

Kirklees
Preventing Homelessness
and Rough Sleeping
Strategy
2018 - 2023



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Our Vision

'Kirklees is a place where no one sleeps rough on our streets, where no one is excluded, and where the support to prevent homelessness, or end it as quickly as possible, is available for people for as long as they need it.'

Foreword

The Kirklees Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy sets out the vision which has been developed by the Council in partnership with key stakeholders who work across Kirklees, to prevent and tackle homelessness in all its forms.

We want to see an increase in the amount and range of housing that is safe, secure, affordable, accessible and sustainable, coupled with the right level of tailored support for people who need this.

Our ambitions for preventing homelessness and rough sleeping directly support the outcomes for Kirklees that the Council sets out in the Corporate Plan¹. Housing, and having access to good housing is crucial to people's lives. It is important for children's best start in life and for people's ongoing health and wellbeing, their economic prosperity, security and ambitions. Equally, the delivery and supply of decent

housing for everyone who needs it supports the wider vision for Kirklees as a district that enjoys economic success and offers a great quality of life. Achieving our ambitions for housing, and the prevention of homelessness, supports the outcomes for people and places in Kirklees that we want to achieve.



Cllr Cathy Scott

Cabinet Member - Housing and Democracy

¹Kirklees Council's Corporate Plan, 2018 – 2020 <http://www.kirklees.gov.uk/beta/delivering-services/corporate-plan-201820.aspx>

Summary



The Kirklees Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for 2018 -23 sets out the key issues around homelessness including rough sleeping, the opportunities we will respond to, and the challenges we face. Homelessness prevention is part of the overall strategy for housing in Kirklees. It's a priority for and across a range of services, and links to the Kirklees Health and Wellbeing Plan and the Kirklees Economic Strategy. The strategy takes into account the changes that have been brought about with the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and the focus on rough sleeping as set out in the Government's Rough Sleeping Strategy.

This strategy has been developed in close partnership with the multi-agency Kirklees Homelessness Forum and with the involvement of people who have lived experience of homelessness. Their experiences, of what works and what needs to change, are reflected in the case studies within this strategy.

Preventing homelessness links directly to the wider outcomes for Kirklees people and places that we want to see. These include enabling improvements in people's health and wellbeing, and their financial resilience through increasing

people's independence, access to training, learning and employment.

The Council has seen an increase in the numbers of homeless households in Kirklees since 2016, and an increase in the annual partnership estimate of the numbers of people reported as sleeping rough. However, our partnership work to prevent and relieve homelessness for anybody who is at risk of becoming homeless has seen good success, and we are committed to building on this.

Our shared focus is centred on taking early, effective and integrated actions, and with those groups of people who are more at risk of becoming homeless. If homelessness cannot be prevented, we will work to enable people to move into a settled and secure home with the right type of support and as quickly as possible, successfully moving on from homelessness.

We recognise that ownership of the preventing homelessness agenda must be partnership based, across the Council and its partners – the Council cannot prevent homelessness on its own and our partners play a vital role in preventing and responding to homelessness.

The key issues addressed in the strategy are both structural, and individual. They include:

- housing costs, and people's ability to afford and keep a decent, settled home
- housing supply, including private rented homes
- impacts of benefit changes and an increasing number of households seeking assistance from the Council
- health, especially mental health and other complex factors, and the links with homelessness
- responding to the need for clear and well understood information
- supporting vulnerable groups
- increasing numbers of people sleeping rough and in temporary accommodation.

Summary



Our Priorities

In response to the issues identified, the strategy sets out two key priority themes. These are:

Priority 1: Preventing Homelessness and enabling access to support

The strategy sets out what we will do in partnership to address the challenges and risks around homelessness and rough sleeping, and to build on the strengths and opportunities that are available.

