

Brighton & Hove City Council

Cabinet Briefing

Agenda Item 89

Subject: Homelessness and rough sleeping strategy 2025 to 2030

Date of meeting: 11 December 2025

Report of: Cabinet Member for Housing

Lead Officer: Genette Laws, Corporate Director for Homes & Adult Social Care

Contact Officer: Harry Williams, Director of Housing People Services
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Ward(s) affected: All wards

Key Decision: Yes

Reason(s) Key: Is significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more electoral divisions (wards).

For general release

1. Purpose of the report and policy context

- 1.1 Under the Homelessness Act (2002) all housing authorities must have a homelessness strategy based on a review of all forms of homelessness in their district. The strategy must be renewed every 5 years. The draft homelessness and rough sleeping strategy 2025 to 2030 sets out plans to prevent and reduce homelessness and rough sleeping and for ensuring that sufficient accommodation and support are available for people who are at risk or those who become homeless.
- 1.2 The draft strategy, revised following public consultation, can be found at Appendix 1. It contributes to the delivery of Outcome 2 in the council plan: A fair and inclusive city. Development of a strategy is identified as an action in both the council plan 2023 to 2027 and the housing strategy 2024 to 2029.
- 1.3 The proposed priorities for the homelessness and rough sleeping strategy 2025 to 2030 are to:
 1. Increase our effectiveness in preventing homelessness and rough sleeping
 2. Improve temporary accommodation pathways and experiences
 3. Improve joined-up support with our partners for people who need most help
 4. Tackle homelessness in children, families and young people

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet agrees to adopt the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for 2025 to 2030.
- 2.2 Cabinet delegates authority to the Corporate Director – Homes & Adult Social Care, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and the Cabinet Adviser for Homelessness to agree council led actions for inclusion in a joint delivery plan and structure agreed with our partners.

3. Context and background information

- 3.1 There is a national homelessness and rough sleeping crisis. At the end of 2024, there were 127,890 households living in temporary accommodation, representing a 13.6% annual increase. These households included 136,908 children under 18. Households with children increased by 13.7% to 81,060, and adult only households by 13.3% to 46,830. The annual national rough sleeping snapshot for 2024 identified 4,667 people sleeping rough. The national rate of people sleeping rough rose from 6.8 per 100,000 population in 2023 to 8.1 per 100,000 in 2024.
- 3.2 The last national rough sleeping strategy, *Ending Rough Sleeping for Good*, expired in 2025 and set out a four-pronged approach of prevention, intervention, recovery and a more transparent and joined-up system. Soon after coming to office in 2024, the current government announced the first cross-government national homelessness strategy, to be published in 2025 following the multi-year spending review. Other measures announced included increases in social and affordable housing supply and the abolition of Section 21 no-fault evictions through the Renters' Rights Bill (now the Renters' Rights Act). We still have no date for the publication of the national strategy.
- 3.3 In line with the national picture, there is an increasing number of people experiencing homelessness in Brighton & Hove. Analysis by Shelter in 2024 indicated that homelessness affects around 1 in 77 people in the city (3,580 people). They estimated that at the end of June 2024 there were 3,528 people experiencing homelessness and living in temporary accommodation. A further 52 people were sleeping rough.
- 3.4 Shelter also estimated that there were 1,411 homeless children in the city: almost 40% of the total homeless population. At the Census 2021 children made up 17.1% of the city's population. Most of the children experiencing homelessness were living in temporary accommodation. At the end of 2024, 47% of households in temporary accommodation contained children.
- 3.5 Rough sleeping is also rising, reflecting national and regional trends. The rate of rough sleeping in Brighton & Hove was 30 per 100,000 population in March 2025, up from 20 per 100,000 in October 2020. Brighton & Hove has the joint 19th highest rate of rough sleeping in England.

