

Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025-2030

Regeneration and Inclusive Growth

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Foreword

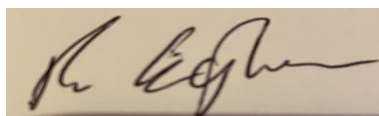
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council understand the importance of tackling homelessness and ensuring that our Borough is a place where our residents live happy and healthy lives, as well as being a great place to work live and visit. The Homelessness Act 2002 requires local housing authorities to develop a strategic approach to tackling homelessness and rough sleeping and to publish a homelessness strategy. It is important that our Strategy is regularly reviewed and updated to ensure it addresses the needs of those within our borough who are at risk of homelessness and rough sleeping, meets national policy priorities and reflects any relevant changes in relevant legislation. Following consultation with our service users and key partners, as the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing I am pleased to present Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council's refreshed Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy which sets out our vision, strategic direction and priorities for the period 2025-2030.

There are many and varied factors which can contribute to an individual or family experiencing homelessness, for example poverty, unemployment, cost of living challenges, the lack of affordable housing and family breakdown. These risk factors can also be exacerbated by personal vulnerabilities such as mental health and substance abuse, trauma, domestic abuse, offending, sudden serious illness, divorce, death of a partner, and disabilities.

Given the complexities of homelessness, we cannot work in isolation. Our strategy provides a framework for how we will engage early with those who need our services, our partners and wider stakeholders (including our local communities, Registered Providers, Government agencies, private landlords and our wider voluntary and community partners) to intervene and prevent homelessness and offer appropriate services as we understand that homelessness can be a very damaging experience for individuals and families.

This strategy details how we will work to mitigate and address the challenges associated with homelessness and rough sleeping and is accompanied by an action plan, which will be monitored (and were appropriate updated) on a quarterly basis.

We are determined to act, in partnership with our stakeholders and local communities to reduce inequality and prioritise prevention, as reinforced within our Stockton-on-Tees Plan and the Powering our Futures Programme. As a Council we believe everyone should have a warm, safe and secure place to live and I am confident that this strategy will have a positive impact on our commitment to tackling homelessness within our Borough.



Councillor Richard Eglington
Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing

Developing the Strategy

This Strategy has been developed using a collaborative, inclusive and evidence-led approach, to ensure it is reflective of the experiences of our residents and, crucially, to ensure that our stakeholder partners (across all sectors) can contribute towards its delivery. We recognise that through collaboration, we can achieve better outcomes together.

Several means of consultation have been used to capture the views of our service users, providers, and stakeholders. These include hosting focus groups, administering a survey, and holding interactive sessions within our temporary accommodation sites to secure the experiences of those with lived experience of homelessness. Feedback has informed both the content of our strategy, how our strategic priority aims will be achieved and re-affirmed the importance of collaboration with stakeholders.

The National Agenda

It is important to acknowledge that the national Government agenda has a wide-ranging impact on local homelessness services. Government is currently in the process of creating a long-term strategy to “end homelessness once and for all”¹. Once received we will review our Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy to ensure it remains up to date and reflects national priorities.

In 2022, the Government of the day published the document ‘Ending Rough Sleeping for Good’, which set out a national commitment to ensure that ‘no one in our society would have to suffer the injustice of living a life on the streets, deprived of shelter, warmth, and necessities’². This has been considered within our strategy.

In addition to the above, there are also imminent legislative changes which will impact on homelessness both nationally and locally. Specifically, the Renters Rights Bill, which delivers on the Government’s manifesto commitment to transform the experience of private renting, including a provision to abolish Section 21 ‘no fault’ evictions and the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023 which aims to regulate supported exempt accommodation. A requirement of this Act will be the introduction of a licensing regime for supported housing and a set of national supported housing standards and a requirement for local authorities to publish a Supported Housing Strategy. Work is ongoing in preparation of the formal implementation of these Acts.

Recently Government has also set ambitious national housebuilding targets which include a commitment to bring forward investment to deliver “*the biggest increase in affordable housing building in a generation*” (confirmed in the 2025 summer Spending Review).

Finally, our strategy has also evolved to take into consideration the Comprehensive Spending Review which was announced in June 2025.

Stockton-on-Tees Plan 2024

The Stockton-on-Tees Plan sets out the Councils vision for the future of the Borough. Our Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 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. As outlined within the Stockton-on-Tees Plan, the delivery of

¹ [Largest ever cash boost to turn the tide on homelessness - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/largest-ever-cash-boost-to-turn-the-tide-on-homelessness)

² [Ending Rough Sleeping for Good \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/111111/Ending-Rough-Sleeping-for-Good.pdf)

these priorities will require strong and effective partnerships, a theme also at the core of this Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy and supporting Action Plan.

