

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

2018-2023

Foreword

Homelessness in modern Britain is not acceptable. Leicester City Council is committed to preventing homelessness and helping people find suitable housing that meets their needs.

This strategy reinforces our commitment to preventing homelessness rather than dealing with households at the point of crisis.

We and our partners have made progress in improving homelessness prevention, and for those where homelessness is not prevented provide quality services. This has been achieved in a context of reduced funding and increasing numbers of people seeking assistance when they are homeless or at risk of homelessness.



The roles of our partners are critical, and we recognise all their work in providing accommodation, supporting residents and sustaining tenancies; it is with our partners that we have managed to achieve the success we have.

However, we know that we can still do more, and this strategy sets out the actions we will take to help prevent even more people from becoming homeless and increase the support for those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Councillor Andy Connelly
Assistant City Mayor – Housing

Introduction

The Homelessness Act 2002 places a legal requirement on local authorities to undertake a review of homelessness in their area, and develop and publish a strategy to prevent homelessness, based on the findings of the review.

What is homelessness?

People can be homeless if they have nowhere to stay and are living on the streets, they can also be considered homeless even if they have a roof over their head.

Homelessness can include people:

- staying with friends or family (sofa surfing)
- staying in a hostel, night shelter or bed & breakfast accommodation
- squatting
- at risk of violence or abuse in their home
- living in poor conditions that affects their health
- living apart from their family because they don't have a place to live together

Some people consider homelessness, begging and rough sleeping to be the same; this is not the case. People who are involved in street begging are not always homeless, and people who rough sleep are not always involved in street begging, and as the above definition shows homelessness is much wider than just rough sleeping.

This is Leicester City Council's fourth homelessness strategy and it builds on previous progress made. It also recognises the changing national and local context which has brought increased levels of demand and a challenging financial environment.

Our last homelessness strategy focused on preventing homelessness. This approach has delivered excellent results, especially in preventing family homelessness. In 2016/17 over 3,000 households were provided with support to help them maintain their current home or find alternative accommodation.

This strategy will continue to focus on homeless prevention and seek to improve homeless prevention for singles and couples. This is aligned with the Homelessness Reduction Act which aims to ensure a greater focus on the prevention of homelessness and offers some increased protection for single homeless people and couples without dependent children.

The council is committed to investing in early intervention and preventing homelessness where possible. At the time of writing this strategy the council has invested approximately £5.6m a year in housing-related services for people who are homeless and threatened with homelessness.

We will monitor our progress annually and update our action plan annually to ensure we respond to changing local and national pressures.

We are committed to working with Leicester's strong voluntary and community sector to reduce homelessness and to provide the best possible support for those affected by homelessness.

Context and challenges

The homelessness review was carried out in 2017 and included collecting data and evidence and consulting with local people and those involved in delivering services for homeless people or those at risk of homelessness.

Key points:

- **Increasing numbers of households seeking assistance**

Since 2014/15 there has been a year on year increase in the number of households approaching the council for assistance when they are homeless or at risk of homelessness. From 2015/16 to 2016/17 approaches increased by 30% (863). We expect to see increasing demand for housing and homelessness advice and requests for support.

- **Homelessness preventions have increased**

The council has been able to respond to the increased numbers of households seeking assistance by increasing homelessness preventions (this work is supported / carried out by a range of internal services and external providers as well as housing options). From 2015/16 to 2016/17 preventions increased by 32% (828). The Homelessness Reduction Act will strengthen advice and assistance options for the single homeless. This will place additional burdens on services that are already under significant pressure due to the increase in presentations for advice and assistance.

- **Level of / awareness / access to support or information could be improved**

There is little homelessness prevention advice and information available online via the council's website. There also needs to be other access points for those who find it difficult to access services. When individuals are not able to access council funded services (e.g. because they have no local connection, have no recourse to public funds or have previously been excluded from accessing services) relevant information and advice should

always be provided. We will work with partner organisations to improve advice and support available.