- 3.6 Trends in homelessness in the city, alongside other evidence informing the strategy, are set out in more detail in the *Review of Homelessness in Brighton & Hove 2025* at Appendix 2. The review makes 22 recommendations which have informed the strategy. The review identifies the need to move the approach to prevention ‘upstream’, identifying risk and intervening earlier, the need to improve the standard of temporary accommodation and the need to improve integration and partnership working when providing support for the most vulnerable.
- 3.7 There are specific legal duties that the council, as the local housing authority, must comply with. These include providing information and advice and preventing or relieving homelessness. If homelessness cannot be prevented the council may have a duty to help applicants find a settled home if they are eligible, have a priority need and other tests are met. There are other duties relating to homelessness, including the Duty to Refer, and responsibilities under the Children Act 1989, that also apply to the council’s partners. There are some duties owed by adult social care in limited circumstances.
- 3.8 Homeless applications have been rising since 2021. In 2024, 2,624 households approached the council for help either because they were at risk of homelessness or because they were homeless. If people approach us before they become homeless, we can often help them stay in their home or find an alternative. 594 households approached the council for help before they became homeless in 2024. However, the number of households approaching the council after they had already become homeless rose from 993 in 2021 to 1,230 in 2024.
- 3.9 Prevention is central to our strategy because it offers the best outcomes for individuals while making the most effective use of limited resources. Homelessness can create or worsen trauma, disrupt employment and education, and damage physical and mental health in ways that become increasingly difficult and costly to address. Our first priority is to increase our effectiveness in preventing homelessness and rough sleeping. By working with our partners, sharing information and using digital technologies we aim to get better at identifying who might be at risk and offer support before they reach crisis point.
- 3.10 While people’s homeless applications are being processed or while they are waiting to be rehoused, they may be placed in temporary accommodation. After falling between 2020 and 2022, the use of temporary accommodation by the council has again risen, with 1,928 households living in temporary accommodation at the end of 2024. We know from national evidence and local data, that living in temporary accommodation has adverse effects on people’s health and wellbeing, employment, education and training, and other outcomes. Our second priority, therefore, is to improve temporary accommodation pathways and experiences. As well as reducing the inflow into temporary accommodation through better prevention, we aim to improve move on into settled accommodation and improve the quality and suitability of the temporary accommodation available to us.

- 3.11 More people are approaching services with significant and often complex needs. 68% of applicants owed a relief duty (that is people already experiencing homelessness) had at least one additional support need. The 4 most common support needs are:
- a history of mental health problems,
 - physical ill health and disability,
 - drug dependency, and
 - experience of domestic abuse.
- 3.12 Data from a recent audit of people with Multiple Compound Needs indicates that there were 704 people in contact with services who were experiencing homelessness with 2 or more other compounding needs (mental health needs, substance use, experience of domestic violence, history of offending). People in this cohort are at significant risk of experiencing rough sleeping. This has informed the third priority area in the strategy 'Improve joined-up support with our partners to people who most need help'.
- 3.13 Our focus on prevention means that tackling homelessness in children, families and young people is central to delivering a long-term, positive step change. We also want to ensure that the challenges facing children, families, and young people experiencing homelessness are explicitly addressed. In developing the strategy, we listened to feedback from our partners and other stakeholders and have included a dedicated chapter. Our first 3 priorities provide the framework for the fourth - focused action to address homelessness in children, families and young people.
- 3.14 The draft strategy makes 3 commitments to underpin delivery of the strategy – to fairness and inclusion, to partnership working, and to make best use of resources.
- 3.15 The unequal impact of homelessness on some groups and individuals is striking. Our attention has been drawn to factors such as age, sex, ethnicity, sexuality, gender identity, disability and more. What is equally striking is that, while these factors can help us understand risk, none of them alone can help us predict who is likely to become homeless or the impact of homelessness on their lives. To make a difference we will work to understand how these and other characteristics interact in different contexts to develop fair and inclusive interventions and services that take into account the diversity of experiences and needs, and challenge stigma and exclusion.
- 3.16 Partners in the public, voluntary, community and social enterprise sectors make a major contribution, alongside the council, in tackling homelessness in the city. However, many of the factors that cause homelessness are beyond our direct control. Homelessness is rooted in structural inequalities and system wide challenges. Unemployment, disability, physical ill health, mental health needs, substance use, domestic abuse, and family breakdown create pathways into homelessness for many. The current cost of living crisis has intensified these pressures, meaning that even those in work can struggle.

