

Bristol City Council

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025-2030

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Foreword

It's been five years since we published our last Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and while developing this strategy for the next five years, we have reflected on what is going well, what's changed and where we can improve our services for those facing homelessness or sleeping rough. Bristol's One City Plan outlines a shared vision that by 2050 everyone in Bristol will live in a home that meets their needs within a thriving and safe community. This strategy builds on the objectives of the previous iteration to ensure we meet this vision.

Between 2019 and 2024 we have seen some of the most challenging cost of living conditions on record and homelessness and rough sleeping have increased significantly both in Bristol, and nationally. Over the past few years, private rents have increased rapidly, while Local Housing Allowance rates and the benefit cap have been frozen. The price of essentials such as food and fuel soared, and on top of this, households have faced significant increases in their housing costs. These challenges have increased the numbers of people facing homelessness in Bristol and across the UK.

In Bristol we have a wide network of organisations working hard to prevent homelessness and support people in difficult situations. During the height of the cost-of-living crisis, 106 Welcoming Spaces were opened across the city, demonstrating the willingness of people across Bristol to provide support, warmth, and food for those who need it.

The impact of homelessness can be destructive for both families and individuals. Mental and physical health can be impacted negatively along with employment and education for both adults and children. The destructive nature of such experiences result in long term consequences for those impacted. For these reasons reducing homelessness and rough sleeping is a priority for the council and a key commitment in our Corporate Strategy.

The council is committed to ensuring that there are different and specialist services available, including longer-term prevention. However, the findings of our Homelessness Review (2024) show that more needs to be done – particularly in relation to early intervention and prevention. This strategy will act as a road map to get us there.



Councillor Barry Parsons,
Councillor for Easton
and Chair of the Homes and Housing Delivery Policy Committee

Introduction

The Bristol City Council Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025-2030 outlines four strategic priorities that will guide the council in its response to tackling homelessness and rough sleeping. To deliver the required change, the following priorities will direct the work of the council over the next five years:

1. Prevention
2. Accommodation
3. Working in partnership
4. Helping people move forward

Delivering on these priorities will ensure homelessness is reduced and people at risk are supported. Within each priority there are a set of key objectives that will be achieved over the next five years. We will deliver an action plan each year to support the delivery of these objectives.

The priorities of this strategy have been agreed after extensive engagement with a range of local stakeholders including those with lived experience of homelessness and rough sleeping. This cross-city collaboration produced several key themes that informed the priorities of the strategy. As part of the extensive engagement undertaken, a multi-agency steering group with a lived experience Chair was established and comprised of a range of individuals that work within homelessness and prevention services. Over the lifetime of this strategy the group will continue to meet. The organisations included within the steering group were:

- Ashley Community Housing (ACH)
- Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board (BNSSG)
- St Mungos
- Changing Futures
- 1625 Independent People
- InHope
- One25
- Stand Against Racism and Inequality (SARI)
- Housing Matters
- Caring in Bristol
- Shelter
- Second Step
- Sovereign Network Group (SNG)

Alongside a comprehensive Homelessness Review (2024), the council assessed the challenges within the council, particularly in relation to public health and children's services given the increasing number of older people sleeping rough as well as families approaching the council for support.

The priorities and objectives for 2025-2030 build on the last strategy which:

- provided more move-on accommodation for people sleeping rough in the city through a range of affordable options.
- built on existing work with our partner organisations to develop a 'Housing First' approach for homeless people with the highest level of need.
- developed greater understanding of the triggers that are causing tenancies to end, especially in the private rented sector.
- supported 1534 households across Bristol in 2022-23 with homelessness prevention – including early intervention.

A November 2023 'Deep Dive' into rough sleeping by central government concluded that Bristol has the right services in place, and that increases in rough sleeping were not a result of inappropriate provision in the city. Given this, it is clear that wider housing issues, along with national policy decisions, have had a major impact on the likelihood of people facing homelessness. However, the huge increase in the number of households currently in temporary accommodation makes it clear that we must develop and sustain an increased focus on prevention and this needs to be a priority for our work in the next five-year period.

The extent of the challenge we face as a city in relation to homelessness and rough sleeping is evidenced in the council's Homelessness Review (2024); a comprehensive assessment of homelessness and rough sleeping in the city which identifies key trends and challenges. The review also examines wider issues including population in Bristol, economic factors, health inequalities and deprivation.