The Stockton-on-Tees plan also highlights the Council's aim to make the Borough a great place to live, work and visit, which will be supported through the provision of a diverse housing offer including affordable housing tenures.

Powering Our Future

To ensure the Council is set up to achieve the priorities of the Stockton-on-Tees Plan, we have developed a new, cross cutting Mission Statement for the council to Power Our Future which details how we will work as a Council and is underpinned by five supporting Missions. This strategy has been developed to ensure we both align and support the 'Powering Our Communities' and 'Powering Our Partnerships' missions and by doing so achieve more favourable outcomes for those residents of our borough who may require the support and assistance of our homelessness services.

Complementary Strategies

As well as reinforcing the Council's core strategic documents, this strategy also has direct alignment and will support the delivery of a number of wider Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council strategies. These include the Stockton-on-Tees Domestic Abuse Strategy, the Council's Anti-Poverty Strategy, the Stockton-on-Tees Community Safety Strategy, the Fairer Stockton-on-Tees Strategic Framework, the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy and as noted above the Stockton-on-Tees Plan.

Key achievements during 2024-2025

Despite the challenges noted previously, key achievements within the last financial year have included:

- The number of people new to rough sleeping within our borough has been reduced by 37%.
- The number of relief cases accepted has reduced by 10% (from 806 in 2023/24 to 732 in 2024/25).
- The number of rough sleepers who have moved on to medium term accommodation has risen by 8%.
- The number of 'move-ons' from commissioned temporary accommodation into independent accommodation has increased by 11%.
- We have reviewed our service delivery model and introduced a Rough Sleeper and Repeat Homelessness Team which provides bespoke support to those who are at risk of homelessness and have complex circumstances.
- We have established quarterly multi-agency meetings to ensure that relevant information and examples of best practice are shared.
- We have increased access to dispersed homelessness accommodation for families.
- Our 'Homefinder' role has been successful in securing accommodation for homeless households, ensuring positive outcomes for our residents.

Our Borough

Stockton-on-Tees is a borough of contrasts made up of a mixture of busy town centres, urban conurbations, and picturesque villages. The borough covers approximately 20,000 Hectares (equal to 200 square kilometres) and is home to 196,587 residents (expected to rise to 200,440 by 2030), living in 91,154 dwellings (2025). According to the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD 2019), the borough is ranked 73rd most deprived out of the 317 local authorities in England. There are 27 wards within Stockton-on-Tees, nine of which are in the 10% most deprived wards in the country. This is reinforced by the Borough's significant life expectancy gap, with men in Ingleby Barwick East living 16.7 years longer than men residing within Stockton Town Centre, and women living 18.5 longer within the same comparable areas. Furthermore, 58.9% of households in Stockton-on-Tees have an income of under £30,000, with 17% having a household income below £15,000. This reinforces the socio-economic challenges facing the residents of our Borough, which has a significant consequential impact on their access to suitable housing.

The 2021 Census showed that there had been some significant changes to the population of the borough since the 2011 Census. Some key statistics are shown below:

- The population of Stockton-on-Tees now stands at 196,600 (Census 2021), an increase of 2.6%, since 2011. This is projected to increase further to 211,005 by 2039. The borough remains the largest Council area in the Tees Valley by population size.
- There was also an increase in the number of people aged 65 and over of 3.9%, with the largest increase of 2.3% being between the ages of 65 to 74. The number of people between the ages of 16 to 64, generally referred to as the working age population, fell by 3.6%.

Housing Tenure

One notable statistical change between the 2011 and 2021 Census, is that Stockton-on-Tees experienced the second-largest percentage-point fall of the North East local authorities in the proportion of households that owned their home, falling from 68.5% in 2011 to 66.2% in 2021. A decrease of 2.3%. The 2021 census found that 17% of the population of Stockton-on-Tees are now renting from a private landlord which is an increase of 3.9% from 2011.

In April 2025 the average house price in Stockton-on-Tees was £169,000, lower than the national average of £265,000³. However, housing within the current market is still priced above the reach of those on low incomes. Whilst the average salary in Stockton-on-Tees is £33,691⁴ in the most deprived wards, annual income is less than £15,000 per annum.

