



Doncaster Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy

2019-2024

We will work together to prevent homelessness and ensure nobody in Doncaster needs to sleep rough on our streets.

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Foreword

I am pleased to introduce this Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy, which sets out our vision for the prevention of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping in Doncaster.

Doncaster and the nation has seen an increase in homelessness and rough sleeping in recent years, and we recognise that the impacts of Welfare Reform have made the prospect of access to secure, good quality affordable housing challenging for many people across our Borough.

We are committed to a whole system approach to the prevention of homelessness to improve people's lives, which means we all need to work together to prevent homelessness. The most visible part of homelessness is rough sleepers who often have multiple and complex needs but the majority of people who are homeless or potentially homeless are there because of an end to their tenancy or a family breakdown – prevention is a key objective and thread throughout this strategy.

We have achieved much in the last 18 months that has transformed the way we deliver services. For example, we have introduced an award winning Complex Lives Alliance, which incorporates a multi-agency approach to supporting our most vulnerable rough sleepers with multiple and complex needs.

We have also worked in partnership to lever in further resources from government by co-ordinating multi agency bids, for example working with Government on a Rapid Rehousing Pathway and supplying preventative floating support to those at risk of rough sleeping.

We know that we require the right offer of accommodation when people need it and we have set up an accommodation pathway multi-agency partnership to understand the existing accommodation and support available to those who are homeless – ensuring we support people to access accommodation they can call their own as quickly as possible. Maximising our accommodation offer is a key objective of this strategy.

We know that getting the right care and support at the right time can make a real difference to people and their families. There are more vulnerable people present with complex needs in Doncaster than average and we need to ensure if people want support we can help them to turn around their lives. Effective, joined up care and support is a key objective of this strategy.

We know there are significant challenges. Our review of homelessness and rough sleeping in Doncaster has taken place to determine what we need to build upon but more importantly where we need to make the most improvement. The review has shaped this strategy and the key objectives that run through it.

This strategy sets out our strategic ambition over the next five years and we will review annually our delivery plans to make sure our initiatives are providing the desired outcomes, and that we are keeping on top of emerging trends and opportunities

This strategy sets out our commitment to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping at an earlier stage, maximise our accommodation offer and ensure we support those who need our services most.

I would like to thank those who have contributed to this strategy, including service providers, Crisis and the people who have lived experience who took the time to help us understand homelessness and rough sleeping in Doncaster.

Our vision '*we will work together to prevent homelessness and ensure nobody in Doncaster needs to sleep rough on our streets*' is at the heart of all we are trying to achieve with this strategy.

Glyn Jones

Deputy Mayor of Doncaster

Portfolio Holder for Housing and Equalities

Introduction

- 1 Since the Government's Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 came into force in April 2018, Doncaster continues to experience a wide range of reasons for homelessness, reinforcing the need for a wide partnership response. The Council has a statutory responsibility to provide housing to those who meet a range of criteria.
- 2 This strategy sets out our vision, objectives and activity to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping. The strategy has been informed by a wide range of stakeholders and seeks to address all aspects of homelessness including, prevention, accommodation and support services. This strategy is supported by a suite of other work that has helped develop this strategy or will deliver the strategy objectives in the future;
 - The Review of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping in Doncaster
 - An Annual Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Delivery Plan
 - The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Due Regard Statement
- 3 The partnership have undertaken a comprehensive review of the latest legislation and the effectiveness of its operating procedures and initiatives. The findings from the review have directly informed and shaped this new strategy for the way the partnership will deal with homelessness, especially those with complex needs.
- 4 We will renew our annual delivery plan across the partnership where we will consider challenges and our response, aligning to our strategic vision, objectives and resources.
- 5 The due regard statement details the variety of consultation and feedback that has been incorporated to inform the development of this strategy but in particular the way in which we have given regard to people with protected characteristics.

National Context

- 6 The **Homeless Reduction Act** came into place on 3rd April 2018 and changed the length of time that Authorities have to deal with homelessness with a view to reducing the number of cases accepted as homeless. An emphasis on prevention and a Duty to Refer from key organisations should impact on the ability to deal with cases before they become an emergency.
- 7 The national **Rough Sleeping Strategy**¹ sets out how the government wants to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and end it by 2027, and builds upon the rough sleeping initiative which started early in 2018. There are a number of interventions within the strategy that are mainly based around 'Prevent, Intervene and Recover' and a number of Government funded interventions across the country.
- 8 In 2018 Crisis published their report '**Everybody In**'² that sets out a number of principles and actions to promote a more positive agenda to prevent and end homelessness. The report brings together key evidence from across the globe looking at prevention, rapid re-housing and tackling rough sleeping via methods such as Housing First, Street Outreach and expanding the evidence to understand what works with regards to supported accommodation.