Within the objectives of the strategy's four principles, the council is committed to ensuring that equality, diversity and inclusion is delivered across all services. This includes the specific experiences and challenges faced by single people, young people, women, abuse survivors, migrants, and those from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds who are disproportionately represented in homelessness and rough sleeping data. This includes retaining a focus on early prevention and working in partnership with those experiencing homelessness and operating within the sector. As part of these principles the council is committed to developing a whole city trauma-informed approach.

In December 2025, central government published its National Plan to End Homelessness, setting out a long-term vision to reduce and ultimately end homelessness across England. The priorities within the national plan closely align with this strategy, notably through a strengthened focus on prevention and early intervention. The national plan also emphasises partnership working, including the introduction of a new 'Duty to Collaborate' for key public services to work together to prevent homelessness and support people at risk of crisis. This reflects the council's cross-city partnership model which underpins this strategy. As part of this work, the council will continue to collaborate with the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority, which is expected to play an increasingly important role in addressing homelessness at a regional level. The National Plan to End

Homelessness introduces new national and local targets, including commitments to reduce the number of people leaving institutions into homelessness and to eliminate the unlawful use of bed and breakfast accommodation for families. These duties and targets will be reflected through this strategy's yearly action plans, alongside strengthened monitoring and reporting through the Local Outcomes Framework.

Central government has also announced additional homelessness funding, increased investment in supported housing, and grant funding through the Long-Term Rough Sleeping Innovation Fund. This funding will be used to support the delivery of the priorities and objectives set out in this strategy.

Finally, the Renter's Rights Act, which came into force in May 2026, also presents new opportunities to support people in housing need. The council will set out its vision for a fair, safe and sustainable private rented sector through a new strategy, expected to be published in autumn 2026.





Our Vision

Bristol's One City Plan outlines a shared vision for Homes and Communities that by 2050 **'everyone in Bristol will live in a home that meets their needs within a thriving and safe community.'**

In line with the findings of the Kerslake Commission on Homelessness and Rough Sleeping, there is not one single answer to ending homelessness, but a series of actions covering prevention, early response and new provision that need to be considered. For those that are currently experiencing or threatened with homelessness and / or rough sleeping, this vision can feel distant. This strategy will deliver visible progress towards achieving this vision over the next five years, bringing together services and the sector to support people to deliver our objective.

The council has made a corporate commitment to preventing homelessness and rough sleeping and tackling the underlying causes. This includes helping prevent homelessness by building and retaining our social housing, supporting good mental and physical health, developing employment and skills opportunities, and taking ethical approaches to debt collection.



What we know about homelessness in Bristol

Bristol continues to face several significant challenges and there is no 'quick fix' to resolving many of these broader social and economic obstacles but identifying them and understanding their impact is crucial to the delivery of this strategy and the future delivery of council services. Homelessness is a much wider issue than rough sleeping, with many people living in unsuitable homes or in temporary accommodation.

As a local authority, the Homelessness Reduction Act requires the council to have a strategy to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping and conduct a needs analysis. Our Homelessness Review (2024) assessed the current situation in Bristol and provided a statistical analysis of trends in homelessness presentations and underlying causes. Among the key challenges and Bristol context outlined in the homelessness review are:

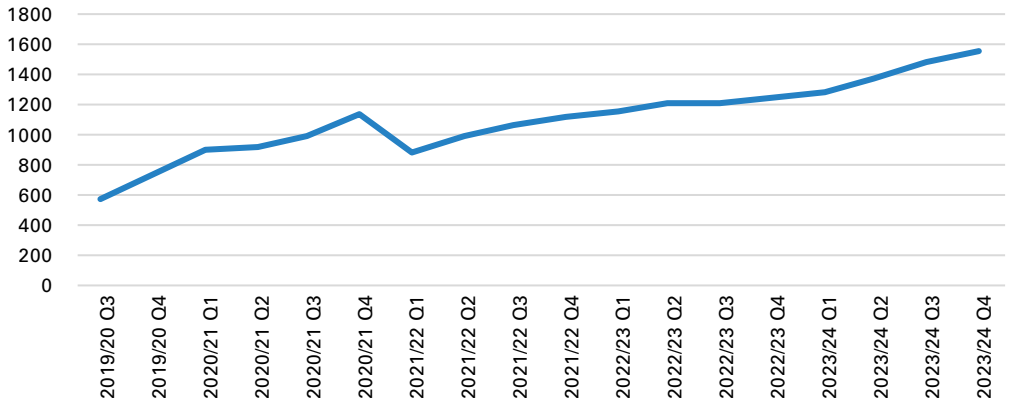
Private Rented Sector

- Bristol is one of the UK's most expensive areas for private renting and, generally, Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates do not fully cover the cost of rent in the city. As a result, tenants receiving housing benefit are often required to make up the difference from their own pocket.
- there are several barriers which mean access to private rental accommodation is incredibly challenging. These include credit ratings, financial cost, deposits, discrimination, and the competitive nature of renting in Bristol – which can result in the practice of bidding wars.
- the main reported reason for people presenting as homeless in Bristol continues to be 'End of private rented tenancy', followed by 'Family no longer willing or able to accommodate', and 'Domestic Abuse'.
- the key challenges identified by the 2023 Bristol Living Rent Commission Report were an increasing shortfall in the supply of private rental properties relative to demand, rent increases, and the overall cost of rent relative to income. The commission concluded that private renting in Bristol faces a serious access, affordability, and security of tenure crisis, playing a major role in homelessness.

Social and affordable housing demand

- social housing is in extremely high demand and there are over 21,000 households on the council's social housing waiting list (HomeChoice Bristol). Statutorily homeless households can expect to wait for two and a half years or more to make a successful bid for council or housing association housing.
- this also impacts temporary accommodation (TA) use in the city with over 1,500 households in TA across the city. It is estimated that over 800 people are living in vehicles in the city and the single biggest reason given for this is inability to afford other housing options and a lack of social housing.
- there is a shortage of affordable housing in the city with a need to provide affordable housing for 13,973 households unable to afford to rent or buy over the period 2020-2040 – equating to 699 households per year.
- due to a lack of affordable housing, much of the TA the council uses is expensive accommodation from the private rental sector – including the use of hotels.

Total number of households in temporary accommodation 2020–2024



Supported housing

- existing supported housing in Bristol is oversubscribed, increasing the use of TA and out-of-area provision.
- where a duty is accepted, the priority need group with the largest increase since 2018 has been those reporting 'vulnerable as result of mental health problems'. This saw a sharp increase from 36 to 245 in 2022-23, with a particularly significant growth amongst young people.

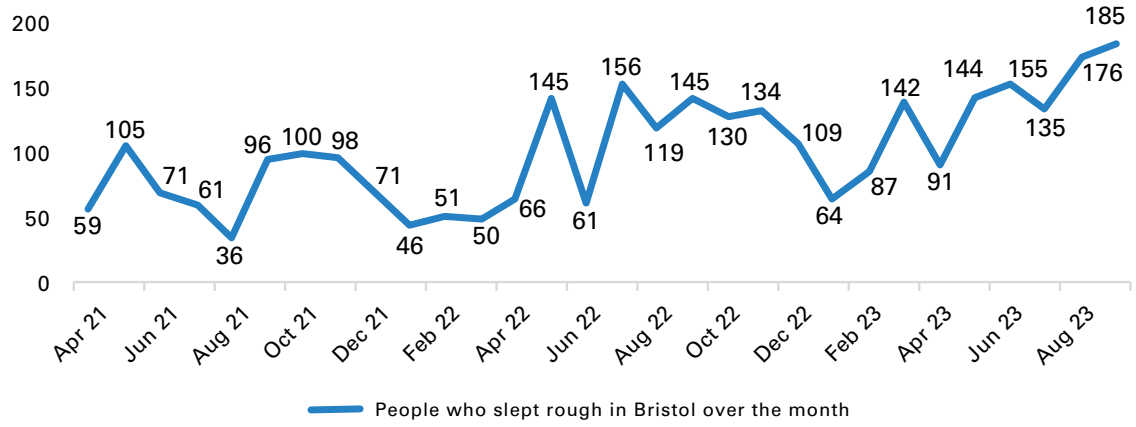
House prices

- over the last ten years the average house price in England and Wales increased by 67%. In Bristol, this number was 93%. As a result, many of those who would like to get on the property ladder are forced to continue to rent in the city – driving up demand and resulting in more people operating in an increasingly costly and competitive market.
- the average house price in Bristol is almost ten times the local average annual earnings, making Bristol the least affordable of the English Core Cities. In parallel, rents in the city have increased by 52% since 2011 whereas wages have only increased by 24% over the same period.

