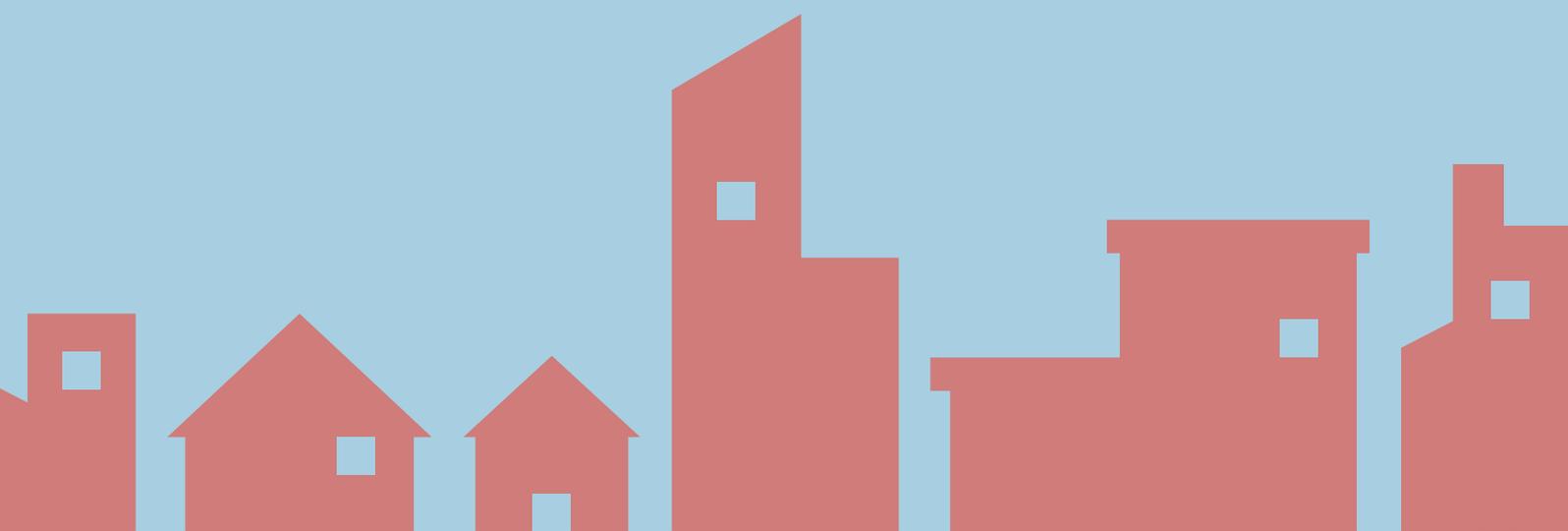


South Gloucestershire Council

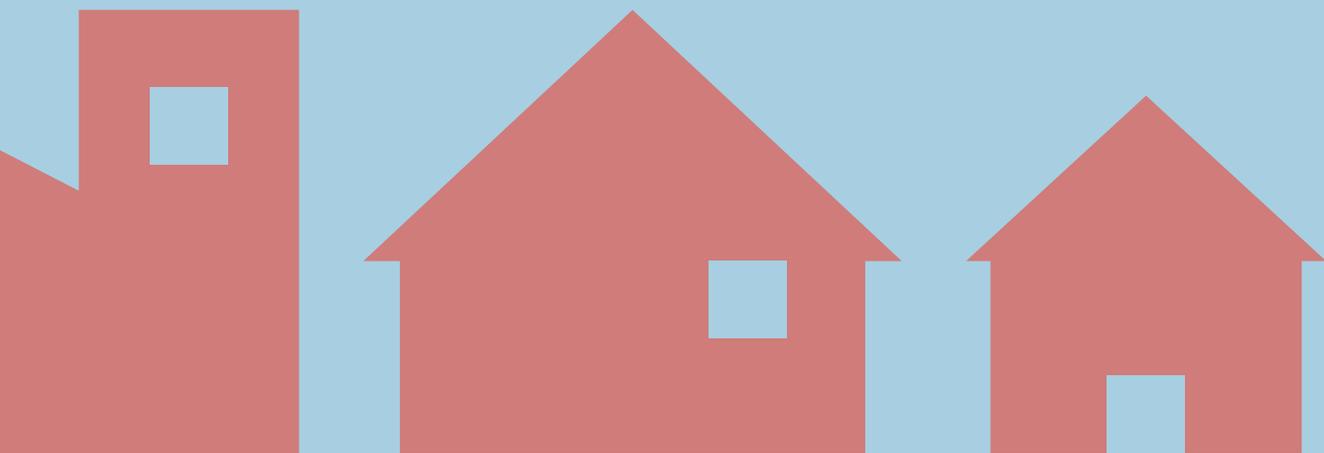
Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024



www.southglos.gov.uk

Contents

Foreword	3
Aim of this Strategy	4
Scope	4
Strategic Links	5
National Context	6
Local Context	7
Vision	9
Main Priorities	9
Governance & Delivery	11