We will:

- provide meaningful and effective advice which is timely and outcome focussed, for everybody who approaches the Council with a housing need, including people referred via the Duty to Refer
- build on our active networking and strengthen engagement with partners and services across and beyond the Council to develop a joint action plan that ensures early and “upstream” preventative action, where partners identify people who are struggling and who may be at risk of losing their home, including people leaving prison or discharged from hospital and young people asked to leave the family home where the family relationship has broken down.
- explore innovative and different approaches to intervening earlier, which effectively address issues and ensure clear pathways to support are in place
- continue and develop our shared approaches to reducing and mitigating the impacts of welfare reform and other financial pressures, including a focus on enabling people to access and maintain employment, and achieve better paid work
- maintain and further embed our approach to prevention, using personalised approaches such as individual housing plans, “working with” people rather than doing to/for them
- make greater use of good quality and affordable private rented accommodation
- develop proposals for enabling provision of more supported accommodation for single homeless households in North Kirklees
- ensure the Council’s Housing Allocations policy continues to effectively meet the needs of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness
- work with our partners in the voluntary sector to support them in submitting funding bids and enabling increased provision
- review and extend the current models of temporary accommodation and reduce our use of Bed and Breakfast, and ensure this is not used to accommodate 16/17 year olds
- ensure effective referral pathways into the new outcome focussed housing support services to be commissioned by the Council through the Kirklees Integrated Support Services
- take account of all relevant factors when allocating temporary accommodation for homeless households. For those households with children, this includes location of schools, travel options and the age and educational stage of the children in that household.

Summary



Priority 2: Tackling rough sleeping

We want to see an end to rough sleeping in Kirklees. We recognise this is ambitious and challenging. It needs a range of partners working cohesively and in collaboration, and there is no one single solution to rough sleeping.

We will:

- improve and extend our emergency responses to rough sleeping, including arrangements for dealing with the impacts of adverse weather conditions on rough sleepers and quickly getting people off the streets
- ensure that as part of the follow up response to people who are enabled to come off the streets the Council's Housing Solutions Service facilitates engagement with people who have been sleeping rough
- use a tailored and person centred approach in developing solutions with people sleeping rough
- work to better understand and tackle the underlying reasons some people do sleep rough, despite having accommodation available to them
- adopt the principles of Housing First through the Kirklees Integrated Support Service (via the Life Chances Fund) where this is an appropriate approach and where more traditional approaches have been unsuccessful
- identify and better support "hidden homeless" households such as women who are living in very insecure and unsafe situations and who may be vulnerable to exploitation and abuse
- continue to embed across the Council and externally, a wider understanding of the links between preventing and ending rough sleeping and successfully achieving wider health, wellbeing and economic resilience outcomes
- incorporate the lived experience of homelessness perspective into service planning and action plans
- work in a more integrated way to prevent rough sleeping and the risk of people returning to the streets
- ensure that our referral mechanisms are clear, accessible and understood by partners
- support the ongoing roll out and awareness raising around the Homelessness Forum's Street Outreach Good Practice Guide
- regularly review the information available to anyone who is concerned about rough sleeping in Kirklees to make sure it is readily available understandable and accessible and supports the provision of longer term solutions to rough sleeping.

The strategy Action Plan will be further developed with partners and will set out clear and measurable outcomes. Progress will be monitored and reviewed by the Council on an annual basis and will be refreshed in line with that review, for the duration of the strategy.

Summary





What is homelessness?

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) defines statutory homelessness as:

“A household is legally homeless if, either, they do not have accommodation that they are entitled to occupy, which is accessible and physically available to them, or they have accommodation but it is not reasonable for them to continue to occupy this accommodation”

Introduction

The term “homelessness” is much broader than reported statutory homeless and has a number of interpretations. Also included in the broader spectrum of homelessness are people living in hostels; rough sleeping and “hidden homeless” including overcrowded, shared or concealed households.

A common view of street homelessness (rough sleeping) is that it is a problem of accommodation. Health problems, including mental ill health and other complex factors frequently tip people into homelessness or are barriers which prevent people from acquiring and/or sustaining appropriate accommodation. Such issues can lead to social isolation; mistrust of agencies and a reluctance to engage; inability to sustain a tenancy and difficulty managing household budgets.