Private Sector Housing

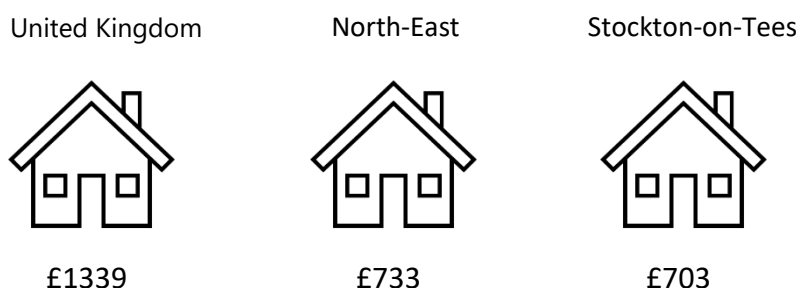
In 2024 the number of people who are renting a property within the private sector (nationally) increased to 19%⁵. The data below details average monthly rental rates within Stockton-on-Tees, which have increased by 10.5% since May 2024.

³ ONS [Housing prices in Stockton-on-Tees \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk)

⁴ [Average earnings \(Gross weekly pay FT workers\) NOMIS](#)

⁵ [English Private Landlord Survey 2024: main report - GOV.UK](#)

National Comparison
Average Monthly Rent May 2025⁶



Although the Borough's rental fees are lower than both the national and regional average, as mentioned previously, there are 27 wards within Stockton-on-Tees, nine of which are in the 10% most deprived wards in the country. The gap between the average private rent rate and the Local Housing Allowance rates (as detailed below) is notable.

The average rental price, according to the Office for National Statistics, as of May 2025 in Stockton-on-Tees by numbers of bedrooms and property type is detailed within the tables below⁷:

Number of Bedrooms	Per Calendar Month	Price Per Week
One Bedroom	£511	£118
Two Bedroom	£638	£147
Three Bedroom	£760	£175
Four or More Bedrooms	£1131	£261

Property Type	Per Calendar Month	Price Per Week
Flats and Maisonettes	£600	£138
Terraced Properties	£705	£163
Semi Detached Properties	£751	£173
Detached Properties	£1048	£242

The average rental price per calendar month across all property types is £776.

The Local Housing Allowance rates for Stockton-on-Tees (table below), are set nationally. When compared to the above table, the weekly Local Housing Allowance rates do not meet the weekly rental costs of any tenure. This puts pressure on individuals to meet the shortfall from other allowances or benefits. Where this is not feasible (affordable), many seek the support of the Homelessness Service and other council welfare support services.

Number of Bedrooms	Weekly LHA Rate – April 2025
Shared Accommodation Rate	£66.50
One Bedroom	£94.36
Two Bedroom	£109.32
Three Bedroom	£126.58
Four Bedroom	£172.60

⁶ ONS [Housing prices in Stockton-on-Tees](#)

⁷ [Housing prices in Stockton-on-Tees](#)

Demand for Social/Affordable Housing

The availability of social/affordable rented housing is not maintaining pace with demand within our borough. In March 2025, there were 2960 Stockton residents (individuals or families) registered on the Tees Valley Homefinder platform. Between April 2024 and March 2025, an average of 18 properties were advertised per week and each advert attracted on average, 90 bids. It is also worth noting that the ‘type’ of affordable housing that becomes available for letting does not match the household make-up of our Housing Register and those who have presented to our homelessness service. For example, between April 2024 to March 2025, there were no one-bedroom properties built within the borough which were made available for letting as affordable housing. Within the same period, 195 one-bed properties social/affordable rented properties were advertised on Tees Valley Homefinder, unfortunately this is vastly outweighed by the number of individuals with an active Tees Valley Homefinder account, who require a one-bed properties (1,504)⁸.

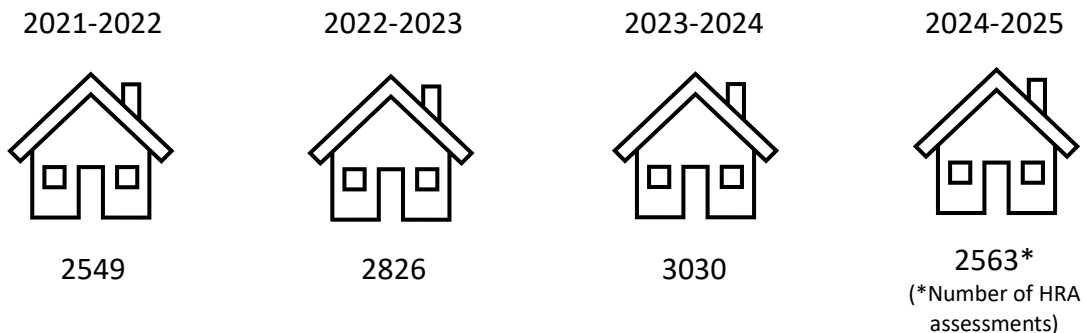
In 2025, the Council, along with other members of the Tees Valley Lettings Partnership, agreed (following consultation) to implement a revised Common Allocations Policy to ensure that those who are most in need can be supported into appropriate and suitable accommodation to prevent, or relieve, homelessness.

