need to capitalise on knowledge and resources in the city. This will enable more upstream work and successful outcomes across the partnership. We are reviewing our pathways with a particular focus on improving access to the Council's Housing Solutions service and the quality of the response to ensure timely advice is given.

¹⁷ Research conducted by BRE using modelled data suggested that 24% of properties in Sheffield are privately rented, an increase from 16% in the 2011 Census.

We will build on the existing partnership to enable effective professional relationships and holistic assessments. This will ensure that people struggling with their housing only have to tell their story once. Sharing of knowledge and information will be key to this approach and we will improve our use of technology and systems to allow better collaboration and communication. We will strengthen the visibility of outcomes by regularly sharing key performance data to review and plan services. Any new initiatives will be aligned and work in synergy with existing provision, with a commitment to effective communication between providers, commissioners, and other partners to avoid duplication and inefficiency.

We will ensure that our strategic and operational responses are planned with the partnership, responding to evidence across the city of what works. We will also continue to work closely with our government national advisors to gain understanding of national good practice. We will use this approach to forward plan what our funding requirements across the city are, to bid for funding, and prioritise resources appropriately.

We will upskill the workforce, building on shared experience across the partner organisations and utilising cross organisational learning, including training on equalities.

Duty to Refer and Protocols/Pathways

It is important that we improve how people can access our service by reviewing and extending our duty to refer system¹⁸ to agencies beyond those with a statutory duty to refer. This will enable a pledge to refer¹⁹ programme for further preventative work.

We will also review our protocols and pathways to improve how we work collaboratively including building on our current trusted assessor arrangements.²⁰

Changing Futures

In 2021 Sheffield succeeded in securing Changing Futures funding to run a programme aimed to improve partnership working to better support individuals who experience multiple disadvantages. The programme will invest significantly in developing and embedding co-production and trauma-informed approaches which will be key contributors to lasting system change. This short-term funding will grow existing good practice, connect systems, and interventions together in a more coordinated way.

¹⁸Section 10 of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 places a duty on specified public bodies to refer those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, with their permission, to the Local Housing Authority ([Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk))

¹⁹ By this we mean that all agencies are proactively thinking about homelessness risks and referring people appropriately and working with us to develop a holistic support plan around that person.

²⁰