The main reasons for the increase in rough sleepers include:

- impact of Welfare Reforms
- reduction in funding for services or raising threshold of support services (ie Mental Health)
- a shortage of appropriate and affordable accommodation.

Homelessness then, is a continuum. At its sharpest, most visible end is rough sleeping. But there are a range of situations that people who are homeless fall into including: people whose housing situation is insecure; who are “sofa surfing”; living with domestic abuse; in private rented accommodation with a legal notice to leave their home or living in unacceptable conditions. Where the local authority is accommodating a household (either an individual person, a couple or where children are included) in temporary accommodation, that household is also homeless.

The earlier that intervention occurs, for example before people become known to services and are “in the system”, the more effective we become at preventing homelessness. This is a driving force not only for this strategy, but as a guiding principle for the Council and its partners. Our emphasis on prevention and relief of homelessness includes rapid intervention where homelessness does occur, on recovery from the effects of being homeless – or rough sleeping – and moving on to successful outcomes using an approach which makes the most of people’s assets and strengths.

Our approach

Under the Housing Act 2002, local housing authorities must have a strategy for preventing homelessness in their district. The Government’s Rough Sleeping Strategy² requires that these strategies also address rough sleeping and that this is reflected in the title of the local housing authority’s strategy.

The *Kirklees Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018 – 2023* reviews and builds on the intelligence and work undertaken set out in the previous strategy. It’s informed by local data and intelligence and takes account of a number of important changes. These include changes at a legislative and policy level, with the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, and at an operating level, with the numbers of people becoming homeless, and reducing budgets to support services.

²<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-rough-sleeping-strategy>

Introduction

There is also a growing focus on homelessness and rough sleeping politically and from a public perspective and increasing recognition that preventing homelessness needs intervention from a wide range of partners and agencies as part of a broader system response.

Homelessness is an issue across the country, and Kirklees is typical. Since 2016, we have seen an upward trend in the numbers of people who are approaching the Council as homeless, or threatened with homelessness, and a corresponding increase in the numbers of people whom the Council accepts as statutory homeless³. However, it is worth noting that, certainly prior to this time the long term trend in homelessness has been significantly decreasing.

At a regional level, the Council's Housing Solutions Service works with colleagues in neighbouring local authorities to share good practice, innovation and improvement and improve effectiveness of shared referral systems. Locally, Kirklees has a well-established and effective multi agency partnership which represents the breadth of agencies who play a part in the homelessness prevention agenda. The Kirklees Homelessness

Forum (KHF) works to prevent homelessness, and end rough sleeping and where people do become homeless, to support those individuals into settled accommodation and build on the skills and abilities needed for people to achieve successful outcomes. The Forum has steered the development and direction of this strategy, and will have responsibility for agreeing and contributing to the outcomes arising from the strategy action plan.

Together, we have developed two overarching themes which will be our priorities as we move forward with strategy implementation. These are:

Preventing Homelessness and enabling access to support

- Early intervention and prevention with improved inter-agency working, intervening before crisis and more effectively supporting vulnerable people.
- Increasing and maximising the housing offer through enabling more affordable and sustainable housing including housing with support.
- Access to help which sustains tenancies, improving people's lives and achieving positive outcomes.

Tackling rough sleeping

- Improved responses for people who sleep rough, getting people off the streets and maintaining ongoing engagement to break the rough sleeping cycle;
- Developing a more collaborative, 'working with' relationship with rough sleepers;
- Building on and strengthening our partnership arrangements including the growing and emerging range of voluntary groups, food banks and street kitchens.

A key theme which runs throughout this strategy and underpins our priorities is one of innovation, thinking differently and trying new approaches. It's also about ensuring that preventing homelessness and ending rough sleeping in Kirklees is a focus for all of us.

³These are households that are owed a full housing duty by the local authority. To be statutory homeless, the following tests are applied:

- Eligibility, whereby some people will be ineligible because of their immigration status
- Is the household homeless or threatened with homelessness within (now) 56 days
- Do they belong to a 'priority' group, i.e. people with children or single people who are considered vulnerable because of disability or ill health
- Are they unintentionally homeless that is, they have not made themselves homeless by their own action (or inaction)
- Have a local connection to the local authority.