Given the limited supply of affordable housing within our borough, the Council has recently undertaken an option appraisal to explore how we can accelerate the provision of additional affordable housing (of all tenures) in our borough. Following the conclusion of this exercise, approval has been secured to move forward on a Hybrid Delivery model (enabling, direct delivery and partnerships). This will include delivery on affordable housing (all types and tenures) on council owned sites and within our broader regeneration plans.

Our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Services in Context⁹

Presentations to the Service

Number of presentations¹⁰ to the homelessness service*:



⁸ Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Lettings and Nominations Data

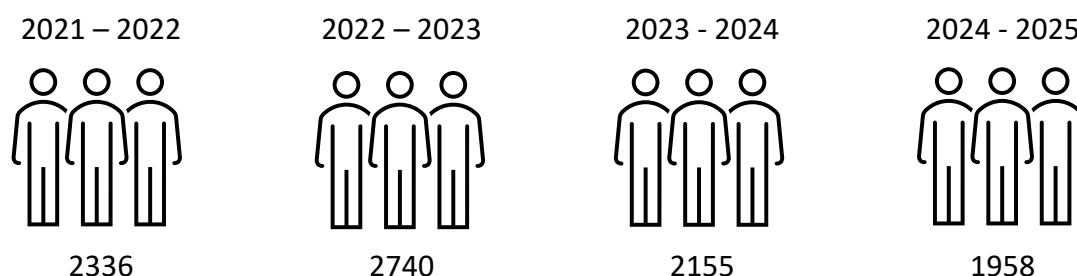
⁹ Housing and FSoT 2023-2024 BUP

¹⁰ A presentation refers to the point at which a person makes themselves known to the service as homeless.

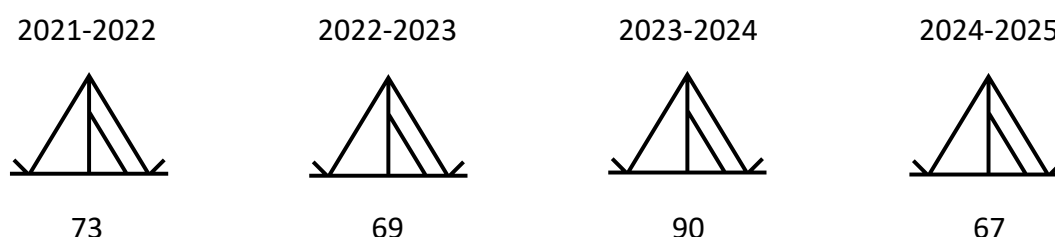
The above information demonstrates a general trend in an annual increase in the number of people presenting as homeless or threatened with homelessness within the borough. The number of homelessness presentations increased by 481 between 2021 to 2024 (an increase of almost 19% over three years). During the period 2023 to 2024, there was a significant increase in the number of people presenting to the service, specifically, an additional 204 presentations were made (an increase of 7.2%). Whilst the number of presentations made to the service are no longer monitored, the number of Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) assessments completed in the 2024-2025 financial year was 2,563, which provides a more reflective insight into the number of individuals in Stockton-on-Tees who perceive themselves to be homeless, or who are at risk of homelessness, and seek the support of the Homelessness Service.

Our Homelessness Service deliver the statutory homelessness duties on behalf of the Government. The primary duties are Prevention and Relief, both are set out within the Housing Act 1996, and have been amended by legislation which has followed, such as the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. As set out within the Homelessness code of guidance for Local Authorities¹¹, Prevention Duty requires the Council to take reasonable steps to help prevent any eligible person (regardless of priority need status, intentionality and whether they have a local connection) who is threatened with homelessness from becoming homeless. Given that the Government emphasise the importance of preventing homelessness, the Council's stance is reflective of this. According to the same Government guidance, the Relief Duty requires housing authorities to help people who are homeless to secure accommodation. For those who have vulnerabilities as defined within the Housing Act 2002, the Council are required to secure emergency accommodation.