These key challenges were echoed in the engagement conducted with organisations and individuals with lived experience. Engagement with stakeholders provided a clearer insight into the direct experiences of those operating in the sector and the impact of the above challenges on people's lives.

Numbers reported as sleeping rough 2021–2023

'Monthly rough sleeping' counts and estimates show all people who have been found bedded down in Bristol over the course of the month. This graph shows the significant rise in the number.





Strategic Priorities

This strategy looks to strengthen the already high level of partnership working across Bristol and how we can continue to make significant improvements across homelessness and wider council services. To bring about significant change within our communities, the strategy focuses on four key priorities, which have been co-developed with key partners across the city. More detail on the actions being taken by the council against each priority is available in the accompanying action plan which will be reviewed and updated annually.

Strategic Priority 1: Prevention

Homelessness across the UK and in Bristol is increasing. Given this challenge, it is critical that the council continues to put homelessness prevention at the heart of everything it does. We believe the best way to reduce homelessness is to prevent it in the first place and the council will aim to help people at the earliest opportunity and ensure that they get the advice and help required.

As part of this approach, the council is committed to further understanding the factors that can lead to someone becoming homeless – including the two leading causes in Bristol, end of a private tenancy agreement and family breakdown. We will also continue to better understand and consider the role other social issues play, including poverty, health, abuse, discrimination, and trauma.

Every aspect of life impacts a person's health and ensuring all residents have the resources to live a healthy life is vital. Successfully providing support at an early stage ensures problems are treated rather than being left to worsen and early identification of the need for mental health support or substance abuse is one of many health-driven preventive steps that can be taken in relation to homelessness and rough sleeping.

How we understand prevention:

Our focus on prevention over the lifetime of this strategy will be guided by the following definitions of the varying forms prevention can take:

Universal prevention – preventing or minimising homelessness risks across the population at large

Targeted prevention – upstream prevention focussed on high-risk groups, such as vulnerable young people, and risky transitions, such as leaving local authority care, prison or mental health in-patient treatment

Crisis prevention – preventing homelessness likely to occur within 56 days, in line with legislation on 'threatened with homelessness'

Emergency prevention – support for those at immediate risk of homelessness, especially sleeping rough

Recovery prevention – prevention of repeat homelessness and rough sleeping

Key Objectives:

- Bring together community, voluntary and statutory stakeholders to participate in homelessness prevention, identifying people at risk and providing them with signposting and support.
- Identify and increase best practice for homelessness prevention work, recognising the different drivers of homelessness.
- Ensure the availability and accessibility of information and advice for clients seeking early help to meet a housing need.

Strategic Priority 2: Accommodation

We are committed to increasing the supply of, and access to, accommodation in Bristol. Increasing the supply of accommodation in a range of varying forms is a critical step for tackling rough sleeping and people are receiving the accommodation and support best tailored to their specific needs.

Key Objectives:

- Secure more accommodation for vulnerable people (seek to extend Housing First schemes amongst other initiatives). This will include delivering supported housing in line with our Supported Housing Delivery Plan 2024-2029.
- Improve the quality and suitability of temporary accommodation, while being more efficient with money. This includes reducing spending on accommodation that can be better used for homelessness prevention services.
- Move more people into sustainable longer-term accommodation and increase the supply of move-on accommodation by working with housing providers through our Supported Housing Delivery Plan 2024-2029.
- Support more people move into the private rented sector, through incentivising landlords to let housing at Local Housing Allowance rates, providing and promoting deposit schemes, and supporting tenancies.



Strategic Priority 3: Working in partnership

Working in partnership with a well-connected, well-trained, resilient homelessness prevention sector is one of the most effective ways the council can operate. Tackling citywide challenges like homelessness and rough sleeping requires collective action across the city. No one person or organisation can deliver the solutions to homelessness and rough sleeping on their own and the way forward lies in involving and coordinating as many people's energies, ideas, talents and expertise as possible.