National Picture

The context of preventing homelessness and rough sleeping is set out at a national level, in the Housing Act 1996, the Homelessness Act 2002, the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and the national Rough Sleeping Strategy. This document says that all local authorities should update their strategies and “re-badge” them as homelessness and rough sleeping strategies; and that local authorities report progress in delivering these strategies and publish annual action plans.

Latest data from MHCLG⁴ shows that between 1st January and 31st March 2018, local authorities accepted 13,300 households as being statutorily homeless, down 2% from the previous quarter (Q4 2017) and down 9% on the same quarter of 2017.

The national picture shows there are increasing numbers of people in temporary accommodation⁵. As at 31st March 2018 the number of households in temporary accommodation was 79,880, up 3% from the same time in 2017, and up by 66% since 2010. There has been a reported drop of 1% in the figures of homelessness prevention and relief since quarter 1, 2017.

Shelter reports on some notable trends; young people and single parent families are disproportionately affected by homelessness and the number of homeless people aged 60 and over is at its highest in a decade. Looking at temporary accommodation, it notes that 38,390 single parent families are living in temporary accommodation and for this group, the increase has been even higher, at 54% over the same timescale.

According to a report by Centrepoin in 2015, 28% of young people (under 25), have been forced to sleep in an unsafe and unsuitable place at some point, including in a car, an abandoned building or on the streets and government data also shows an increase of almost a third in the numbers of this age group sleeping rough (MHCLG, 2018).

Homelessness Reduction Act, 2017

The focus on preventing homelessness is underpinned by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, implemented in April 2018. This major piece of legislation places a mandatory duty on local authorities to work to prevent homelessness for all households at risk of losing their home within 56 days. Local housing authorities must intervene earlier in order to prevent or relieve someone’s

homelessness, including people who do not have priority need, are intentionally homeless and regardless of their local connection⁶.

Where someone’s homelessness cannot be prevented there is a new duty to try and bring that homelessness to an end as quickly as possible (called the relief duty). This duty means that the local authority will try and support the individual to find secure and settled accommodation that is suitable, and available to them with at least a 6 month tenancy.

These duties are not subject to the individual being in priority need, having a local connection, or whether they are considered to be intentionally homeless⁷. The duties apply to anyone who is threatened with, or experiencing, homelessness.

⁴Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, Statutory homelessness and prevention and relief, January to March (Q1) 2018: England

⁵Accommodation arranged by the council after an individual has made a homelessness application and the council has not offered permanent tenancy through its housing register/waiting list.

⁶This means an individual has links based on living or working in the area, close family in the area or other special reasons.

⁷If you lose your home because of something that you deliberately do or fail to do.

Strategic Context



The new Act also introduces the Personal Housing Plan (PHP), an agreement between the local authority and the individual as to what actions will take place to find and keep settled suitable accommodation. The PHP places a responsibility on the individual to carry out any reasonable actions that have been agreed, as well as being clear what actions the local authority will undertake. In Kirklees, we have used the principles of restorative practice and co-production – doing with, not doing to or for – as well as our commitment to a strength based approach, to underpin how we develop personal housing plans with people who are homeless.

The full housing duty⁸, and the circumstances in which temporary accommodation must be provided, remain unchanged.

Duty to Refer

A new Duty to Refer has been introduced for public bodies (implemented October 2018). The Crisis report, “Preventing Homelessness; it’s everybody’s business”⁹ notes that this:

“Reflects a recognition that successful homelessness prevention can never just be the responsibility of the local housing authority”

The Duty to Refer applies to public sector organisations such as Health, Jobcentres, the Ministry of Defence, Prisons and Social Care to refer anyone who they believe may be homeless or at risk, to the local authority for assistance with housing. Consent to referral must be given by the individual. The Government’s Rough Sleeping Strategy delivery plan notes that this new duty is:

“Embedding a culture of homelessness prevention across agencies who work with vulnerable people”¹⁰



A new
Duty to Refer
applies to many[†]
**public sector
organisations**

⁸For households which are unintentionally homeless and in a priority need category (such as having dependent children) the local authority has a main duty to secure settled accommodation. The local authority has a main duty to ensure suitable temporary accommodation is provided until settled accommodation is available.

