

Homeless and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025 – 2030

March 2025

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Foreword

Homelessness is a profound and complex issue that touches the very heart of our society. It represents the stark reality faced by too many individuals and families who find themselves without a place to call home, often through circumstances beyond their control.

This strategy has been developed with a deep sense of commitment to making a difference in the lives of those experiencing homelessness. It is not merely a document but a blueprint for change that seeks to restore dignity, hope, and opportunity to those who need it most.

In the pages that follow, we outline a comprehensive approach that addresses the root causes of homelessness, from systemic inequalities and economic hardship to health challenges and social disconnection. Our goal is to create a supportive environment where everyone has access to safe, secure, and affordable housing, along with the necessary services to rebuild their lives.

This strategy is the result of collaboration with stakeholders, including local authorities, charities, healthcare providers and more. Their insights and perspectives have been invaluable in shaping our vision and ensuring that our approach is both compassionate and effective.

In line with our Corporate Plan and key objectives, over the next five years, Eastleigh Borough Council will fulfil its statutory duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 by working in partnership with key agencies, being person-centred and taking a proactive and preventative approach in tackling homelessness.

This strategy contributes to our overall vision to improve the health and wellbeing of everyone who lives and works in the borough so that all our residents have an equal opportunity to flourish and live long, happy and healthy lives.

Cllr Paul Bicknell
Cabinet Member for Social Policy

Introduction

Homelessness in the United Kingdom has reached alarming levels, with a significant increase in the number of individuals and families lacking stable housing. Rising living costs have caused financial difficulties, including unemployment, which has pushed many individuals and families into homelessness. Addressing this crisis requires proactivity and a comprehensive strategy that include increasing affordable housing, providing robust support services, and implementing preventive measures to reduce the risk of homelessness.

Homelessness is often associated with poverty and is a social determinant of mental health. Households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness contain some of the most vulnerable members of our communities and research carried out by Crisis demonstrates that those affected by homelessness are at increased likelihood of poor physical and mental health, placing further pressures on health services. Homelessness is not always visible and includes households who are living in overcrowded or unsuitable housing and those who have no fixed abode, including sofa surfers, rough sleepers, those living in garages, sheds, cars and other moveable structures, and transient households.

In Eastleigh Borough, homelessness is below that of both England and most neighbouring authorities. However, it still presents as a significant challenge. With an increase in the number of people approaching Eastleigh Borough Council recorded since 2018/2019 and the number of households owed the main housing duty increasing over the last three years, there is still a strong need to focus on referrals and maximise opportunities for prevention work.

The main reason for homelessness in Eastleigh Borough over the last three years is due to the end of private rented accommodation, which accounted for 33% of all cases where a duty was owed. It is recognised that there is a need for a much greater focus on preventing homelessness by increasing housing supply and developing homelessness prevention initiatives.

Some of the challenges are in relation to substance misuse and mental health, both in terms of securing suitable supported placements, and longer-term move-on solutions. Previous tenancy histories of rent arrears and behavioural issues can be a barrier to accessing move on opportunities, including social housing.

The Council, alongside key partners, have worked very hard over the last five years to prevent homelessness year on year and we have a strong record of performance compared to our nearest statistical neighbours. Despite these successes, the next few years are likely to bring considerable challenges. Homelessness in Hampshire and the UK is steadily rising and the continued roll out of welfare reform measures will inevitably impact on many households who are already seeking housing advice and support from the Council.

Background

The Council define “homelessness” and “threatened homelessness” using the definition in [Section 175 of the 1996 Housing Act](#).

Someone is homeless if:

- they have no accommodation they are legally entitled to occupy, either in the UK or overseas;
- they have accommodation but cannot secure entry to it;
- they have accommodation designed or adapted to be lived in that consists of a ‘moveable structure’ (such as a caravan, mobile home, or canal boat) but they have nowhere to put it;
- they have accommodation but it is not reasonable or suitable to continue living there.

Somebody is threatened with homelessness if:

- they are likely to become homeless within 56 days;
- they have been given a legal valid notice to leave the accommodation, and the notice expires within 56 days

To achieve our vision and tackle homelessness, we must first understand the context within which we are working. The increase in homelessness in England is driven by several complex, interrelated factors:

- The cost of housing, both to rent and to buy has risen significantly over the past decade, far outpacing income growth.
- Welfare reforms, delays in Universal Credit payments, and reductions in benefits for certain groups, have left many unable to afford their rent and sustain their tenancy.
- Economic factors such as stagnant wages, job insecurity, and rising living costs are pushing individuals and families into financial hardship.
- The shortage of affordable homes, particularly in urban areas, contributes to homelessness.
- Mental health issues, substance abuse, and other complex needs contribute significantly to homelessness. Many people who are homeless also have multiple vulnerabilities that make it harder to access stable housing and support services.
- Domestic violence is a major driver of homelessness, particularly for women. People fleeing abusive relationships may not have access to immediate or affordable housing, leading to stays in temporary accommodations or, in some cases, street homelessness.
- In September 2024, the United Kingdom granted protection to 52,739 individuals who had submitted asylum claims, marking a 34% increase from the previous year. This increase reflects the UK's ongoing commitment to providing refuge to those fleeing persecution and conflict.