Number of accepted prevention and relief cases (combined):



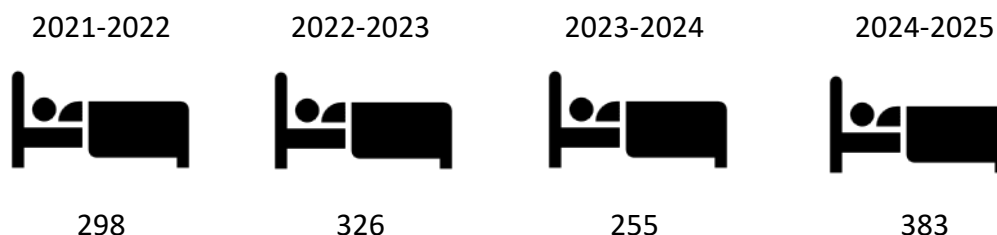
Number of verified rough sleepers:



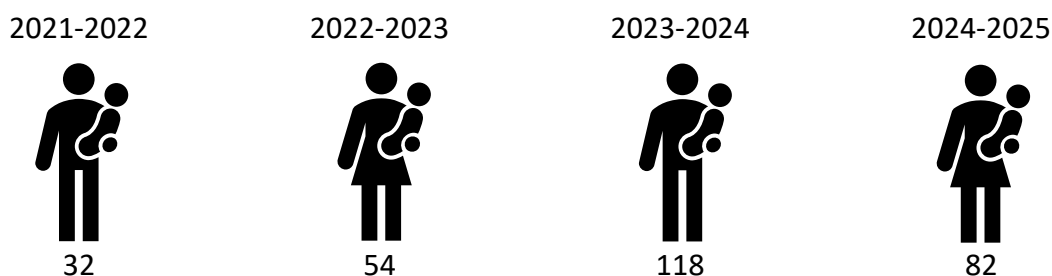
- Between 2021 and 2024, there has been a 23% rise in the number of verified rough sleepers, highlighting that the increase in rough sleeping is a significant challenge facing the Homelessness Service.
- During the financial year 2024/25, the number of verified rough sleepers reached its lowest level since 2021. However, we acknowledge that there is still work to be done to ensure that this number continues to fall during the lifetime of this Strategy.

¹¹ [Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities - Overview of the homelessness legislation - Guidance - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities-overview-of-the-homelessness-legislation)

Number of families and single people placed into Emergency Accommodation:



Number of children placed into Emergency Accommodation:



- Of the 82 families which were placed into emergency accommodation in 2024/25, 29 (35.3%) remained within the emergency placement for longer than 21 days.
- The number of single people who were placed into emergency accommodation in 2024/2025 was 301. This is a rise of 219.7% compared to the previous year.
- Of the 301 single people who were placed into emergency accommodation, 56 of them remained within the placement for longer than 56 days (18.6%).

The top three reasons for presentation to the Homelessness Service are:

- 1) Individuals are asked to leave accommodation by friends and family,
- 2) Termination of tenancies by private landlords, and
- 3) The requirement to flee Domestic Abuse occurring within the home.

Key challenges faced by the Homelessness Service

Cost-of-Living

Increasing interest rates has resulted in rent rises with affordability in the private rented sector pricing many of our residents who would previously resolve their own housing challenges out of the market. The average rental cost as of May 2025 being £776 across all property types. In addition interest and inflation rates increased significantly during the lifetime of our previous strategy, with the cost of consumer goods

and services increasing by 9.6% in October 2022¹². This resulted in a significant increase to mortgage repayments and household bills. At the time of writing, the Bank of England interest rate is 4.25%¹³.

Complexity of Cases

We have seen an increasing number of very complex cases presenting to the service, often involving a combination of issues, for example substance abuse, mental health challenges and offending behaviour. Individuals with complex needs frequently struggle to sustain tenancies due to a lack of understanding or capability around basic budgeting coupled with the impact of harmful lifestyle choices and behaviours have a negative impact on their tenancy.

Some individuals and families who are homeless have additional health issues. To address this, we have a named outreach nurse funded by Public Health to work directly with those who require additional health support.

Limited Supply of Social and Affordable Housing

The context around the limited availability of social and affordable Housing within the borough has been referenced previously. However, it is appropriate to acknowledge that this is one of the key challenges faced and is one of the key reasons why our residents opt for private rented accommodation, albeit this is also becoming more challenging. Whilst the Council are strategically planning, alongside partners, to increase the availability of affordable housing, the current supply is unable to meet demand.

Increasing use of Private Sector Accommodation

Nationally, the number of households which are residing within privately rented accommodation has risen from 13.1% in 2011, to 17% in 2021 (Census, 2021). Alongside this, there has been a significant rise in the cost associated with residing in privately rented property. In February 2024, the average monthly rental figure in Stockton-on-Tees was £622 per month, whereas in February 2025, this figure rose to £692 per month. This, consequently, means that households living in privately rented accommodation in Stockton-on-Tees have, on average, experienced an 11.3% rise in the cost of their core rent over the course of one year (MHGLC).