¹ Rough Sleeping Strategy (2018). MHCLG

² https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/239453/everybody_in_how_to_end_homelessness_in_great_britain_2018.pdf

- 9 In 2018 Shelter published ‘**A Vision for Social Housing**’³, which was overseen by a wide range of commissioners and sets out the findings from a big conversation with over 31,000 people. It argues for a new regulator that would work across private and social renting sectors to set and enforce standards, urgent reforms to the private rented sector to protect against eviction and a large-scale programme of social housing delivery with 3.1 million new homes needed over the next twenty years.
- 10 In February 2018 MHCLG amended the **Homeless Code of Guidance** for Local Authorities, giving a summary of homeless legislation and the duties, powers and obligations on housing authorities and others towards people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.
- 11 Wider national challenges are or have the potential to impact upon our response to increasing homelessness and rough sleeping in Doncaster;
- **Welfare Reform** and the introduction of Universal Credit has, in some circumstances, caused financial problems that have affected people’s ability to secure affordable accommodation.
 - The uncertainty arising from **leaving the European Union**, however we leave, may have detrimental economic impacts over the short, medium and long term.
 - The ability of local people to **afford a home** in the Private Rented Sector or to buy their own home putting pressure on council housing waiting lists.
 - **Time limited funding** from Government for initiatives often for a period of 1 or 2 years.
 - We have to do this in an **environment of limited and reducing resources**.

About Doncaster

- 12 Homelessness and in particular rough sleeping has been increasing both locally and nationally since the previous strategy was agreed in 2015. As well as increases in the volume of people, there has also been an increase in the complexity of issues people face when presenting for services; this demand has been replicated across many parts of the country. We have responded well to this rise in demand with more focussed and integrated partnership working.
- 13 We have been successful in a number of time-limited bids for Government grant, which support homelessness and rough sleeping including: MHCLG Cold Weather Fund, Flexible Homeless Support Grant, Private Rented Sector Funding, Rough Sleeper Initiative and Rapid Rehousing Pathway grants. However, there remains a difficult financial environment across public services to meet demand in a sustainable way.
- 14 St Leger Homes of Doncaster are responsible for the statutory homeless function delivered through the Home Options Team. The team has an increased focus on the development of robust Personal Housing Plans to ensure that the identification and addressing of the root causes relating to homelessness are identified, and acted on. Homelessness presentations in Doncaster arise at a later stage, however, increasing access to support and information at an earlier stage enables intervention to be as effective as possible before the point of crisis, therefore maximising homelessness prevention options, activities and outcomes.
- 15 Doncaster Council has a joint commissioning strategy with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) supporting more integrated commissioning of services. Doncaster also holds regular accommodation flow discussions to determine and streamline the pathways available for homeless households into supported accommodation.

³ https://england.shelter.org.uk/support_us/campaigns/a_vision_for_social_housing

- 16 Doncaster provides support for Veterans including housing allocation, waiting list priority, tenancy support and has additional dedicated housing stock in partnership with St Leger Homes and the Help for Homeless Veterans Charity. A Regional Veteran Awareness Package will ensure a consistent advice and housing support across Doncaster and South Yorkshire Region.
- 17 We have set up a Complex Lives Alliance, working across teams and organisations to provide a multi-agency approach to supporting those with multiple and complex needs. This approach has won the MJ Local Government Award and we would like to continue this partnership work in the future. This multi-agency approach is fundamental to improving the whole system approach we want to adopt in the future.
- 18 Doncaster Council considers a preventative approach to be a high priority, and, as recognised in the independent **Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review**, we cannot do this alone and will need involvement from statutory partners, voluntary sector leaders and specialist providers in order to do this effectively, building on the good relationships it has with commissioned and non-commissioned providers. The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review published alongside this strategy summarised the key information relating to information across Doncaster.
- 19 The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review recommends a 'whole system' approach to prevention, with a multi-agency action plan, a review of homelessness services, and choice and control for service users, moving away from the default response to single homeless being supported accommodation.

Prevention

- Prevention figures are lower than national averages with opportunities to expand prevention initiatives including more to support those in existing tenancies.
- Proposals include working with landlords, managing relationships through mediation services, and offering access to services to customers earlier in their journey.
- Doncaster has increased numbers of homeless approaches with complex issues. It hosts four prisons in its borough, releasing into the town and its surrounding areas.
- The highest reasons for approach are end of tenancy, family no longer able to accommodate, domestic abuse, relationship break up and eviction from supported housing highlighting the need to build relationships with support organisations.
- A high proportion of those presenting are already homeless. With the system in place mostly reactive, highlighting a need for staff training and support to bring about a more proactive prevention led approach.