The Council is aware of the emerging local government reorganisation picture and will work with other councils to ensure that homelessness services are not disrupted by any organisational change across the area.

Current position

In 2023/24, Eastleigh Borough Council owed homelessness duties to 404 households

Roughly 28% of people owed a prevention/ relief duty in Eastleigh Borough were between the ages of 25-34 in 2023/24

The biggest reason for homelessness in Eastleigh Borough in 2023/24 was the end of a Private Rented Sector Tenancy

In December 2024, there were a total of 32 households in emergency accommodation in Eastleigh Borough

Eastleigh Borough recorded 2 rough sleepers in 2023

There were 2551 households in Eastleigh Borough on the housing register at the end of March 2024

According to Shelter, 19.7 million people (66%) in England reported pressures on their housing in 2023

In Eastleigh Borough, the greatest demand is for one-bedroom accommodation, which accounts for 42% of all applicants

For households looking to rent property, the lower rent in 2023 was £875 per calendar month. Households would need to spend 42% of their income to afford this

Lower property prices in Eastleigh Borough in 2023 were £250,000. The income multiple required to buy was nine times income

Strategic objectives

We are committed to supporting people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness by providing secure and good quality housing. The Council understand how invaluable this is in maintaining good health, improving quality of life and reducing health inequalities. Those individuals and communities suffering the worst health outcomes are often those on the lowest incomes and in the poorest standard of housing.

The Council's approach will focus on four key strategic objectives:

- Taking a preventative approach to tackling homelessness whilst supporting sustainable communities
- Providing sufficient housing stock to cope with demand
- Working in partnership with key agencies to address homelessness and rough sleeping
- Being proactive in tackling rough sleeping across the borough

Preventative approach

Everyone deserves a safe and stable place to live. Homelessness exposes individuals to numerous hardships, including poor health, violence and social stigma. Through early intervention of homelessness prevention, we uphold wellbeing and reduce the risk of long-term detrimental effects. We will:

- Offer advice and/or assistance to all households threatened with homelessness
- Ensure the delivery of an out of hours service operated by experienced officers with a homelessness background
- Identify support needs at an early stage and refer to appropriate services (social inclusion, mental health, young persons, domestic abuse, ex-offenders)
- Increase provision of mediation to sustain existing accommodation
- Increase use of Discretionary Housing Payments and Rent Top Up loans to clear or reduce arrears in order to prevent homelessness
- Increase and improve mediation and negotiation between families, landlords and Housing Providers
- Collaborate with neighbouring Local Authorities to review the Hampshire-wide Duty to Refer protocol
- Effectively use funding streams to respond to emergency situations (such as travel to access accommodation and utility bill top up)
- Ensure households on low incomes are assisted with essential items required to set up a home
- Enable the provision of funding to supply tailored furniture packages to households following the resolution of their homelessness
- Continue partnership working with SCRATCH to expand the range of household items supplied (including paint, flooring and white goods)
- Maximise opportunities within sheltered housing stock via the housing allocations scheme to provide suitable housing options for applicants aged over 55

- Enhance proactive assisted bidding through Hampshire Home Choice for homeless households to maximise housing opportunities
- Further develop relationships with Housing Providers and Local Authorities operating outside of the Hampshire Home Choice Framework to increase availability of hard to let stock
- Work in partnership with Citizens Advice Eastleigh to explore ways to more effectively share intelligence and develop sustainable individual client plans to prevent homelessness
- Continue to review customer call back service to maximise opportunities to prevent homelessness at the first point of contact
- Continue to review template letters and forms to ensure they are user-friendly and contain relevant information
- Continue to review internal processes and procedures to ensure delivery of an effective and person-centered service
- Build on existing webpages to give a greater level of advice online
- Provide staff training in homelessness and other relevant legislation, softer skills and mental health/support needs (for example managing suicidal conversations and Connect 5 training)
- Continue to review application processing times and quality to ensure a high level of service is provided consistently
- Build on support provision for tenants to aid tenancy sustainment

Increase housing supply

Housing supply is crucial as it ensures people have access to affordable homes and addresses the root causes of homelessness, promoting long-term stability and wellbeing of communities. We will:

- New build programme
 - Continue to support the delivery of new homes by working with developers, landowners, Housing Providers, local communities and government agencies
 - Work to maximise the delivery of affordable housing across the borough
- Increase supply of temporary accommodation and promote throughput to maximise vacancies
 - Work with partner Housing Providers to increase temporary accommodation resource
 - Work with providers to deliver new units of supported accommodation and facilitate efficient move-on
 - Effective use of Hampshire Home Choice Allocations Framework to increase move-on opportunities
- Enhance engagement with private landlords by delivering a landlords' forum and developing a toolkit of incentive schemes to increase resource in the sector and support tenancy sustainment
- Increase work with tenants to encourage move on (encourage repayment of debts to ensure housing register application is maintained, support to deal with debt and tenancy management issues, use of Rent Top Up loans and Discretionary Housing Payments to assist with arrears and shortfall)

- Work collaboratively with support agency partners to improve tenancy sustainment

Partnership approach

Partnership working is essential in tackling homelessness as it brings together diverse resources, expertise and perspectives that create a coordinated and sustainable approach. We will:

- Deliver elected member and key partner training sessions to inform legislative duties, service delivery practices and promote Eastleigh Borough Council's strategic approach
- Build upon close working relationship with councillors and continue monthly meetings with the Portfolio holder
- Foster stronger relationships and pathways with Housing Providers and other accommodation providers
- Negotiate reciprocal move arrangements with other Local Authorities to increase housing options for households needing to move out of area
- Expand on close relationship with the borough's largest housing provider VIVID Homes Limited
 - Continue collaborative appointments with Housing Providers and tenants threatened with eviction due to rent arrears
 - Ensure provision of Management Moves in line with the Hampshire Home Choice Allocations Framework
 - Continue joint visits to households in temporary accommodation to encourage move on and address tenancy management issues
 - Improve links with VIVID's homelessness prevention support service
- Ensure suitability of emergency accommodation provision
 - Carry out Bed and Breakfast inspections
 - Ensure compliance with Out of Borough Placement Policy
 - Ensure compliance with The Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2003
 - Develop alternatives to Bed and Breakfast placements by expanding on close working relationships with housing and support providers
- Input into regular agendas for Tactical Community Safety Partnership, Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) and Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) (and attend meetings where appropriate)
- Attend regular meetings with local support providers to discuss referrals, move-on, contractual issues and improvements
- Attend Hampshire and IOW Local Authority housing groups including:
 - Hampshire Housing Authority Directors Group
 - Housing Enabling Network
 - Stock Holding Local Authorities
 - Hampshire Housing Needs Group
 - Hampshire Private Sector Housing Group
- Attend regular meetings with other Local Authorities and Housing

- Providers to share best practice and discuss any issues
- Provide input into development of a network of key partners to help tackle health inequality and deprivation (including Food Bank, Department of Work and Pensions, Citizens Advice Eastleigh, Two Saints and Fledge)
- Continue close working with the Housing Benefit team to expand use of Discretionary Housing Payments to prevent homelessness by providing financial assistance towards rent arrears, tenancy start up and removal costs

Rough Sleeping

Everyone deserves to live with dignity. Addressing rough sleeping is vital to improve wellbeing, promote public health and safety and foster social cohesion. We will:

- Continue to implement and review SWEP (Severe Weather Emergency Protocol) taking a compassionate and reactive approach to the provision of shelter to rough sleepers during periods of severe weather
- Continue to work closely with social inclusion provider to respond quickly to reports of rough sleepers in the borough by providing efficient and effective outreach advice and assistance
- Continue regular engagement with the Rough Sleeping Advisor at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to support good practice and maximise funding opportunities
- Increase public awareness of Street Link to encourage reporting of rough sleepers

Engagement and consultation

To ensure that this strategy is effective in addressing homelessness, the objectives have been co-produced with a number of key stakeholders and partners, all working to reduce homelessness and enable health and wellbeing across the whole borough.

During the development of this strategy, and the strategic needs assessment, we have engaged with key services and partners, including:

- Relevant services within the Council, such as housing and homelessness teams, local areas, planning policy, revenue and benefits and more.
- Local agencies and institutions, including the NHS, Department for Work and Pensions and other local councils.
- Community organisations and charities, including Community First, Citizens Advice, Fledge and children and young people services.
- Housing Providers and the private rented sector.

Links to other strategies

This Homeless and Rough Sleeping Strategy complements the Council's overarching Corporate Strategy and the Housing and Development Strategy.

There are also a number of strategies and policies that are closely related to the Homeless and Rough Sleeping Strategy. These documents are reviewed and renewed to ensure they remain up-to-date and relevant:

- Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP)
- Empty Homes Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Armed Forces Community Covenant

The following external strategies and agencies also impact on homelessness in Eastleigh Borough and must also be considered:

- Hampshire Home Choice Allocations Framework
- Accommodation and support providers

The Council will measure its performance by recording the following outputs using Homelessness Case Level Collection (H-CLIC) and through the quarterly monitoring process:

- Number of households in emergency accommodation
- Number of families in non-self-contained emergency accommodation +6 weeks
- Number of verified rough sleepers
- Number of Hampshire Home Choice applications pending +10 working days
- Corporate Priority Indicators (CPI)