- **Rental and home ownership affordability is an increasing issue**

Renting in the private rented sector and home ownership is already unaffordable for many households in Leicester. The overall rate of new housing provision, including affordable housing provision, is not keeping pace with household growth and is failing to reduce housing market pressures. Local housing allowance rates are set to be frozen at 2015 rates until 2020/21. This and other welfare reforms and increases to the cost of living have, and continue to impact on individuals' ability to sustain a home. We expect these pressures to generate rising demand for housing advice, support and homelessness services in the years to come.

- **Rising levels of rough sleeping**

Like figures nationally, Leicester has seen an increase in rough sleeping. This is a concerning trend. The council's outreach team will try and assist all rough sleepers. There are some that don't wish to access services. We will review our approach and see if there are alternative offers of support that could be provided. We and other partners in the city want to understand the full nature of rough sleeping so appropriate responses can be taken. Several organisations, along with the council, are championing an approach at ending street homelessness in the city.

- **Meeting the needs of individuals with complex / multiple support needs**

Homelessness is not just a housing issue. Many homeless people have complex needs which require a multi-disciplinary approach. We will continue to work with others and seek to forge strong working relationships with a range of services / organisations. We will look to improve and build-upon partnership working with a health and social care services (mental and physical), substance misuse services, employment, training and advice services, criminal justice agencies, benefit support services, asylum and refugees support services, domestic violence support services. Leicester has many excellent services for homeless people that have implemented the governments psychologically informed environments (PIE) guidelines through the Leicester PIE project. We will continue to support this project and this approach.

- **Continuing repeat homelessness of singles & couples**

Breaking the cycle of homelessness is difficult, however by providing joined – up responses and access to support some progress has been made to reducing repeat homelessness. However, there are still a significant number of singles that access temporary accommodation who have previously been in temporary accommodation before. We want to ensure that people who are

placed in temporary accommodation get the support needed so they can achieve a positive move-on.

- **Continuing financial pressures / uncertain economic circumstances**

Economic growth has been slow and forecasts suggest uncertainty in the coming years, particularly affected by the decision to leave the European Union. Households on benefits have also been affected by welfare reforms. These have and will continue to have an impact and are a significant risk to the continued success of the prevention of homelessness. Council services are also affected by financial cuts, including housing, which delivers homelessness services. As a result, it is important that we target services where they are most needed, and that homelessness is prevented wherever possible. There are proposals for a new model for funding supported housing from 2019. These are being consulted upon and we are waiting for full proposals. The current proposals are a risk for the future viability of supported housing schemes.

- **Lack of settled affordable accommodation available**

There is more demand for social housing however there are fewer lettings; therefore, people are waiting longer for a property and some may never be offered accommodation. The lack of settled affordable accommodation available can mean households are placed in temporary accommodation whilst waiting for suitable settled accommodation to be found. To address the numbers of people in temporary accommodation we have to ensure there is a suitable supply of settled accommodation. We have been working with the private rented sector; however, this is becoming increasingly more difficult as rents have increased above local housing allowance rates. We have also adopted the Housing First model (supporting homeless people with high needs of entrenched or repeat homeless to live in their own homes) where 'secure housing is viewed as a stable platform from which other issues can be addressed.'

Our Goals

This strategy will continue to focus on preventing homelessness and breaking the cycle of homelessness. Our strategic aims are:

- 1. Anyone at risk of homelessness is aware of and has access to the services they may need to prevent it.**
- 2. Provide suitable accommodation and support options for people who are, or who may become homeless.**
- 3. Reduce rates of repeat homelessness amongst single people.**
- 4. Provide the right support and services so that no person needs to sleep rough in Leicester.**

Homelessness is complex and is affected by national and local circumstances however this does not prevent us from striving to achieve these goals.

The actions we and our partners will take to help deliver these aims are set out in the action plan for this strategy.

Governance of the strategy

The strategy and action plan will be monitored and reviewed annually. A report will be prepared for Housing Scrutiny Commission and actions and performance will be monitored by the Homelessness Reference Group (HRG).

