



# Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy 2025/29



# **Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025- 2029**

## **Draft**

### **1. Preface**

Housing is fundamental to the wellbeing of people, their families, and their communities. Decent housing provides a stable base on which people can build their lives and build successful communities. Poor or unsuitable housing, however, can have negative impacts on many other areas of personal and community life as well as physical and mental health and wellbeing. If you do not have decent housing, everything else becomes much more difficult. Improving housing options, conditions, and neighbourhoods within the city is essential for economic growth, improving outcomes for residents and children including their educational attainment, health and wellbeing, and community cohesion.

Coventry's new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy sets out the vision, strategic direction, and priorities for the city for the next five years.

It has been co- produced with customers, partner organisations and stakeholders.

The strategy supports Coventry City Council's corporate priorities and is reflective of the One Coventry vision for the city. It complements other strategies and programmes that support independence, and targets help at the most vulnerable. It is compliant with key legislation that sets out the Council's duties in respect to homelessness and rough sleeping. The strategy ensures we deliver on the requirements to prevent homelessness, provide support, and ensure sufficient accommodation is available.

Information about the local context and the challenges our customers face is provided in the most recent homelessness review which has been used to inform this strategy and should be read in conjunction with the Strategy.

### **2. Background**

Coventry City Council no longer owns its own housing, having transferred its stock to Whitefriars Housing Group (now Citizen Housing) in 2000. However, the Council still has strategic housing responsibilities and a duty to carry out a periodic review of homelessness and to publish a Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy.



## 2.1. Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2019-2024

The current Housing and Homelessness Strategy was published in 2019 and runs until 2024. Its aim is to provide a high-level plan to set out the main priorities for the Council and its partners for the life of the strategy, to guide the allocation of resources and investment, and provide a framework to inform project development to achieve the vision that:

- Coventry Citizens will be able to access a suitable, affordable, and decent home, with the support they need to sustain their housing.

In 2019 when the current strategy was developed the previous Homelessness Strategy and Housing Strategy (2014-2019) were combined into one document. The rationale of this decision was that it was recognised that activities to prevent and relieve homelessness were to a certain degree dependent on the availability of permanent housing.

Whilst great achievements have been seen and the delivery of the housing and homelessness function and strategy have moved, developed, and changed since its initial publication, we have also seen a shift in terms of some of the priorities and the challenges that sit alongside these.

Rather than combine strategies in the way we did in 2019 this strategy has a specific focus on homelessness and rough sleeping as key issues.

The Covid pandemic has changed the way we operate and deliver homeless services in the city. Our teams began working from home in the early stages of the pandemic and, now a model of hybrid working with a combination of in person work and remote (home working) has become the norm. This has meant that online contact and telephone based work has replaced much of what was done in person. Working this way also makes us more accessible for some as residents are not required to attend our premises in order to engage with us. There will always be people who do not have access to the appropriate technology to engage remotely, or prefer face to face contact, so the option to come into the office and meet in person remains open to them.

The financial crisis is having a significant effect on households in the city. Many people are faced with making a choice between rent, heating, and food. We have seen an increase in people approaching for homelessness support both nationally and locally, with the top 3 reasons for homelessness being in line with national and historical trends.

The implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act (2017) in 2018 changed the way that homelessness services are delivered by local authorities. There have also



been further changes to legislation, such as the Domestic Abuse Act, which placed further duties on local authorities to provide temporary accommodation to all who are homeless because of domestic abuse. The decision to leave the European Union has also been an influential factor, and changes made as part of the UK's withdrawal from Europe have impacted on who is eligible to receive homelessness assistance.

The culmination of these factors alongside other challenges such as the Local Housing Allowance falling some way short of local rental values, has resulted in the council seeing greater numbers of households approaching for assistance and support than we have previously experienced.

## **2.2. Rough sleeping Strategy and action plan 2019-2024**

Coventry published its first Rough Sleeping Strategy in December 2019, in line with a requirement by the Government for all Local Authorities to have a strategy to prevent and tackle rough sleeping. From the outset it was accepted that the successful delivery of the Rough Sleeping Strategy and Action Plan was not in the Council's power alone. Therefore, a partnership approach is the only way that we will be able to ensure successful realisation of our vision, therefore the strategy needed to be owned, supported, and delivered by ensuring effective collaboration and partnership working.