Foreword



The housing market nationally has become increasingly challenging since 2010, and South Gloucestershire has not been unaffected. While most citizens in the district enjoy a good standard of housing, the Council is very aware of those who don't. Responding to an increase in housing need is one of the challenges identified in the Sustainable Community Strategy, with the accompanying commitment to the collective action of ensuring suitable housing for everyone.

No housing need is more pressing than homelessness, and this Council is proud of the services it has in place for those who are affected. While we have achieved successes, we do not underestimate the scale of the task and services for households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness continue to be a priority.

Since the adoption of the last Homelessness Strategy, a major piece of legislation has commenced, the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. This places homelessness prevention and relief at the core of the legal framework and promotes that services work together more effectively at an earlier stage to address homelessness.

South Gloucestershire Council feels strongly that this Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy should go beyond merely meeting the Council's statutory duties. This Strategy sets out its vision of identifying and addressing the wider causes of homelessness. It has been an ideal opportunity to bring together the wide range of initiatives that South Gloucestershire Council and its partners are currently undertaking to respond to those affected, and to build on these with the work that is now needed.

This Homelessness Review and Strategy has been developed with input from a wide range of partners and stakeholders, and taking into account the responses to the formal consultation. The Strategy will be supported by an Action Plan that sets out the key actions for the council and its partners, and the Action Plan will be regularly monitored and updated to ensure delivery of the Strategy.

I would like to thank those who have taken part, and all those who continue to be committed to the prevention and reduction of homelessness in South Gloucestershire. Tackling homelessness is everyone's responsibility.

Cllr Ben Stokes
Cabinet Member for Adults and Public Health
South Gloucestershire Council

Aim of this Strategy

The purpose of the Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy is to set out the council's strategic direction and specific priorities to prevent and tackle homelessness in South Gloucestershire.

While the Homelessness Reduction Act puts the person at the centre of resolving their homelessness problem, we want our Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy to go further than the legal requirements. It recognises the responsibilities of the local authority and its partners to be aware of and identify early indicators of insecure housing, and in creating the environment to respond and make it possible to deliver a holistic and personalised service to those who need help.

Our Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy aims to prevent homelessness arising by recognising and identifying when a household is getting into difficulty, and by responding when the risk is arising. It sets out how those who become homeless will be supported, and how our collective resources will be employed in this.

The Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy recognises that in order to be effective, the council must work in partnership with organisations, services and residents in the area to tackle homelessness and its causes.

Through having the right support in place and resources available, we aim to make sure that South Gloucestershire Council and its wider partnership are responsive to the needs of those who are at risk of, or who are, homeless. We all have a joint responsibility to support our citizens to access and maintain housing.

Scope

The scope of this Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy recognises all types of homelessness needs including:

- ◆ Those who don't have their own home and are considering their housing options,
- ◆ Those where there are indicators of a risk of homelessness, or who have experienced homelessness before,
- ◆ Homeless families with children,
- ◆ Those who are homeless and have complex needs,
- ◆ Those who are roofless,
- ◆ Young people and care leavers who

experience homelessness,

- ◆ Those who are moving on from homelessness into a settled home.

What this Strategy will not do:

- ◆ It will not deliver more social housing,
- ◆ It will not make housing more affordable,
- ◆ It will not change the wider policy and decision making environment, including the welfare system,
- ◆ It will not improve security of tenure in the Private Rented Sector.

Strategic Links

Homelessness is an issue that cuts across a number of other strategic priorities within the council and the visual below sets out many of these relationships. It recognises the important contribution that our partners and other agencies can make to address homelessness, and how tackling homelessness supports their own strategic aims.



National Context

Homelessness Reduction Act 2017:

Since the last strategy was adopted, the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and more recently, the statutory duty to refer, has seen significant changes in the legal framework that local authorities must follow when working with clients who are homeless, or threatened with homelessness.

A national picture of the impact of the new Act is not yet available, but the outcome of similar legislation in Wales, introduced in 2015, has had a positive effect on the number of cases where homelessness was prevented¹.