Progress will be monitored by 7 key indicators. These are:

Indicator	2016/17 Outturn
Total number of households approaching housing options for assistance when they are homeless or at risk of homelessness	3,739
% of households prevented from becoming homeless after seeking help at housing options	89.7%
Total requests for assistance: % were someone was placed in temporary accommodation % not placed in temporary accommodation because there was no vacancy	48% 33%
Unique individuals identified by the outreach team (from the Outreach teams snapshot, which is all rough sleepers witnessed sleeping rough between 6am and 8am every Friday morning only)	198
% of unique individuals who have entered commissioned homeless accommodation two or more times within the last two years	43%
% of households achieving independent living following a stay in LCC commissioned temporary accommodation: Families Singles & couples Offenders Young people	91.9% 63.3% 73.4% 75.7%
% of households supported by LCC commissioned floating support services to establish and maintain independent living	96.4%

Action Plan – 2018

Strategic aim 1: Anyone at risk of homelessness is aware of and has access to the services they may need to prevent it

Ref	Action	Target / Outcome	Lead
1.1	Deliver the Homelessness Prevention Trailblazer project with Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland	Development of homelessness prevention app Introduce one-to-one support service for individuals requiring more support to prevent homelessness Improve awareness and referral routes of homelessness advice Consider opportunities for developing shared housing options for under 35's	LCC - Head of Service Homelessness, Prevention & Support
1.2	Implement the Homelessness Reduction Act	Increased focus on prevention and increased protection for singles and couples	LCC - Head of Service, Homelessness Prevention & Support
1.3	Work with the Think Family programme to identify households at risk of becoming homeless and advise which services could help support the household in sustaining their tenancy	Increase early homelessness preventative work to reduce crisis presentations	LCC - Head of Service, Homelessness Prevention & Support LCC – Head of Service Early Help
1.4	Improve advice / signposting / information available online	Improve information available about homelessness services available across the city, including information for landlords	LCC – Head of Service Homelessness, Prevention Support LCC - Head of Revenues & Customer Support
1.5	Consider opportunities for partnership working e.g. with Leicester prisons through the gate team and a specialist housing prevention officer working with Community Rehabilitation Company & National Probation Service	Improve homelessness prevention for offenders including people on remand Procedure with Leicester prison for providing advice for offenders soon to be released from prison / to take homeless declarations, if required, before day of release	LCC - Head of Service Homelessness, Prevention & Support Governor Leicester Prison DLNR Housing & Welfare Manager Head of Probation Leicestershire
1.6	Targeting discretionary housing payments to prevent homelessness. Consider targeted use for young people when they are looking for or have gained employment	Procedures / programme in place that ensure DHP's are made in cases where this will prevent homelessness	LCC – Head of Service Homelessness, Prevention Support LCC - Head of Revenues & Customer Support
1.7	Work with private rented sector (PRS) landlords to reduce barriers to letting to tenants on benefits / offer tenancies of more than 6mths and develop targeted communications package for PRS landlords	Promote positive impact private landlords can have and how what they do can impact on homelessness	LCC – Head of Service Homelessness, Prevention Support
1.8	Improve interactions with Leicester City Council tenants when they are starting and ending their tenancy	Explore pre-tenancy assessments to identify vulnerable tenants and assess individual housing and support needs Provide appropriate advice and guidance and early housing options advice when tenants give notice	LCC – Head of Service Homelessness, Prevention Support LCC – Head of Service Districts
1.9	Ensure ongoing availability of budgeting support before and after full implementation of universal credit	Support is available to tenants receiving universal credit to manage monthly payments and not fall into rent arrears	LCC – Head of Service Homelessness, Prevention Support