The Rough Sleeping Strategy and its Action Plan were reflective of and intrinsically linked to the Council's Housing and Homelessness Strategy. The two strategies were considered and delivered in tandem at this point in time where the Housing and Homelessness Strategy set the vision for housing in the city and our priorities as well as preventing and tackling homelessness.

Since the approval of the strategy in 2019 there has been a world-wide pandemic. Obviously, this has had a number of serious and negative impacts on individuals and society as a whole. In regard to rough sleeping there have been a number of positive outcomes in regard to our ability to accommodate and support some of the most entrenched rough sleepers in Coventry. The impact of this can be seen in the number of people accommodated as part of the 'Everyone-In' initiative.

The current Rough Sleeping strategy was reviewed during 2022 to reflect the shifts that had happened as a result of the covid 19 pandemic and the increased funding and support that was being provided for those rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping.

### **Achievements and Impact from the previous strategies**



Since adopting the last strategy in 2019 we have seen a number of changes and impacts on homelessness and rough sleeping in Coventry, these include but are not limited to:

- The Homelessness Reduction Act duties have been fully integrated into the homelessness service.
- Recruitment of Head of Housing, Housing and Homelessness Operational Lead (Accommodation Team) and Housing & Homelessness Commissioning and Partnerships Lead – as a result housing and homelessness is led at the appropriate level to drive forward continuous improvement in the service
- Creation and expansion of Rough Sleeper Outreach Team who carry out outreach 5 mornings per week – as a result of this we have regular face to face to contact with rough sleepers in the city and have built a number of trusting relationships. This enables us to provide better support rough sleepers when they are on the street and respond quickly when there is a change in circumstances
- Creation of additional accommodation options for rough sleepers including short-, medium- and long-term provision – as a result should any one rough sleeping want to be off the street, even for a night, we can respond to this. Spending nights off the street can provide a useful first step to considering moving into more permanent accommodation.
- Creation of the Temporary Accommodation Team- which has enabled us to purchase our own temporary accommodation and ensure the use of B&B accommodation for families is minimised.
- Created our own internal Supported temporary accommodation offer (STA) for those who are most vulnerable, with on-site wrap around support which means individuals are supported to address the wider challenges that impact upon their homelessness.
- The Service adapted and continued to deliver services during the Covid-19 pandemic and restrictions.
- Regular training is provided to various council services and external partners in relation to homelessness and rough sleeping which has resulted in better joined up support for individuals who find themselves homeless.
- There has been a Redesign of the Coventry Homelessness Forum which now has in excess of 100 members on the mailing list and is chaired by someone with lived experience of homelessness.
- A Co-creation panel was set up for those with lived experience of homelessness – as a result we are listening, in a structured way, to the experience of people who have been or are homeless which enables us to



ensure the support we offer is relevant to the needs of the homeless community.

- The housing related support services were recommissioned and launched in April 2020 – the redesign of the provision has meant that support is provided at multiple points of someone’s homelessness, including early intervention and tenancy sustainment
- Carried out a full review of our home finder policy which now means that we are more effectively allocating our housing stock based on housing need.

## **Operating environment**

Since 2019 homelessness has increased both nationally and locally. The pandemic has had devastating impacts on our communities, affecting their health, causing social and economic disruption. More recently, the cost of living has increased steeply, and previous economic downturns suggest the impact of an economic crisis on homelessness presentations will be seen over two or three years

Since 2010 Councils have faced a significant reduction to core funding from the Government and more recently have seen significant increases in costs as a result of the high rates of inflation alongside increasing demand for services. Many of our partners have also experienced these issues and there is an ongoing need for efficiencies and savings.’

There has been significant national investment into Rough Sleeper services which has made a significant impact to our ability and capacity to support rough sleepers, but this funding is time limited and currently confirmed up to 31 March 2025 only.