- 3.17 The broader determinants of homelessness require comprehensive, coordinated responses that span multiple partners and levels of intervention. Sustainable progress will also depend on addressing the underlying causes of homelessness through a broader strategic lens. This includes actions set out in the council plan, housing strategy, the city plan, economic development strategy, health and wellbeing strategy and more. To achieve real change, we will need to collaborate with government, and with regional and local partners including other local authorities, the incoming regional Mayor, businesses, further and higher education sector and, critically, with people with lived experience of homelessness.
- 3.18 The cost of homelessness to the council and to our partners in the public and voluntary sectors is not sustainable, with rising prices and increasing demand. We also anticipate a significant reduction in government grant funding over the life of the strategy due to changes in the national funding formula. To deliver the strategy with its planned shift to prevention, it must be financially sustainable in the short and medium term to deliver the necessary long-term benefits.
- 3.19 Our challenging financial position, and that of our partners, means that we must think creatively about how we make best use of our resources, integrate services and develop innovative solutions. We need to invest in our collective workforce to ensure that they have the skills and knowledge that are required. We also need to make best use of our buildings and other physical assets across the city and develop a plan to ensure these are used to greatest effect. We will continue to develop our joint commissioning arrangements to ensure integrated, multi-agency, wrap-around support for people experiencing homelessness.
- 3.20 The *Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities* states that housing authorities should develop effective action plans, to help ensure that the objectives set out in the homelessness strategy are achieved. There is an expectation that plans are developed and owned with partners who will be jointly responsible for delivery. Any specific actions expected to be taken by another body or organisation cannot be included in an action plan without their approval.
- 3.21 Our approach to delivery follows principles set out in the council's learning framework. As a connected council we will work with our partners to put in place governance arrangements to ensure oversight and delivery of the strategy. Following agreement of the strategy we will work with our partners to develop, agree and implement a detailed action plan. This will include targets, milestones and arrangements for monitoring and evaluation. We will report on progress and update the action plan annually.
- 3.22 The strategy builds on our homelessness and rough sleeping strategy 2020 to 2025. Since that was agreed, our housing needs services have been remodeled, with prevention outcomes now consistently outperforming other councils in the region. We have revised our Housing Allocations Policy to ensure that people who have experienced homelessness can remain on the

housing register after moving into private rented housing. We have also set up a tenancy sustainment service to help prevent repeat homelessness.

- 3.23 Working with our valued partners in the voluntary sector we have offered advice and support, including outreach services, day centre provision and supported housing. With social care and the NHS, we have developed pathways for the most vulnerable, including rough sleepers, 16–17-year-olds, care leavers, refugees, and people with multiple compound needs.
- 3.24 In 2021, with cross party support, Brighton & Hove became the first UK local authority to sign the Homeless Bill of Rights. This was a core commitment in the last strategy, reinforcing our determination to uphold the rights of people experiencing homelessness.