			LCC - Head of Revenues & Customer Support
1.10	Review triage service for those seeking housing advice against best practice (consider needs of different service users e.g. those with multiple and complex needs / learning difficulties / mental health issues)	Increased satisfaction of services users with housing advice availability and ease of access	LCC – Head of Service Homelessness, Prevention Support
1.11	Extend housing options surgeries at the Dawn centre so these are available 5 days a week	Ensure entrenched homeless people and those leading chaotic lives can access services	LCC – Head of Service Homelessness, Prevention Support
1.12	Distribute links to classroom resources available regarding housing / homelessness to secondary schools / pupil referral units in Leicester	Raise young people’s awareness of the causes of homelessness and recognise the circumstances that can lead to homelessness and how to look after their wellbeing and social networks	LCC – Head of Service Homelessness, Prevention Support LCC – Head of Service Raising Achievement
1.13	Consider specialist housing prevention officer/s working with social care & health, domestic violence and children’s services cases	Improve joint working between services Benefits achieved with partnership work with hospitals achieved with other services	LCC – Head of Service Homelessness, Prevention Support
1.14	Review existing procedures to ensure, where appropriate, referrals are made to commissioned floating support services	More referrals / raised awareness of commissioned floating support services to aid the prevention of homelessness	LCC – Head of Service Homelessness, Prevention & Support

Strategic aim 2: Provide suitable accommodation and support options for people who are, or who may become homeless.

Ref	Action	Target / Outcome	Lead
2.1	Increase the supply of affordable housing and maximise the use of existing housing stock Impact on the delivery of housing in Leicester	163 completions of new affordable homes (123 for social/affordable rent, 1 for immediate rent and 39 shared ownership) Work with partners, private finance companies and subsidiary housing company linked to the council	LCC – Head of Service Capital Investment
2.2	Review existing housing related support services and homeless day centres ensuring it meet anticipated demand and the holistic needs of service users	Meet anticipated demand and the holistic needs of service users	LCC – Head of Service Homelessness, Prevention & Support
2.3	Monitor the impact of the closure of Leicester City Council supported and shared accommodation	Minimise move-on barriers / improve pathways of support	LCC – Head of Service Homelessness, Prevention & Support
2.4	Work and support housing providers to deliver new and needed types of interim or more permanent models of accommodation, including through the use of targeted right-to-buy funding	Increase accommodation options and available accommodation for those at risk of homelessness or homeless	LCC – Head of Service Homelessness, Prevention & Support
2.5	Develop referral routes with Job Centres	Co-located advice point/s (Housing Options & Job Centres) Dedicated DWP homelessness officer / work coaches Improved coordination regarding individuals who have been granted leave to remain LCC tenants at risk of eviction due to non-payment of rent receive home visit from DWP	DWP - District Manager Leicestershire and Northamptonshire LCC – Head of Service Homelessness, Prevention & Support
2.6	Review initiative to provide housing for individuals & families with no support needs to ensure alternatives available rather than be placed in accommodation which offers housing-related support	Minimise the use of temporary accommodation for families with no support needs	LCC – Head of Service Homelessness, Prevention & Support
2.7	Review the multiple service user project to identify any lessons learnt and adopt any positive practice	Identify possible interventions / joint working opportunities to prevent homelessness	LCC – Head of Service Homelessness, Prevention & Support
2.8	Adopt a commitment to prevent homeless which has buy in across all local authority services including the police, criminal justice agencies and health services. Explore ways to increase partnership working and building support to tackle homelessness	Ensure all partners engage where multi-agency work is required Look for opportunities to increase joint commissioning that takes into account the needs of people using homelessness services Coordinated approach across the city (involving organisations and individuals) to working together to prevent homelessness in the city	LCC - City Mayor & Assistant City Mayor Housing
2.9	Work with Homeless Reference Group members to identify 'activities' provided and consider opportunities to make these available across service providers / agencies	Increase opportunities and range of activities available Reduce isolation and social exclusion	LCC – Head of Service Homelessness, Prevention & Support