When people do need to move, their housing options are limited. Average private rents in Great Britain have risen to record highs, with annual rental growth in hotspot locations, specifically Coventry increasing by 19.5% between Q1 2023 and Q1 2024 <https://www.rightmove.co.uk/news/content/uploads/2024/04/Rental-Trends-Tracker-Q1-2024-FINAL.pdf>

Homelessness and rough sleeping go beyond housing. They affect mental wellness, physical health, independence, self-esteem, and life choices. Without homes and the sense of community they can provide, it is easy to feel isolated and alone.

We realise how hard it is to ask for help and how easy it can be to feel defined by the label of homeless or rough sleeping. This strategy is not about simply ticking boxes, assigning labels or making assumptions about why somebody needs our help. At its heart, it is about breaking stigmas to understand and support people out of homelessness. We will work hard to see the stories behind the situation people find



themselves in. Losing a tenancy and or being unable to find suitable and safe accommodation can be a frustrating and traumatic experience. It is therefore important that we focus on preventing people who are at risk of homelessness from losing their homes. We want to move beyond a reactive response. We will focus on reducing population-wide risks of homelessness by developing stable, supportive and inclusive environments. The longer someone is homeless, the greater the risk of worsening physical and mental health problems. It is crucial that we intervene as early as possible to provide support and work quickly to help people find a suitable home or where appropriate remain in their current accommodation and preventing homelessness. It is also important that when we intervene, the support we provide ensures long-term solutions and reduces the risk of repeat homelessness.

### **3. The New Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy**

Homelessness and rough sleeping are part of wide set of challenges.

The legal definition of homelessness is that a household has no home in the UK or anywhere else in the world available and reasonable to occupy. The following housing circumstances are examples of homelessness:

- Rooflessness (without a shelter of any kind, sleeping rough)
- Houselessness (with a place to sleep but temporary, in institutions or a shelter)
- Living in insecure housing (threatened with severe exclusion due to insecure tenancies, eviction, domestic violence, or staying with family and friends known as 'sofa surfing')
- Living in inadequate housing (in caravans on illegal campsites, in unfit housing, in extreme overcrowding)

The causes of homelessness are typically described as either structural or individual and can be interrelated and reinforced by one another. Causes and their relationship vary across the life course.

Structural factors include:

- Poverty
- Inequality
- Housing supply and affordability



- Unemployment or insecure employment
- Access to social security

Individual factors include:

- Poor physical health
- Mental health problems, including the consequences of adverse childhood experiences
- Experience of violence, abuse, neglect, harassment or hate crime
- Drug and alcohol problems (including when co-occurring with mental health problems)
- Bereavement
- Relationship breakdown
- Experience of care, prison or time serving in the Armed forces
- Refugees

For our new Strategy we will be focussing on Housing and Homelessness. This new strategy will consider interventions, services, challenges and accommodation provision for people who are homeless (in all its forms) or threatened with homelessness.

Through delivering our new strategy and action plan we will continue to meet the duties placed upon us by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and the Housing Act 1996 (as amended). Preventing Homelessness is a critical due to the impact on lives of people affected by homelessness and the resource implications associated with responding to it. We will work in partnership with other providers and stakeholders to prevent and alleviate homelessness. The Positive Pathways model will be used as our roadmap for addressing homelessness and rough sleeping within the city, working in partnership with statutory services, commissioned partners, the voluntary and community sector, and people with lived experience of homelessness.

Over the next 5 years and beyond we want to ensure that we are equipped and able to focus on prevention and recovery – whilst still responding to crisis. We know that by working up stream to prevent people becoming homeless or those with a history of rough sleeping returning to the street and by ensuring people are supported in their recovery we will reduce the need for crisis intervention.





To achieve our prevention objectives and priorities it is crucial that we work in tandem with a range of partners including, NHS organisations, Ministry of Justice (MOJ), substance misuse services, advice agencies and internal partners as well as accommodation providers in the city to be able to identify and respond quickly to those on the cusp of homelessness and rough sleeping.

In terms of recovery, connecting people with services and into their communities is key to sustainability of both their home and their own well-being.

We will use data and qualitative information to inform our practices and priorities to ensure our approach is effective and achieves the best possible outcomes for the widest possible group.