Homelessness Acceptances: The introduction of this legislation in England follows a steady increase in annual homelessness acceptances since 2009/10. In 2016/17, 59,000 homelessness duties were accepted across England, a 48% increase from 2009/10.

Temporary Accommodation: Since 2010/11, homeless placements in temporary accommodation have also risen sharply by 71% up to June 2018.

Reasons for Homelessness: The vast bulk of the recently recorded increase in statutory homelessness is attributable to the sharply rising numbers made homeless from the private rented sector. This now accounts for more than 30% of accepted cases.

Welfare Reform: Changes to welfare benefits including a reduction in the benefit cap imposed in November 2016 and the freezing of the Local Housing Allowance has impacted on the affordability of private rented accommodation. The number of Housing Benefit/Universal Credit claimants who are private tenants is now approximately five percent lower than when the Local Housing Allowance reforms began in 2011, despite the continuing strong growth of the private rented sector overall.

Rough Sleeping Data: Over the last eight years, there has also been an upward trend in officially estimated rough sleeper numbers. There has been a 169% increase in reported numbers between 2010 and 2018.

Homeless Prevention: Whilst there is clear evidence of increased pressure on homelessness services throughout the country, as shown in the increase in statutory homelessness acceptances, there has also been an increase in the number of cases where homelessness was either prevented, or relieved with a 30% increase since 2009/2010. This shows the greater focus on earlier intervention evident across the country².



¹ Post-implementation evaluation of Part 2 of the Housing Act (Wales) 2014: Final Report: Welsh Government Social Research: 19.07.18
² The homelessness monitor: England 2018 - Crisis report (published April 2018)

Local Context



Homelessness Reduction Act 2017:

The introduction of the Act means that more households now fall within the scope of homeless legislation. In Q1 & Q2 of 2018/19, 471 homeless applications were taken, which is almost twice the number taken during the whole of 2017/18 (258).

The introduction of the duty to refer in October 2018 should also result in an increase in the number of households seeking advice although it is too soon to make meaningful comparisons on the impact in comparison with previous years.

In order to meet the additional demands presented by the Act, the council has restructured and expanded the HomeChoice team, the council's housing advice and options service, so that it can deal with the increased number of customers approaching the service for assistance. The changes implemented have focused resources on front line preventative services, designed to engage with customers at an earlier stage to minimise the number of households who become homeless.

Reasons for homelessness: Loss of private sector accommodation continues to be the main cause of homelessness in South Gloucestershire followed by parental eviction & non-violent relationship breakdown.

Rough Sleeping: The number of rough sleepers identified in the annual rough sleeping estimate in November 2018 was 4. Whilst this figure remains low, especially in comparison with neighbouring Authorities in the West of England, the number of referrals received through Streetlink, the government funded body set up so that members of the public can report rough sleepers, has been slowly rising. South Gloucestershire Council recognises that those of its citizens who are roofless are likely to gravitate to the city centre of its larger neighbour, Bristol, in order to access services.

Bristol has provided data that, of 951 individual rough sleepers counted in its area during 2018, 9 came from a South Gloucestershire postcode. While the number is low, the impact is high and South Gloucestershire Council is working with its neighbour to ensure that each case is addressed.

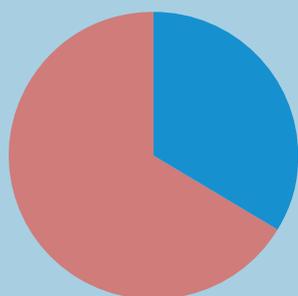
Private Rented Sector in South Gloucestershire has continued to grow over the last five years. In 2017, there were over 17,000 private rented dwellings in the area, which is 30% higher than the social housing stock in South Gloucestershire. Accessing, or maintaining accommodation in the private rented sector remains the most likely solution for many households threatened with homelessness, however the demand for accommodation, especially affordable homes, remains high.

Social Housing: The demand for social housing remains high with nearly 4,000 households on the council's housing register. Whilst South Gloucestershire Council has delivered a strong pipeline of affordable homes in partnership with Registered Providers in the area, this has not met the overall demand for housing. In 2017/18, 856 properties were let of which 613 were general needs homes and of which 19% were let to homeless households.

Welfare Reform: The issue of welfare reform is highlighted in the previous strategy and it continues to have a significant impact on households seeking/maintaining accommodation in the area. There are a number of issues of concern including the number of households claiming housing benefit/universal credit where there is a significant gap between the benefit entitlement and rents being achieved in the private sector. We have yet to see the full impact of the Universal Credit rollout in South Gloucestershire, however this will also impact on the ability of many households to manage their finances effectively.