In addition, between 2019 and 2022, the proportion of households in the North-East who were homeless, or at risk of homelessness as a result of Section 21 evictions increased by 88%, compared to a rise of 18% nationally (MHCLG).

Rising use of Temporary Accommodation and Length of Stay

Earlier statistics on the use of emergency accommodation and the time it takes for service users to move on into medium and long-term accommodation highlight a significant challenge facing the council. This trend not only places a financial pressure on the Council but also has a considerable impact on those placed in such accommodation, especially children and vulnerable adults.

Organised Crime Group (OCG) Activity

Whilst the number of reported crimes in Stockton-on-Tees has decreased, criminal activity continues to impact the Homelessness Service. For instance, the service will be required to support individuals who are at risk of harm due to the actions (or anticipated actions) of organized crime group OCG members. This includes not only direct victims, but also their family members and associates. OCG activity, therefore, remains a challenge for the service¹⁴.

¹² [Cost of living latest insights - Office for National Statistics](#)

¹³ [Interest rates and Bank Rate | Bank of England](#)

¹⁴ [Crime and disorder in Stockton-on-Tees, 2024 Q4 \(12 months ending\) | LG Inform](#)

Increase in Rough Sleeping

Previous statistics highlight that rough sleeping is a significant challenge in Stockton-on-Tees. Whilst our Outreach Support Team conduct regular engagement attempts with individuals who are rough sleeping (both those who are known to sleep rough and those new to rough sleeping), it is often the case that individuals do not want to engage with Officers. This results in difficulty when attempting to implement a tailored plan for the individual to enter secure, long-term accommodation.

Youth Homelessness

Additionally, there is an increasing number of care leavers between the ages of 16-25 who require a long-term placement to transition to, in order to avoid becoming homeless. As a corporate parent, the Council understand the importance of providing crucial support to care leavers, and have, therefore, established internal protocols between the Homelessness and Housing Solutions Team, Children's Services and Adult Social Care to ensure that there is a clear, streamlined path for each care leaver. The pathway will enable services and the individual to create and fulfil a plan to enter long-term accommodation, which will ensure stability, and a fulfilling future. Despite this pathway, unfortunately there will be instances where care experienced young people (those aged between 16-25 years) become homeless.

Anticipated Future Challenges

While steps are being taken to prevent homelessness and positively support those at risk of becoming homeless we continue to anticipate challenges. These include, for example:

- Managing the expectations of those at risk of homelessness in terms of securing access to accommodation based on an individual's available budget verses their aspirations. For example following a financial assessment, individuals who are at risk of homelessness may not have the financial means to afford the rent on a property they are seeking to secure i.e. a household with a 2 bedroom need maybe actively bidding on a 3 bedroom property. This is not always well received. In these circumstances it is vital that we manage the expectations of the individual.
- The need for a wider dispersal of supported housing properties within the borough to help people re-connect with families and communities.
- The current and future economic landscape continues to present challenges (continued rental increases in the private rented sector, Local Housing Allowance rates not reflecting market rents, continual rises in the cost of living, or due to competition for accommodation landlords requesting guarantors).
- Legislative challenges, including the implementation of the Renters Rights Bill, which may result in private landlords deciding to exit the market, potentially leading to an increase in presentations to the Homelessness Service. Currently, it is also unclear if one of the unintended consequences of the implementation of the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023 is increase in homeless presentations if landlords do not apply for a licence and/or again decide to exit the market.
- Whilst the recently announced three-year funding settlement for local authorities is welcome, ongoing uncertainty surrounding long-term funding to tackle homelessness limits our ability to plan strategically. It also affects our capacity to recruit and retain experienced staff particularly where roles are dependent short-term funding.

In summary the preceding sections of the strategy highlight the significant challenges faced by the residents of our borough and particularly those who are unable to purchase their own homes or access either social or affordable private rented accommodation.

Our Vision and Strategic Priorities

The Vision

Our Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025-30 is intended to convey the Council's determination to end homelessness within our Borough. **Our vision is 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.**

To ensure that the appropriate action is taken to achieve our vision our strategy is underpinned by four strategic priorities:

1. **Prevent and relieve homelessness**
2. **Prevent rough sleeping**
3. **Efficient use of temporary and supported accommodation**
4. **Working in partnership to address homelessness**

Actions

To achieve our four strategic priorities and address our key challenges, we will develop and implement a comprehensive action plan that has been informed through consultation with our partners and those with lived experience of homelessness.

All actions underpinning our strategic priorities will be monitored using a SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time Bound) approach. Our Action Plan will identify:

- Expected outcomes and success measures.
- Timescales for the completion of specific actions.
- Lead officers and stakeholder partners to drive specific areas of work, and
- Budget implications.