2.10	Review eligibility / prioritisation criteria's for housing related support (temporary accommodation & floating support services)	To ensure they are available for those who most require them, and at a time that these services are needed	LCC – Head of Service Homelessness, Prevention & Support LCC – Head of Service Districts
2.11	Review referral and placement arrangements for specialist housing related support for offenders	Ensure we prioritise higher need clients (from housing and offending perspective) Identify appropriate and relevant pathways for all services for homeless offenders	LCC - Head of Service Homelessness, Prevention & Support DLNR Housing & Welfare Manager Head of Probation Leicestershire
2.12	Work with accommodation providers to understand the variation in length of stay and any barriers for move-on	Good practice shared between providers and barriers to move-on reduced	LCC – Head of Service Homelessness, Prevention & Support
2.13	Develop a more robust regional local authority approach to those positively exiting temporary asylum accommodation	Reduce crisis homelessness when people are granted leave to remain and leave asylum support service accommodation	LCC – Head of Service Homelessness, Prevention & Support
2.14	Review joint working arrangements with primary care, mental health services, including substance misuse services	Notifications / referrals in place between services and reduce health inequalities of homeless people The needs of homeless people are considered when commissioning new services Integrated primary care, mental health and housing services for homeless people and those transitioning from homelessness	LCC – Head of Service Homelessness, Prevention & Support Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust LCC – Head of ASC Commissioning LCC- Director of Public Health

Strategic aim 3: Reduce rates of repeat homelessness amongst single people

Ref	Action	Target / Outcome	Lead
3.1	Review Housing First initiative with Revolving Door clients to see what lessons can be learnt and see whether this approach could be used more widely	Increased tenancy sustainment and reduced repeat single homelessness	LCC – Head of Service Homelessness, Prevention & Support
3.2	Ensure transitional support is available when needed for people moving out of temporary accommodation	Support available when needed improving tenancy sustainment	LCC – Head of Service Homelessness, Prevention & Support
3.3	Ensure support plans follow individuals through breaks in service	Improved outcomes for clients	LCC – Head of Service Homelessness, Prevention & Support
3.4	Review good practice of all housing support providers to identify if there are key learning points regarding support required that could be rolled out to all service providers	Reduced future repeat homelessness Good practice shared between providers	LCC – Head of Service Homelessness, Prevention & Support
3.5	Review and improve support available to those who have been repeat single homeless entering settled accommodation	Increased tenancy sustainment	LCC – Head of Service Homelessness, Prevention & Support

Strategic aim 4: Provide the right support and services so that no person needs to sleep rough in Leicester

Ref	Action	Target / Outcome	Lead
4.1	Conduct a count of rough sleepers in the city	A clearer picture of the number of rough sleepers in the city	LCC – Head of Service Homelessness, Prevention & Support
4.2	Deliver the Rough Sleepers Programme project with Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland	Extended (twilight) outreach service available in the city Implement a rough sleeper monitoring IT system	LCC – Head of Service Homelessness, Prevention & Support
4.3	Work with Action Homeless and other organisations as part of the European End Street Homelessness campaign	Bring local people together to find new solutions to end the cycle of homelessness for those sleeping rough in Leicester	Chief Executive Officer Action Homeless
4.4	Work in partnership with the police and community safety team to develop an action plan to tackle prolific and regular begging in the city	Reduction in begging in the city and rough sleeping	Neighbourhood Policing Area Commander Central Leicester LCC – Head of Community Safety & Safer Leicester Partnership LCC – Head of Service Homelessness, Prevention & Support
4.5	Work with UK Visas and Immigration to support LCCs work with migrant rough sleepers	Roles and responsibilities clearly understood and improved working relationships Vulnerable people not eligible for support or housing are not left destitute on the street	LCC – Head of Service Homelessness, Prevention & Support
4.6	Review current procedures / services to ensure support is available for all rough sleepers and consider alternative offers of support to engage all rough sleepers (including those with complex needs and those who have barriers to accessing services)	No new rough sleepers spend a second night rough sleeping and their needs are quickly assessed Individual targeted plans developed for any rough sleeper appearing on the weekly snapshot of rough sleepers	LCC – Head of Service Homelessness, Prevention & Support
4.7	Targeted and focussed communications and initiatives throughout the year to engage the city in ending rough sleeping	Raise awareness of services available for rough sleepers Clear message that street homelessness in modern Britain is not acceptable	LCC – Head of Service Homelessness, Prevention & Support
4.8	Develop an approach for individuals rough sleeping who have no recourse to public funds that provides support with finding a home and employment	Individuals with no recourse to public funds are supported so they no longer rough sleep	LCC – Head of Service Homelessness, Prevention & Support