4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options

- 4.1 The development of a homelessness and rough sleeping strategy at least every 5 years is a legal duty for the council as the local housing authority. We have based the strategy on the council's vision and core priorities. It has been tested and refined through engagement and consultation with our partners and other stakeholders. The final strategy reflects their feedback.
- 4.2 The council's vision is for a better Brighton & Hove for all. Homes for everyone is central to that vision. Tackling homelessness and rough sleeping will help us make Brighton & Hove a city to be proud of, a healthy, fair and inclusive city where everyone thrives.
- 4.3 Our housing strategy *Homes for Everyone*, sets out our priorities for housing in the city. These are to improve housing quality, safety and sustainability; to deliver the homes our city needs; to promote improved health and wellbeing for all; to provide resident focused housing services; and to prevent homelessness and meet housing need.
- 4.4 Our proposed priorities for the homelessness and rough sleeping strategy 2025 to 2030 build on our vision and priorities. They are to:
1. Increase our effectiveness in preventing homelessness and rough sleeping.
 2. Improve temporary accommodation pathways and experiences.
 3. Improve joined-up support with our partners for people who most need help.
 4. Tackle homelessness in children, families and young people.
- 4.5 To ensure accountability and monitor progress, we will report regularly using performance indicators for each priority.
- 4.6 Our primary goal is to prevent homelessness. If someone becomes homeless, then their experience of homelessness should be brief, and it should not recur. If we are successful, then fewer people of all ages will experience homelessness and rough sleeping.

- 4.7 As well as a reduction in the overall number of people placed in temporary accommodation, people's experience of temporary accommodation will be improved. All households experiencing homelessness, whatever their needs, will be supported to move on into suitable housing.
- 4.8 By integrating our services, we will ensure that the people who are most vulnerable will receive the help they need. Our focus on support for rough sleepers and those with high level or compounding needs will mean improved outcomes for these groups.
- 4.9 A new national homelessness strategy was announced by the incoming government in 2024. At the point of writing this report, the national strategy has not been published and there is no indication when this will happen. When a national strategy is published, our local strategy and delivery plan may need to be refreshed and updated.

5. Community engagement and consultation

- 5.1 The statutory *Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities* sets out how a review of homelessness and strategy development should be undertaken. Section 2.10 of the guidance states that that 'Housing authorities must consult public or local authorities, voluntary organisations or other persons as they consider appropriate before adopting or modifying a homelessness strategy. Housing authorities will also wish to consult with service users and specialist agencies that provide support to homeless people in the district.'
- 5.2 Using the council's Community Engagement Framework to guide our approach, we began engagement with partners and other stakeholders in December 2024 with a call for evidence to inform our review of homelessness in the city. We established a project steering group with representatives from housing, children's services, health and adult social care, public health, the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector (the Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Network) and lived experience (Common Ambition).
- 5.3 We held a number of stakeholder engagement events and attended relevant network meetings between January and March 2025. With the support of Common Ambition and Justlife, people with lived experience of homelessness presented evidence and took part in this process. We also held briefings for members of the council. The cabinet member for housing and the cabinet advisor for homelessness were involved and briefed throughout the process.
- 5.4 Engagement with our partners and with people with lived experience continued over the summer to help us develop and refine the draft strategy. We organised dedicated sessions for key stakeholder groups including NHS commissioners and providers, voluntary, community and social enterprise sector leaders and frontline workers and others. During this time the project team also engaged with council corporate, directorate and senior leadership to ensure support for proposals.