Accommodation

- Clarity and communication needed for referral routes and eligibility criteria services with specific interpretation of the functions of each scheme within the housing support pathway, including clarity of service functions within the pathway. Extending multi-agency work for those at risk of becoming complex, with increased flexible floating support and more dispersed provision.
- More focus on earlier settled accommodation, incorporating support for physical disabilities and mental health.
- Doncaster has great assets in its own stock used for temporary accommodation including support for 159 families with children (2018/19).

Care & Support

- Rough Sleeper numbers increased to a peak during 2018/19 and a multi-agency taskforce was set up to support those rough sleepers who were willing to engage, halving the number of rough sleepers.

- There are gaps in services for women rough sleepers and young people with substance misuse issues indicating we need to reform support pathways.
- Doncaster has a higher number of homeless people with multiple needs. This includes Autism and Learning Difficulties.
- Highest additional support needs include mental health, physical disabilities, offending history, drugs, repeat homelessness, rough sleeping, domestic abuse, learning difficulties, and alcohol misuse with a high number of single person homeless presentations.

Key Facts



2227

Presentations
 655 (29%) not proceeding with application
 597 (27%) Prevention Duty Accepted
 975 (44%) Relief Duty Accepted
 95 Full Duty Accepted
 (2017/18 340 Full Duty)



Levels of Homelessness per '000 households

Doncaster **10.95**
 Yorkshire and Humber 10.47
 England 10.2

Proportion prevented from becoming homeless
 England 55%
 Yorkshire and Humber 56%
Doncaster 40%



Majority Single Households Presenting (63%)



10 Days
 average spent in B & B



Rough Sleepers

2017 = 8
 2018 = 27

51%

of those owed a prevention duty secured accommodation for more than 6 months

25% became homeless

24% lost contact or withdrew their application

59%

of those owed a Relief Duty secured accommodation for more than 6 months

72.4%

Additional Support Needs (Doncaster)

49.1% Rest of England

56.1% Yorkshire and Humber

Objective 1: Deliver a “whole system” wide plan for Homelessness Prevention

What we want to achieve

We want to promote the earliest possible prevention by embedding homelessness prevention awareness and information through a multi layered, whole system, effective partnership working and strategic response with clear delivery points to achieve the strategy.

Good working relationships with partners is integral to ensure that we recognise potential homelessness early to provide the best outcomes. Strong and effective partnership working to create a holistic, whole system approach to meeting the needs of homeless households and those threatened with homeless.

What we will do

- We will initiate a cross partnership strategic group, including statutory partners, to create a whole system approach to preventing upstream homelessness, considering all relevant stakeholders
- We will develop relationships with landlords and tenants and housing associations providing housing and legal advice to prevent evictions, taking steps to prevent or move families and individuals before it becomes an issue and maintain sub regional landlord connections
- We will source affordable rent properties with increased length of tenure to increase the supply of affordable accommodation
- We will link with Disabled Facilities Grants and Adaptations for homeless households and explore opportunities for prevention initiatives to keep people in their own homes for longer and enable hospital discharge
- We will explore options with our partners for those with no recourse to public funds
- We will review our information and guidance to ensure that local people are informed about the support available to them.

What we will measure

Indicator	Baseline 2018/19
Number of approaches	2227
Number of approaches in prevention	597
Number of cases prevented	473
Number of full duty homeless acceptances	95

Objective 2: Maximise opportunities for independence through a range of housing options

What we want to achieve

We want to maximise every mechanism to increase the number of affordable accommodation options available in Doncaster through a dispersed accommodation offer. Delivering a housing-led model with a focus on rapid rehousing and a reduced reliance on the resettlement pathway, in particular hostel provision. We will ensure there is clarity on the function of each scheme within the pathway and for those that need to enter the pathway, we will ensure there is a focus on a sustainable route out of homelessness

