

REPORT TO CABINET

18 SEPTEMBER 2025

**REPORT OF SENIOR
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

Lead Cabinet Member – Regeneration and Housing – Cllr Richard Eglington

Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025-2030

SUMMARY

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 requires local housing authorities to adopt a strategic approach to tackling homelessness and rough sleeping. A review of the Council's current strategy has been undertaken informed by engagement with our key partners (internal, statutory and VCSE sector) and those with lived experience of homelessness.

The Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025-2030 reflects a whole-system approach, working collaboratively with partners, communities, and individuals to deliver sustainable solutions to both prevent and address the root causes of homelessness and rough sleeping.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)/DECISION(S)

The Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025-2030 sets out Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council's commitment to preventing homelessness and reducing rough sleeping across the borough. It ensures compliance with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and aligns with national Government's strategic priorities to end rough sleeping and prevent homelessness. The strategy supports the vision of the Stockton-on-Tees Plan, particularly its ambition to reduce inequalities and improve outcomes for residents.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is asked to:

1. Approve the Stockton-on-Tees Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025-2030.

DETAIL

Local Strategic Context

1. The Stockton-on-Tees Plan sets out the Council's vision for the future of the Borough. The Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025-2030 aligns with this Plan, specifically the council's aim to ensure that our diverse communities live happy and healthy lives and that we support those who are experiencing poverty and disadvantage.

2. In developing the refreshed strategy, consideration has been given to the current challenges faced by the Council. Over the past four years (2021/22 – 2024/25) an average of 2742 individuals presented per year to the Homelessness Service, with an annual average of 2,297 Homelessness Reduction Act assessments being completed during the same period. Increasing demand from those who are experiencing or threatened with homelessness is not isolated to our borough, rather it is a national issue. The demand for homelessness services can be attributed to multiple factors including:
 - cost of living challenges
 - the limited supply of social and affordable Registered Provider housing
 - the lack of affordable housing options in the private rented sector and
 - wider social issues affecting the complexity of cases (vulnerabilities associated with drug and alcohol use, domestic abuse and offending behaviour for example).
3. During the same period (2021/22 to 2024/25) demand for temporary accommodation also increased, again consistent with national trends. Whilst the council has a range of commissioned temporary accommodation services, demand has on occasions outstripped this supply, resulting in placements in 'emergency accommodation' (non-commissioned accommodation including the use of B&B and hotel accommodation). 301 single people and 82 families were accommodated in emergency temporary accommodation in 2024/2025. In all instances the Homelessness Service works to minimise the length of an individual/family stay in emergency accommodation.
4. In addition to preventing and supporting those who experience homelessness the strategy also aims to support individuals who may be sleeping rough. Whilst the numbers of those who sleep rough within our borough are not high, this is the most visible and often extreme form of homelessness. Whilst homelessness may be the presenting issue, many individuals have complex lives shaped by personal vulnerabilities such as mental health, substance and alcohol abuse, trauma and an offending history. These circumstances require more than a 'housing solution'. Rather a personalised approach tailored to meet an individual's needs, involving a range of statutory and VCSE services (i.e. drug and alcohol support, social care and health professionals and community based support services).

Vision and Strategic Priorities

5. The Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping 2025-2030 Strategy sets a vision **“to minimise homelessness, eliminate rough sleeping and ensure our residents are supported by relevant partners to access a place they are able to call home”**. This vision reflects the council's determination to end homelessness within our borough. To achieve this, the strategy outlines four strategic priorities designed to ensure the Council is equipped to address current and future challenges. These priorities also support the Homelessness Service and its internal and external providers in delivering positive outcomes for our most vulnerable residents.
6. The 4 strategic priorities are:
 - 1) Prevent and relieve homelessness
 - 2) Prevent rough sleeping
 - 3) Efficient use of temporary and supported accommodation, and
 - 4) Working in partnership

Consultation

7. To ensure that the strategy is reflective and shaped by our partners (across all sectors) and importantly those with lived experience of homelessness a targeted consultation exercise was carried out. This included a survey (which included all those with an 'open' homelessness prevention case), focus group activity and an engagement session held within one of our

commissioned temporary accommodation sites to facilitate direct conversations with those with lived experience of homelessness.

8. The consultation survey sought views on the four strategic priorities. The high level results of the survey are summarised below:

- Strategic Priority 1: Prevent and relieve homelessness
 - **Strongly agree – 83.9%**
 - Agree – 14.5%
 - Neither Agree nor Disagree – 1.6%
 - Disagree – 0%
 - Strongly Disagree – 0%
- Strategic Priority 2: Prevent rough sleeping
 - **Strongly Agree – 80.65%**
 - Agree - 16.13%
 - Neither Agree nor Disagree – 1.61%
 - Disagree – 1.61%
 - Strongly Agree – 0%
- Strategic Priority 3: Efficient use of temporary accommodation
 - **Strongly Agree – 72.58%**
 - Agree – 22.58%
 - Neither Agree nor Disagree – 3.23%
 - Disagree – 1.6%
 - Strongly Disagree – 0%
- Strategic priority 4: Working in Partnership
 - **Strongly Agree – 77.42%**
 - Agree – 19.35%
 - Neither Agree nor Disagree – 3.23%
 - Disagree – 0%
 - Strongly Disagree – 0%

9. As members will note, the survey findings demonstrate support for the 4 proposed strategic priorities.

Moving the strategy forward

10. To ensure effective monitoring of progress against each of the 4 strategic priorities, an action plan will be developed to accompany the strategy. The Action Plan will be reviewed internally and in collaboration with stakeholder partners through the Homelessness Forum as we recognise that achieving the best possible outcomes for those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness requires ongoing partnership working.

Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment

11. An Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment has been completed. No group or individual who possesses a protected characteristic, or who has experienced care, poverty or substance misuse/addiction will be negatively impacted by the implementation of the proposed strategy. Conversely the assessment has highlighted that individuals with a disability, young adults, care leavers, those who are experiencing poverty or substance misuse/addiction may be positively impacted by the implementation of the strategy.

CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

12. The draft Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025 – 2030 recognises youth homelessness and the importance of working collaboratively to prevent it, particularly for the boroughs care leavers and care experienced young people. Established protocols are in place with the aim of ensuring a clear, streamlined pathway to help each care leaver secure independent, appropriate and secure accommodation.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

13. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

14. The Homelessness Act 2002 (Section 1 (1)) places a statutory duty on Housing Authorities to conduct a homelessness review of their borough and formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on the results of the review every 5 years (as a minimum). Additional duties introduced via the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 require local authorities to produce a strategy that involves partners in earlier identification and intervention to prevent homelessness. All local authorities are required to publish a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

RISK ASSESSMENT

15. The implementation of the Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025 - 2030 is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

WARDS AFFECTED AND CONSULTATION WITH WARD/COUNCILLORS

16. The strategy will support residents living in all wards across the borough. Ward members were not consulted in the development of the draft strategy.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

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