HomeChoice Review

2018-19: Key Facts



2195

approaches for housing advice.

Total number of homeless applications taken: **1038**

- Under relief: **351**
- Under prevention: **687**



Top 3 reasons for homelessness:

1. End of private rented tenancy
2. Family no longer willing or able to accommodate
3. Relationship with partner ended (non-violent breakdown)



Total number of cases where:

homelessness prevented: **438**

homelessness relieved: **82**

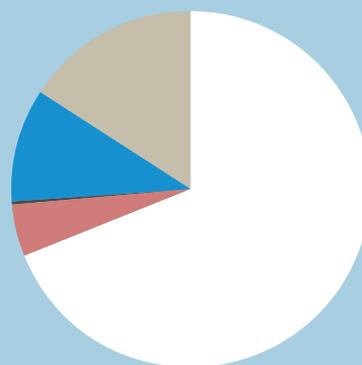
Homelessness decisions made:

- Full duties accepted: **144**

Negative decisions: **65**

The negative decisions are as follows:

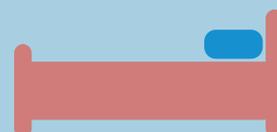
- Not homeless: **10**
- Not eligible: **1**
- Non-priority: **21**
- Intentionally homeless: **33**



Top 3 priority need reasons:

- Household includes dependent child(ren)
- Vulnerable as a result of physical disability/ill health
- Vulnerable as a result of mental health problems

Number of households in temporary accommodation at year end: **98**



Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy

Vision



To work with our partners to recognise the early signs of homelessness and develop innovative solutions to help everyone who is homeless, or at risk of homelessness, to find or maintain a home and then offer them the support to keep it.



Main Priorities

The Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy has the following three main priorities:

①

Prevention and Response

Identify early where households might be at risk of homelessness, and respond to this. For those who are homeless already, have a targeted response in place.

②

Support

Having the right support at the right time for households to prevent or relieve homelessness, and to stop it recurring.

③

Resources

We need services to work collectively and effectively to address homelessness.



These priorities are expanded upon here.

<p>①</p> <p>Prevention and Response</p>	<p>②</p> <p>Support</p>	<p>③</p> <p>Resources</p>
<p>Identify early where households might be at risk of homelessness, and respond to this. For those who are homeless already, have a targeted response in place.</p>	<p>Having the right support at the right time for households to prevent or relieve homelessness, and to stop it recurring.</p>	<p>We need services to work collectively and effectively to address homelessness.</p>

Have the voice of the person represented in all priorities by checking, through continuous feedback and through mapping personas, how each priority is translated into action.

<p>Check what information and advice is most useful. Ensure access to this is easily accessible and is clear as to next steps into the appropriate services.</p>	<p>Understand the role of partner agencies, what they can contribute and how their involvement will benefit the customer.</p>	<p>Achieve a shared understanding of what can be achieved from working together, to the benefit of customers, working effectively and efficiently.</p>
<p>Engage with organisations not subject to the duty to refer in a prevention and response agenda, e.g. Registered Provider, commissioned services, and voluntary sector agencies: devise trigger points indicating emerging risk, and response processes.</p>	<p>All pathway plans to have the person at the centre of the response to their situation, with particular emphasis on entrenched issues. Identify through process mapping what support should be available and when.</p>	<p>Have a clear package of resources and referral routes to these available to households affected by homelessness.</p>
<p>Ensure that personal circumstances and complex needs are not a barrier to accessing services and receiving an appropriate response. Have clear customer journey pathways that ease inclusion.</p>	<p>Have in place a comprehensive tenancy training programme to gain the confidence and skills to live independently, and to overcome landlord risk aversion.</p>	<p>Bring forward innovative programmes offering new access to housing.</p>
<p>Being on top of what's happening locally and nationally that could give rise to homelessness. Understand our data, and use it to develop the response.</p>	<p>Give extra personalised support to those who might need it to overcome complex issues. Embed in partnership agreements and outcomes frameworks.</p>	<p>Understand the current & future demand to influence decisions around the commissioning of services.</p>

Governance & Delivery

South Gloucestershire Council wants to see positive change and development in services to those at risk of, or affected by homelessness. We will work together with customers and partners to ensure that the service is designed to optimise best use of resources and to ensure that we have the skills, knowledge and processes in place for the delivery of the vision and priorities of this Strategy.