What we will do

- We will review housing and support provision for supported housing, and be specific about the function of each scheme within the system pathway, ensuring adequate move-on within the system
- We will work with partners to remodel the existing hostel provision to facilitate greater multi-agency working and Psychologically Informed Environments
- We will develop an assessment hub with the aim of rapidly rehousing individuals using a strength-based approach
- We will improve our rapid rehousing pathway for rough sleepers and people presenting as homeless to accommodation they can call their own
- We will scope, locate and access good quality affordable housing across the Borough.
- We will facilitate access to the non-commissioned supported housing sector and improve pathways through the single point of access (SPOA)
- We will further develop dispersed provision with flexible levels of wrap around support
- We will review the existing offer of floating support to ensure future preventative and resettlement needs are met
- We will further develop Doncaster's Housing First Model
- We will increase access into the Private Rented Sector and Housing Association housing offer by improving relationships and dialogue to increase levels of settled housing and move-on accommodation

What we will measure

Indicator	Baseline 2018/19
Number of households placed in Bed and Breakfast accommodation	169
Average length of stay in Bed and Breakfast Accommodation	9.7 days
Number of families in Bed and Breakfast after 6 weeks	0
Number of households placed in temporary accommodation	358
Average length of stay in temporary accommodation	54.8 days
Number of Rough Sleepers	27
Number accessing Housing First	0
Number ready for move on	95

Indicator	Baseline 2018/19
Number moved on to stable housing	96
Number of complex cases using supported accommodation in the year	81
Number of referrals leading to a move-on placement	TBC
Number of cases ready for move-on where accommodation is not available	52
Number of additional accommodation made available	TBC

Objective 3: Effective and joined up Care and Support services for those most in need

What we want to achieve

We want to support vulnerable people to access and maintain accommodation to live independently within their community, with a focus on recovery and social inclusion. We want to support people to live meaningful lives free from addiction and supported to make healthier choices for themselves and their family.

What we will do

- We will continue to provide specialist support services for rough sleepers with multiple and complex needs through a sustainable multi-agency delivery team model
- We will develop relationships with commissioned and non-commissioned providers to provide support to vulnerable people, victims of domestic abuse and ex rough sleepers into accommodation solutions
- We will continue to work with local providers to provide increased daytime and personal development opportunities and support financial independence
- We will further develop access to mental health and trauma informed services
- We will develop support mechanisms for young homeless and young people with complex needs, building on the 16/17 year old homeless protocol.
- We will manage tenancies and offer neighbour support information when placing complex clients
- We will develop opportunities for those in temporary accommodation, to include meaningful daytime activity, school and employment locations, individual preferences and needs, and signposting to support networks to reduce social isolation
- We will actively source suitable settled housing for families and those in temporary accommodation at an early stage

What we will measure

Indicator	Baseline 2018/19
Number of support cases losing contact	TBC
Intensive support provided	184
Increase in the number of individuals sustaining accommodation for 6 months	66
Reduction in the number of nights spent in hospital	418

Cross Cutting Enablers:

What we want to achieve

We will need a number of cross cutting products that will support the delivery of the objectives set out in this strategy. These products support the partnership to work closer together, provide better intelligence and better value services.

What we will do

- Develop a **Joint Commissioning Strategy/Approach** to contribute to and complement delivery of the overall Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy
- Develop a **Communications Plan** to raise awareness of the increased prevention duty under the Homeless Reduction Act.
- Further develop **joint working protocols with statutory partners** to improve relationships and understand procedure and policy
- We will continue to provide a robust **winter plan (Severe Weather Emergency Plan)** and develop plans for the summer weather period too
- **Introduced a “Protected Characteristic”** for homeless households considered throughout Doncaster Council policies and strategies
- We will continue to **develop our accommodation dashboard** to understand current availability and gaps
- Continue to promote and provide an **alternative giving** scheme where money can be used to support homeless households and rough sleepers
- **Develop a mechanism for regular engagement with those with lived experience** ensuring the user voice has impact
- We will develop a **training plan** for homeless services to include
 - Customer Service, Respect and Dignity
 - Care Act Principles
 - Trauma informed practice with psychologically informed recovery services
 - Financial tools to support residents to remain in their own home

Governance

Homelessness statutory duties are the responsibility of the Council but are devolved to St Leger homes, which discharges this function.

We also need a clear mechanism of delivering the objectives set out in this strategy and ensuring there is clear accountability across the wide range of partners that will be required to deliver this strategy.

Group/Board	Role
Homelessness and Support Partnership	Existing mature partnership for agencies and providers to network, share good practice and directly shape the annual delivery plan
Strategic Commissioning Group	Introduction of a new strategic group that would include statutory partners, enabling upstream prevention, unlocking systems, and greater accountability and grip on the progress of the annual delivery plan.
Homes for All Board	Will receive periodic updates on progress
Town Centre Locality Group	Will discuss emerging and live issues in the town centre feeding in issues relating to homelessness and rough sleeping to shape and inform the annual delivery plan