We will review our Action Plan quarterly, with progress against our stated objectives measured through key performance indicators. These will be reported through the Councils corporate monitoring arrangements and shared with key partners and stakeholders via the Homelessness Forum.

Strategic Priority 1 – Prevent and Relieve Homelessness

To prevent and relieve homelessness we need to ensure that we have robust mechanisms in place to support those who are in need. Our staffing resources need to be sufficient and directed efficiently to deliver positive outcomes for our service users. Toolkits of support including financial assistance will be made available and appropriate to address presenting issues and prevent homelessness.

Our approach focuses on early intervention to support individuals at risk of losing their home either stay in their current home (providing it is suitable to do so), or by supporting a planned move to alternative, suitable long-term accommodation. Homelessness Prevention Officers will negotiate and advocate where possible to keep the individual housed in their existing accommodation. Alternatively, they may offer floating support, advice and financial assistance for re-housing to address the presenting issue.

How will we achieve Strategic Priority 1?

We will:

Ensure that support and advice is provided to individuals to help them sustain their current accommodation or to secure alternative accommodation at the earliest opportunity. For example, children in our care are offered bespoke interventions by a dedicated Homelessness Prevention Officer. We also have Officers who specialise in early engagement with those who have been granted asylum by the Home Office and are allowed to stay in the United Kingdom as well as providing tailored supported to those fleeing domestic violence.

- Ensure partner organisations understand and exercise their 'duty to refer' to enable and support early prevention work.
- Ensure through internal audit mechanisms that customer needs and pathways are regularly assessed and remain fit for purpose.
- Explore how technology can improve services, including the exploration of online application forms.
- Effectively monitor and bid for financial resources to support prevent and relieve homelessness.
- Maximise the use of available resources, including external support services to prevent homelessness.
- Implement a dedicated service for customers experiencing affordability issues in conjunction with the Council's Welfare Assistance Team.
- Deliver quarterly training sessions for those working with individuals at risk of homelessness promoting early identification and interventions from public sector partners, community groups and voluntary sector organisations.
- Explore improved ways of accessing the private rented market for customers. Provide enhanced information and support to enable individuals to undertake independent property searches.
- Implement an proactive, enhanced service for integration and resettlement cases to reduce the use of Emergency Accommodation.

How will we measure progress toward achieving our strategic priority 1 aims?

- The number of successful outcomes achieved in prevention cases will increase.
- The number of individuals placed into short-term supported accommodation who sustain their tenancies will increase. We will do this by working collaboratively with Registered Providers and private landlords to reduce the risk of tenancy breakdown and prevent evictions.
- An increase in the number of referrals from partner organisations under their 'duty to refer'.
- The number of cases that move from a Prevention to a Relief duty will decrease.

Strategic Priority 2 – Prevent Rough Sleeping

Rough sleeping represents the most dangerous and acute form of homelessness. It can have a severe impact on an individual's physical and mental health as well as their personal safety. Rough sleeping is rarely the first form of homelessness that people experience. Our aim is to reduce rough sleeping and ensure that any instance is rare and brief. To achieve this, we are committed to delivering a holistic approach to the assessment process and to service provision, ensuring that support meets the needs of the individual.

This strategy is supported by the Stockton-on-Tees Rough Sleeping Action Plan, aligned to MHCLG Rough Sleeping Initiative funding and outlines our plans for preventing rough sleeping.

How will we achieve strategic priority 2?

We will focus on 3 key areas:

Prevention - Stopping people sleeping rough for the first time by delivering a personalised holistic approach in collaboration with public and community partners.

Support - Supporting those currently sleeping rough to move off the streets by providing early intervention and targeted support and use our Rough Sleeper Outreach Support Officer to prevent evictions from supported housing.

We will ensure the early identification of repeat homelessness cases to determine whether wraparound support is required. In addition, we will explore the procurement of a 'Somewhere Safe to Stay – Sit Up Service', designed to provide immediate support to verified Rough Sleepers.

We will also continue to work in partnership to maintain our 'Buddy Service', delivered by our VCSE partner. Providing intensive support to vulnerable service users focusing on tenancy sustainment and social integration.

Recovery - Supporting those who have slept rough to prevent a return to the streets. This will be achieved through the provision of personalised recovery service, tailored to meet an individual's needs. A dedicated outreach support worker will co-ordinate support services that fall outside the remit of housing including drug and alcohol treatment services (with Change, Grow and Live) and work with social care and health professionals. A clear pathway will be established for progression through housing.

We will explore alternative assistance models which have been implemented in other geographical areas, such as 'Somewhere Safe to Stay', to determine if such models would be effective in Stockton-on-Tees.