Our governance model is as follows:

The Council will create a Homelessness Forum of key partners and with customer representation, with an appointed Chair. This will be responsible for leading on the development and the successful delivery of the Homelessness Strategy Implementation Plan, and for developing and publishing annual progress reports.

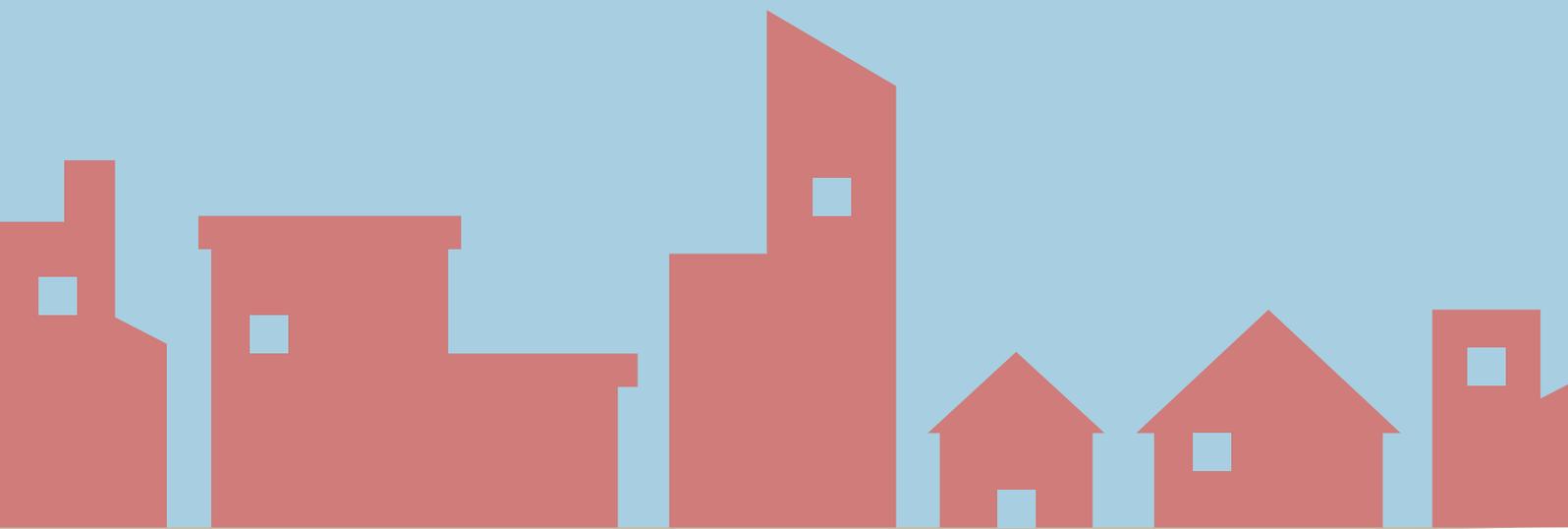
The Plan and Reports are available on the homelessness pages of the council's website, and the annual review will consider how to update and amend the priorities and the implementation plan.

We will seek independent peer review of our Plan and its relevance to achieving our aims.

Key indicators relevant to homelessness are monitored and reported through to South Gloucestershire Council's lead members via the Children Adults and Health department's monthly Divisional Plan, and through the quarterly Housing Performance Monitoring Report. At local level, activity is monitored weekly in the HomeChoice service area, and commissioned services are monitored within a contractual outcomes framework.

An implementation plan of SMART actions will be developed to deliver the Strategy priorities. A sample of actions that could be included is set out here:

- ◆ Develop a Homelessness Charter that partners can sign up to, to commit to preventing and relieving homelessness,
- ◆ Complete Customer Journey Mapping to identify duplication in the system and to develop processes based on optimising customer care,
- ◆ Align our pre-tenancy work with what landlords want and to build resilience against future housing difficulties,
- ◆ Develop a range of options for temporary accommodation and move-on,
- ◆ Explore the possibility of 'peer to peer' training and support, for example for young people,
- ◆ Map support and advice services in the area and meet with them to agree shared working practices,
- ◆ Establish a clear outcomes framework linked to service specifications, including prevention of homelessness indicators and targets,
- ◆ Address affordability issues and ensure partner awareness of assistance available for homeless households,
- ◆ Have an advice hub in place for landlords to advise them of their obligations, as well as the help available should they face difficulties.



#1916 | 11/19

www.southglos.gov.uk