### **3.1. Positive pathway**

Everyone needs somewhere to live and good housing underpins success in other areas of a person's life. The Positive Pathway is about avoiding housing crisis and trying to work to ensure that homelessness is not part of people's life experiences. Too often different parts of the wider "systems" "work in 'silos', but homelessness relies on working together, not only within local authorities but also with other public bodies, voluntary organisations, individuals and families. The Positive Pathway framework does not look at housing and homelessness in isolation because addressing homelessness is more challenging than simply finding housing. The objective of the pathway is to move from a crisis response to upstream prevention and effective supply to help people move on from homelessness and tenancy sustainment.

Prevention and early intervention as defined in the positive pathway are an important part of this strategy. There are very real and re-occurring reasons why people are at risk of homelessness or end up homeless. The solution needs to be a cross-cutting, council-wide and collaborative, multi-agency approach. Some people also need more support than others to build skills and confidence to maintain a tenancy, so we want to make sure our housing pathways are simple, clear and effective. Whether you are a care leaver, somebody leaving an institution such as prison, a single person sleeping rough, or a family you should be able to find out and have a voice in your journey to a place you can call home.

Where homelessness cannot be prevented it is imperative that there is effective and appropriate targeted and crisis support, for anyone in Coventry whether through the council or one of its partners. Moving on from homelessness is challenging, there is significant demand and limited supply of available social and affordable rented



housing in the city. The difference between the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates in the city and the average rent means the private rented sector is difficult to access for those in receipt of benefits or low incomes.

Once a person has moved into accommodation, tenancy sustainment is key to breaking the cycle and the revolving door of homelessness. Therefore, we must ensure there are appropriate and robust move on options for people and we work collectively across the city to ensure tenancy sustainment.

#### **4. Themes and Principles**

In reviewing the evidence contained in the homelessness review and progress made against our previous strategy, we are confident that the priorities we agreed at that time were correct. However, we now need to update the approach to deal with the context of increases in homelessness, further reductions in public funding, and system wide issues.

This strategy and the resulting delivery and action plan is based on the principles of the positive pathway model and broken down into 3 over-arching themes. With in each theme a number of priorities have been identified, and these will be key to transforming the experience and outcomes of those at risk of homelessness, proactively addressing inequalities and dealing with gaps in service provision. Though the causes and experiences of homelessness differ for different groups and cohorts and responses will vary on a case-by-case basis the principles of the pathway model applies to all. We have also identified a number of cross cutting priorities that underpin both the themes and priority areas contained within each theme which will be considered and integrated into the delivery plan for the strategy.

##### **4.1. Early intervention and Prevention:**

We believe that everyone in Coventry should have a place to call home, we will minimise homelessness by focusing on early prevention and intervention to help people keep their home or move in a planned way. Ensuring people access services as early as possible increases the opportunities to prevent homelessness

##### **4.2. Crisis and targeted support:**

We will provide good quality accessible advice and support to ensure people can resolve their housing problems in a way that is resilient and long lasting. Where people do find themselves homeless and in need of emergency accommodation it will be of good quality, appropriate and conducive to their health and well-being.



Targeted support will be provided for individuals and households who need support and find themselves in crisis.

#### **4.3. Move on and Tenancy sustainment:**

There will be a focus on creating and increasing move on options for people and ensuring the right tools and support is in place to help people sustain tenancies once their homelessness has ended. Our focus will not just be in terms of bricks and mortar but will also consider and reflect the wider social detriments that impact someone's ability to secure and maintain a settled home.

#### **4.4. Rough Sleeping**

Rough sleeping is the most visible form of homelessness, therefore eliminating rough sleeping will run through our 3 overarching themes and will not be seen as a stand-alone theme. Though our interventions and responses maybe different, the aspiration to prevent rough sleeping, deal with crisis and support move on and tenancy sustainment is the same.

#### **4.5. Principles**

Underpinning the identified themes are the following 4 principles which will run through and underpin the priority areas and subsequent actions that will be taken to deliver the strategy:

- Partnership
- Intelligence led
- Improving life chances and health outcomes
- Maximising opportunities

#### **4.6. Partnership**

We recognise that partnerships are the key to preventing and relieving homelessness and to supporting people who are either homeless or facing homelessness. The causes of homelessness are multiple and complex and require solutions which reflect this and therefore we will ensure:

- We continue to engage partners across our public, business, voluntary and faith sectors, recognising the importance of each to coordinate a comprehensive approach to homelessness prevention that delivers sustainable outcomes for residents.