Over the life of this strategy, we will continue to build new and existing relationships with our partners to deliver the support and services people need. This includes communicating closely with partners to better understand the needs of vulnerable groups and conducting further work into understanding the factors contributing to the existence of 'hidden homelessness', particularly among women.

Key Objectives:

- Work collaboratively with partners to ensure that the sector has resources and knowledge on all services available; and to reduce as many barriers to homelessness prevention as possible.
- Identify where we can share training, improve the use of data, and increase information-sharing amongst partners for better outcomes for those we work with.
- In addition to the current roll-out of staff training on trauma-informed approaches, embed the 2024 Centre for Homelessness Impact work on our workforce's wellbeing, recognising that this is the bedrock of compassionate, honest, and trauma-informed communication and practice.
- Work with national Government to influence national homelessness policy, co-ordinating with key partners on a strategy to campaign and lobby as a city on key issues.



Strategic Priority 4: Helping people move forward

Bristol City Council is committed to helping people move forward after experiencing homelessness as well as reducing the number of people in crisis. Helping people move forward will help break the cycle many people find themselves in after sleeping rough for the first time.

Key Objectives:

- Work to ensure that places in longer-term accommodation are available, so that people spend less time in emergency and temporary accommodation (settings which can destabilise people's lives)
- Ensure everyone has access to information on the full range of support and accommodation options that can help with moving forward.
- Commission targeted homelessness services that recognise and build on people's existing skills and aspirations to help them flourish.



Implementing our Strategic Vision – Measures and Governance of the Strategy

To ensure that our vision for the city is achieved and the key strategic priorities are delivered we need to work together with our partners over the next five years.

All Bristol City Council directorates are signed up to the delivery of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025-2030. Alongside this strategy, the council will publish an annual action plan outlining the key activity taking place to progress the priorities and objectives each year.

The action plan will identify who is responsible for the completion of specific tasks and outline timescales for delivery. The multi-agency steering group that have been consulted during the development of this strategy will continue to meet, monitor and evaluate the plan regularly. Internally, the yearly action plan will be brought to the council's Corporate Leadership Board and Homes and Housing Delivery Policy Committee for review each year.

From 2026/27, councils are required to publish an action plan alongside their homelessness and rough sleeping strategy, including new local targets aligned to the national Local Outcomes Framework. The council will use the annual action plan to set out progress against these targets and outline any additional actions required to ensure delivery of the strategy's objectives.



Glossary of Terms

- **Housing First:** Housing First is an approach to ending homelessness through housing and support provision. It prioritises access to permanent housing with tailored, open-ended, wraparound support for the resident that emphasises choice and control.
- **Affordable housing:** Affordable housing is for people in housing need who cannot afford to buy or rent on the private market.
- **Temporary accommodation:** Somewhere to live while you wait for longer term housing.
- **Homelessness Reduction Act:** The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 places duties on housing authorities to intervene earlier to prevent homelessness and to take reasonable steps to relieve homelessness for all eligible applicants – not just those that have priority need.
- **Trauma informed approach:** An approach which is grounded in the understanding that trauma exposure can impact an individual's neurological, biological, psychological and social development. Being trauma-informed means assuming that people are more likely than not to have a history of traumatic experiences and that these experiences may impact on their ability to feel safe within or develop trusting relationships with services and their staff, or their ability to live happy and fulfilled lives within their communities.
- **Local Housing Allowance:** Local Housing Allowance (LHA) is used to work out how much Housing Benefit we can pay for private tenants to rent their homes.
- **Kerslake Commission on Homelessness and Rough Sleeping:** The Kerslake Commission on Homelessness and Rough Sleeping was established in 2021 to examine the lessons from the emergency response which supported people sleeping rough during the Covid-19 pandemic. It works with the Government, and other partners and agencies, to achieve the recommendations set out in its reports, to monitor the direction of rough sleeping more widely, and drive changes that will help to end rough sleeping.
- **Hidden Homelessness:** Those who experience hidden homelessness are hidden from statistics and services as they are dealing with their situation informally. This means staying with family and friends, sofa surfing, living in unsuitable housing such as squats or in 'beds in shed' situations (The Homelessness Monitor: England 2018).

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