- 5.5 We launched a formal public consultation on 8 September, running to 26 October 2025. The draft strategy and supporting documents, including the review of homelessness and an Easy Read guide to the strategy were published on Your Voice, the council consultation website. An accessible version of the draft strategy was also published on the main council website. The consultation was promoted using the council's communications channels, including social media, through our partner networks including Community Works, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Network and equalities mailing lists. During the consultation we also reached out to refugee and migrant networks and older people's organisations based on lower response rates for these demographics.
- 5.6 Members of the public and other stakeholders were able to respond to the consultation in several different ways. An online survey could be completed on Your Voice. Printable copies of the survey could be downloaded or sent to people on request. An Easy Read version of the survey was also available. Through Common Ambition and other local voluntary sector organisations we provided support for people with lived experience of homelessness to complete surveys or to contribute through group discussions. We also presented the draft strategy at the Health and Wellbeing Board, People Overview and Scrutiny Committee as well as a other meetings and events including organising two public consultation events and a consultation roadshow at different venues across the city.
- 5.7 At the close of the public consultation we received 154 responses, of which 132 were from individuals and 22 were from groups or organisations.
- 5.8 The key themes arising in the public consultation were:
- prevention and early intervention;
 - temporary accommodation;
 - specific vulnerable groups;
 - service design and delivery;
 - resources and capacity;
 - data, evidence and monitoring;
 - housing supply and affordability;
 - root causes of homelessness and systemic issues;
 - and comment on wording, structure and specific actions.
- 5.9 Key changes to the strategy made following consultation include an amendment to the wording of priority 3 from 'Provide' to 'Improve', to acknowledge the need for greater collaboration and integration. We have also emphasised the commitment to partnership throughout. Other changes include strengthening the statement of vision and priorities, recognising the distinct needs of young people, being clearer about the connection to other strategic priorities for the council and its partners, for example, the delivery of more affordable housing.
- 5.10 We have included an additional action to better address standards in interim temporary accommodation. The wording of other some other actions has also been amended to address points raised by consultees. We have made

explicit reference to the needs of older people, and gypsies, Roma and travellers. The financial position of the council and its partners and the need to innovate to address new challenges has been re-emphasised. As requested by consultees, we have added a glossary of terms.

- 5.11 An engagement and consultation report can be found at Appendix 3. This sets out the themes arising from feedback on the consultation draft in more detail and how this feedback has informed the final draft of the strategy.

6. Financial implications

- 6.1 The financial appraisal of the strategy reveals significant and increasing risks associated with a finite budget resource and potentially reducing government grants. The strategy prioritises prevention and early intervention, as these represent the most cost-effective approaches. However, persistent pressures on temporary accommodation, including rising unit costs, limited supply, and extended stays, continue to drive up expenditure and put a strain on the Council's finances.
- 6.2 The Council's core budget in 2025/26 totals £7.9m. The external grants for this service include the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG) and Rough Sleeping Prevention and Recovery Grant (RSPARG) which are subject to change. Notably, following a formal consultation on the HPG funding formula for 2026/27, Brighton & Hove City Council faces a potential reduction of approximately 45%, falling from £10.9 million in 2025/26 to £6.0 million in 2026/27. Although transitional arrangements may partially cushion the impact, the reduction in grant income across the Medium Term Financial Plan will still be considerable.
- 6.3 RSPARG allocations for 2025/26 are currently stable, but there is no confirmed funding for 2026/27. New initiatives, such as a 'No First Night Out' model, would require decommissioning existing services or reallocating funds, as no new grant funding is expected. This poses a major financial risk.
- 6.4 Charitable and NHS contributions are also under financial pressure, which may further limit support and compound strain on Council services.
- 6.5 Short-term cost pressures impede progress towards prevention strategies, and reliance on expensive spot purchasing for temporary accommodation increases costs. Difficulties in moving individuals out of temporary accommodation result in further financial burdens.

Name of finance officer consulted: Sophie Warburton Date consulted: 20/11/2025

7. Legal implications

- 7.1 This is a very detailed report which sets out the legal requirements and so we do not propose to refresh these save to confirm that this is a legal

requirement. There are detailed considerations as to the equalities duties (public sector and others under the Equalities Act). The report has been prepared in line with the legal requirements including the duty to consult and the duty to consider equalities issues. There is no further legal comment.