How will we measure progress towards achieving our strategic priority 2 aims?

- The number of verified rough sleepers will decrease. Our target is a 5% reduction per year during the lifetime of the strategy. The number of verified rough sleepers should, therefore, decrease to 52 people by 2030.
- There will be an increase in the number of verified rough sleepers who are placed into accommodation within one week of verification.
- The use of Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme units will be periodically monitored and evaluated.

Strategic Priority 3 - Efficient Use of Temporary and Supported Accommodation

The use of temporary accommodation in the borough has increased, a trend that is replicated regionally and nationally. This rise is expected to continue, driven by external factors beyond the control of the local authority and is exacerbated by the growing demand for affordable accommodation, placing additional pressure on available resources.

To meet our statutory obligations and effectively support individuals and families, it is essential that we have the right balance of temporary accommodation and support.

How will we deliver strategic priority 3?

We will:

- Conduct a comprehensive options appraisal of our commissioned short-term supported housing, in preparation for the end of our 'Accommodation-based Housing-related Support Service for Homeless Families and Adults' contract. We must ensure that our temporary and supported accommodation provision meets the needs of individuals experiencing homelessness, delivers value for money and makes best use of our procured accommodation units.
- Break the cycle of repeat presentations for temporary accommodation. We will establish a complex needs criteria group to monitor the top 10 repeat presenters, address their individual circumstances contributing to repeat homelessness and develop a personal housing plan to address these issues. We will also work with partners to increase the number of 'move on' properties for those ready to transition to more stable accommodation.

How will we measure progress toward achieving our strategic priority 3 aims?

- By the number of people who have moved into long-term accommodation in a timely manner.
- The outcomes of the complex needs criteria group will be monitored periodically, with a reduction in repeat presentations to the service anticipated.
- The number of families and single people in emergency homeless accommodation will decrease.
- The overall cost of emergency accommodation (used in instances where commissioned temporary accommodation is exhausted) will decrease.

Strategic Priority 4 – Working in Partnership

To effectively address each individual case and deliver positive outcomes for our residents, it is essential that we identify and work with organisations and partners - across both the statutory and VCSE sector - who are the best placed to offer tailored support to those experiencing homelessness. We acknowledged that the Council may not always be the most appropriate agency to meet an individual's bespoke needs and experiences. Therefore maintaining strong partnerships with Registered Providers, commissioned services, colleagues within VCSE sector and other key partners is vital to ensuring those who experience homelessness are provided with the right support, in a timely manner, by the right people.

Maintaining positive partnerships will enhance our ability to deliver a personalised approach for individuals who present to the Homelessness Service. This person-centred support reduces the likelihood of individuals facing the risk of homelessness again in the future.

Furthermore, given the Government's ongoing commitment to devolving power to combined authorities, we will continue to work closely with the Tees Valley Combined Authority and our sub-regional local authority partners to achieve positive outcomes for our residents.

How will we deliver strategic priority 4?

We will:

- Hold quarterly meetings with partners to understand their challenges and identify any emerging issues or concerns.
- Establish a Homelessness Forum who will have a role in monitoring progress against this strategy.
- Continue to provide bespoke support via the Rough Sleeper and Repeat Homelessness Team, drawing on the expertise of internal and external partners.
- Emphasise the importance of staff members share workspaces with VCSE colleagues and ensure that this becomes standard practice within the team.

Additionally, priority three outline includes the re-commissioning of our temporary accommodation provision. We will ensure that we collaborate with our partners throughout the commissioning process, to enable the delivery of a provision which delivers positive outcomes for those placed into temporary accommodation.

How will we measure progress towards achieving our strategic priority 4 goals?

- Hold quarterly partnership meetings via the 'Homelessness Forum' and the 'Rough Sleeping Action Group', both are expected to improve outcomes for those experiencing homelessness.
- The Rough Sleeper and Repeat Homelessness Team will work to reduce repeat homelessness, leading to a decrease in repeat presentations to the service.
- The number of Prevention and Relief cases with a positive outcome should increase.

How will we deliver and monitor the strategy?

To ensure progress is being made against our strategic priorities, we will adopt robust monitoring arrangements through a detailed Action Plan. This will help us track progress and where appropriate take remedial action. Oversight will include regular engagement through the Homelessness Forum, which is to be established in accordance with Strategic Priority four.

Reviewing the strategy

Our Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy will be reviewed annually to ensure our Action Plan remains relevant and responsive to any new policy, legislation or funding opportunities that may impact on the delivery of services. In addition, our Action Plan will be reviewed quarterly to ensure that identified targets are on track and that timely action is taken if timescales are not being met.