- We work to strengthen our existing partnerships, both with other services in the Council and with external organisations, as well as building new working relationships.
- Ensure partnership working underpins what we do by ensuring we are working with our partners to pool our knowledge, skills, and resources, to improve prevention methods and provide effective support whilst addressing system wide issues that are a barrier to good outcomes.
- Through strong partnership working we will provide a strong safety net for people who do become homeless and make sure they have the support they need to move on to permanent and sustainable new homes.
- We will work across the city in transparent and shared spaces with partners to ensure plans for people and projects are designed together and the most effective they can be, saving time and money while creating long standing change in provision and frontline service for those we find rough sleeping

#### **4.7. Intelligence led**

Our approach to tackling homelessness and rough sleeping will be intelligence-led, building on the work done through the homelessness needs assessment, with dashboards covering each of the priority areas, tracking trends and monitoring the impact of the implementation of the strategy. Focusing on the data;

- We will assess any new and emerging issues and ensure we understand how the Coventry picture compares regionally and nationally, ensuring our approach remains focussed on making a difference to our residents.
- Recognising that homelessness is not random, we will overlay this with wider factors to ensure that we have a holistic approach which enables us to direct our resources to provide support at the earliest stage possible.
- This will be supported by the experiences of people who have experienced homelessness, ensuring our approach is always shaped by their experiences and feedback around what works and what doesn't.

#### **4.8. Improving life chances and health outcomes**

Recognising homelessness as part of a wider system of inequalities, we will seek to improve life chances and health outcomes, through our partnership approach to tackling homelessness and joining systems up. This will include;



- Raising awareness of the impact of homelessness on health and wellbeing outcomes, including how homelessness can exacerbate existing problems, issues and support needs, particularly in relation to mental health.
- Carry out specific initiatives around health and wellbeing for homeless households as well as ensuring our approach to preventing homelessness and supporting households into settled sustainable accommodation provides a basis upon which they can thrive.
- Working in partnership with all agencies and organisations responsible for health and care services when there is a risk of homelessness, or it is the presenting issue.

#### **4.9. Maximising opportunities**

Homelessness and rough sleeping services operate against a complex back drop of legislation and policy which is ever emerging and developing

- We will ensure that where policy and legislation offer opportunities to change how we work we will embrace this whilst being bold and creative in our approach to finding solutions
- We will maximise any impact of changing legislation and policy ensuring that our services reflect changes and capitalise on the opportunities they offer including where funding is available.

### **5. Priorities (What we will do)**

Our priorities for the coming 5 years have been developed through a process of engagement and consultation. We have talked with partners about the challenges we are facing in the city including the rising number of households requiring support. We have used feedback from customers to help identify what matters most to them and we have talked to internal stakeholders about the challenges they face in terms of their service areas in relation to homelessness and rough sleeping. This information, alongside our own knowledge of the current operating environment, has helped us identify the high-level thematic priorities which together with the cross-cutting principles will be the overarching framework for the Strategy delivery plan.

#### **5.1. Early intervention and prevention**



We believe that Everyone in Coventry should have a place to call home, we will minimise homelessness by focusing on early prevention and intervention to help people keep their home or move in a planned way.

1. We will move beyond a reactive response and focus on reducing individual and population-wide risks of homelessness across the city by providing timely, appropriate, and effective interventions to alleviate homelessness and help those sleeping rough.
2. We will work on building early intervention/early prevention approach with partners into all our interactions.
3. We will continually review our self-help offer via the website and self-help information available and ensure it is fit for purpose.
4. We will increase the awareness of duty to refer across the city and other services with regular stakeholder sessions to ensure customers get the right support at the earliest opportunity.
5. We will use our specialist in-house resources to increase visits to mediate with friends/family to increase prevention of homelessness and avoid the need for temporary accommodation.

We will work across the homelessness partnership to ensure we are making the best use of our resources to deliver Information Advice and Guidance (IAG).