Name of lawyer consulted: Simon Court Date consulted: 17 November 2025

8. Risk implications

- 8.1 The most significant risk is a failure to shift the balance between relieving homelessness and preventing homelessness. The strategy aims to improve outcomes and reduce the financial pressure on the council and its partners by focusing on prevention and reducing the flow into temporary accommodation. Outcomes for those experiencing homelessness can be improved by successful move on into settled accommodation. Achieving this shift is particularly challenging given increasing demand, increasing complexity of need, reducing resources and limited supply of move on options. A key mitigation in the strategy is to move prevention activity 'upstream', identifying those at risk of becoming homeless as early as possible and offering them advice and support.
- 8.2 The second key risk is a failure to improve temporary accommodation and thus outcomes for those living in temporary accommodation, especially for children and young people but also for other vulnerable people. Ensuring that there are adequate resources to do this, while managing demand and cost pressures, requires mitigation through financial and demand management, market development and measures such as dynamic purchasing as set out in the strategy.
- 8.3 A third key risk is failure to develop system wide, wrap around support for those in greatest need. Improving outcomes for people experiencing rough sleeping, those with mental health needs, disabilities, with substance use issues or fleeing domestic abuse depends on effective partnership working and coordination of resources across the system. There are a number of mitigations in the strategy, including a commitment to greater service integration and co-location and building on models of good practice such as the Changing Futures 'team around me' approach.

9. Equalities implications

- 9.1 Initial equality analysis was carried out for the review of homelessness at Appendix 2. This also informed the final Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) which can be found at Appendix 3.
- 9.2 The strategy has been developed with the input of people with lived experience of homelessness and other intersecting characteristics (as defined in the council's equalities framework). They have contributed evidence, robust challenge and constructive suggestions on how the strategy can help the council meet its Public Sector Equality Duty.

9.3 The EIA concludes that if the goals of the strategy are met, this is likely to have a positive impact on people with protected and other characteristics, including intersecting characteristics as set out in the council's Equalities Toolkit. The EIA makes 26 recommendations which have been taken into account in drafting the final strategy or which are material considerations in its delivery.

10. Sustainability implications

10.1 There are no immediate sustainability implications arising from this report.

11. Health and wellbeing implications

11.1 Poor health and disability can be both a cause and consequence of homelessness. Data and evidence on health and homelessness in the city is included in the review of homelessness at Appendix 2 together with summary information on healthcare services for people experiencing homelessness in the city. There is evidence from local Health Counts data and national research that living in temporary accommodation has a negative impact on both physical and mental health. People with multiple compound needs have significant health and care needs.

11.2 The strategy has had input from Public Health colleagues and draws on a public health approach with its focus on upstream prevention, service integration and tackling the root causes of homelessness. Other measures include drawing on evidence of effectiveness; the use of data to identify risk, drive service improvement and support innovation; supporting delivery by developing our workforce, creating clear referral pathways and providing guidance and policy support; and supporting learning by building in evaluation and creating rapid learning loops in our interventions.

Other Implications

12. Procurement implications

12.1 There are no immediate procurement implications arising from this report. Specific measure set out in the strategy, such as the recommissioning of outreach services will require procurement and social value advice as they are taken forward.

13. Crime & disorder implications:

13.1 The review of homelessness and draft strategy identify domestic abuse as a key cause of homelessness. Under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 the council is required to set out its plans for accommodation for survivors of domestic abuse. It last did this in the Pan-Sussex Strategy for Domestic Abuse Accommodation and Support 2021-2024. The strategy was developed in partnership with the Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner, West Sussex County Council, East Sussex County Council.

13.2 Homelessness and rough sleeping are sometimes associated with begging and other forms of anti-social behaviour. While the strategy does not explicitly address these issues (as more appropriately matters for the Community Safety and Crime Reduction Strategy), it does make a commitment to challenge stigma, build trust and promote community integration and social connections. This is likely to have a positive impact on crime, disorder and community cohesion.

14. Conclusion

14.1 The council is required by law to review homelessness in its area and to agree a homelessness strategy based on that review every 5 years. The draft homelessness and rough sleeping strategy 2025 to 2030 sets out the council's priorities and approach for the next 5 years. The cabinet is asked to approve the strategy at Appendix 1.

Supporting Documentation

Appendices

1. Draft homelessness and rough sleeping strategy 2025 to 2030
2. Review of homelessness in Brighton & Hove 2025
3. Engagement and consultation report
4. Equality Impact Assessment