## **5.2. Targeted and crisis support:**

We will provide good quality accessible advice and support to ensure people can resolve their housing problems in a way that is long lasting. Where people do find themselves homeless and in need of emergency accommodation it will be of good quality, appropriate and conducive to their health and well-being. Targeted support will be provided for individuals and households who find themselves in crisis;

1. We will support rough sleepers across their period of homeless, ensuring rough sleeping is prevented wherever possible, that it is rare in occurrence, it is brief where it is unavoidable and re-occurrences or returns to rough sleeping are prevented.
2. We will provide a quick, responsive, flexible and creative approach to helping someone manage and end their rough sleeping and to be person centred, patient, persistent and creative in supporting people to maintain and not return to sleeping rough.
3. Where homelessness cannot be avoided, stays in temporary accommodation will be for as short a time as possible and placements will be suitable for the needs of the households.
4. We will ensure that pathways for all those that are homeless guarantee crisis and targeted support is available and accessible
5. Our provision of temporary accommodation will be sufficient to manage the demand and meet homelessness duties.



6. Temporary Accommodation will be suitable, to a good standard and procured to ensure value for money is achieved.
7. We will use Bed & Breakfast (B&B) accommodation when unavoidable and have the ambition to eliminate the use of B&B.
8. Our commissioned support services will be accessible relevant, and solution focussed.

### **5.3 Move on and Sustainment**

There will be a focus on creating and increasing move on options for people and ensuring the right tools and support is in place to help people sustain tenancies once their homelessness has ended , our focus will not just be in terms of bricks and mortar but will also consider and reflect the wider social detriments that impact someone's ability to secure and maintain a settled home .

1. We will ensure that there is targeted support for all homeless households to recover from homelessness and to secure and sustain settled accommodation.
2. We will further develop our positive working relationships with the private rented sector and supported housing Landlords to increase the accommodation options available.
3. Develop resources to support households to understand the various housing options available to them.
4. Ensure that individuals and families that need it, are supported to settle into their new homes.
5. Supported housing in the city will provide a basis for an individual to recover from homelessness, with pathways to move into independent accommodation where appropriate.

## **6. Delivery, monitoring, and review**

To realise the ambitions of this strategy, a delivery plan has been developed and will be reviewed annually. This will be shaped by partners through the multi-agency homelessness forum, whilst taking account of local, regional and national changes and pressures. As identified throughout this strategy, tackling homelessness requires a partnership approach and all key partners will have a role to play in progressing the identified actions under the delivery plan.

The Council's housing and homelessness team will be responsible for the coordination and management of the strategy and overseeing the activity contained within it. We will conduct an annual homelessness review to reflect on progress



against the strategy and the current context in relation to homelessness which will be made available on the Council's website.

The statutory requirement to publish a Homeless & Rough Sleeping Strategy sits with the local authority, however, our One Coventry approach means that this is a Partnership Strategy. Accountability and the monitoring and scrutiny of its delivery will be equally through the city's homelessness partnership forum and through our own internal governance structures

As part of our continued commitments to co-creation and power sharing with people who have and still use services, we will facilitate feedback mechanisms and opportunities to ensure progress is shared. The homelessness forum will receive regular updates from action holders and receive report against progress on delivery.

## **7. Public Consultation**

A public consultation exercise has been carried out on the strategy and the identified themes and principles.

The survey was created on the Let's Talk platform and advertised as part of the live consultation page, the consultation was open for a period from 23rd August 2024 to the end of September 2024 and was promoted via a newsletter on 10th September and delivered to 7,182 recipients.

There were 48 people who completed the survey, the Draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy was downloaded 62 times, and the Review document had 57 downloads.

The key messages and findings that came out of the consultation were:

- Most responses were from members of the public (31)
- 1 in 5 responses were on behalf of a charity, voluntary or community sector organisation (10)
- All of the priorities received agreement of over 96%
- Common themes from the open-ended comments received, focused on, the need for holistic support, and that different groups needed different support.
- Partner organisations will be key to delivering this strategy.
- Questions were raised whether we were making best use of accommodation opportunities such as repurposing student blocks.
- All of the principles received agreement.





- From the open-ended comments some respondents raised the issue of the terminology being confusing.
- Others pointed to the need to focus on actions on how they are going to implement the principles

These findings have been considered and incorporated where appropriate into the body of the strategy and the delivery plan.

Sophie Hall

5/11/2024