⁹Preventing Homelessness: it’s everybody’s business, Crisis, Ruth Jacob, October 2018.

¹⁰https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/762854/RSS_delivery_plan.pdf

[†]For a full list of these, see:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/homelessness-duty-to-refer/a-guide-to-the-duty-to-refer#public-authorities>

Strategic Context



Local Picture

The Kirklees Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy does not sit in isolation; it is very much part of the Council's overall strategy for housing in Kirklees, which in turn clearly links to, and supports, wider and corporate strategies such as the **Health and Wellbeing Plan, the Economic Strategy, and the Council's Corporate Plan**. Preventing homelessness and tackling rough sleeping is a firm priority for the Council. This strategy is owned and endorsed across the Council, and supported across the wider Kirklees partnership.

The Council's [Housing Strategy for 2018 – 2023](#) covers the three priority areas of housing focus for the Council and its partners.

The first of these is housing need, including homelessness, with a specific outcome of preventing homelessness for more people, and supporting more people to find an alternative suitable home.

Additionally, the Housing Strategy sets out actions to achieve how people who are at the extreme end of homelessness and sleeping rough, with multiple and highly complex

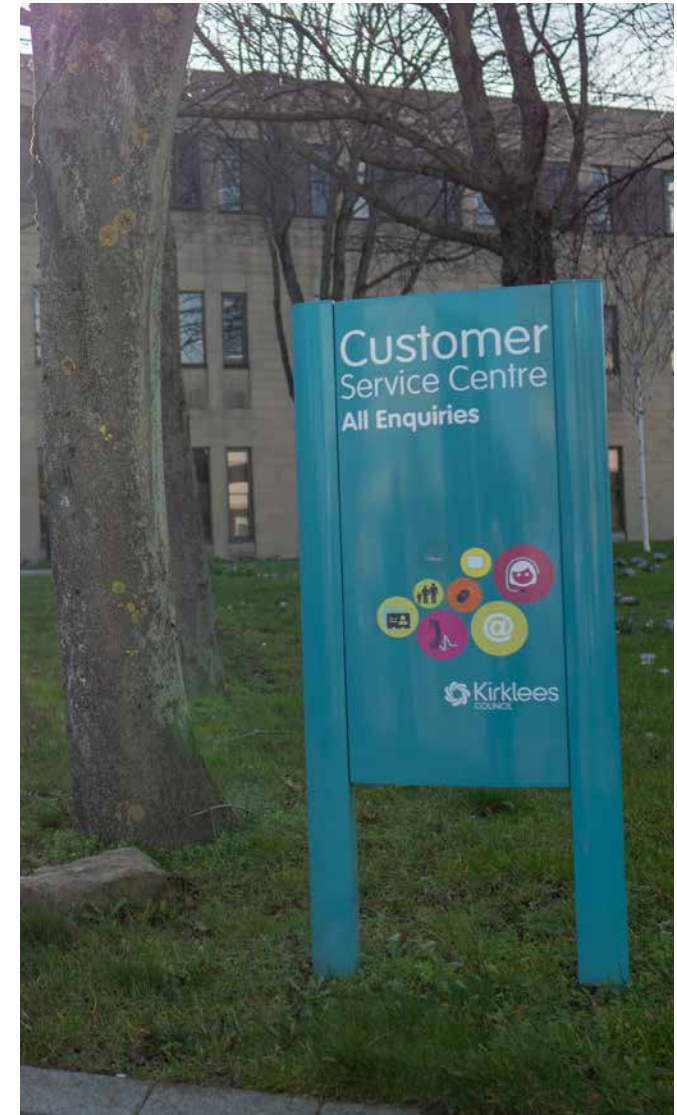
needs are supported off the streets and into appropriate housing, with the right level and type of support.

Data for the main causes of homelessness in Kirklees show that these are:

- ending of an assured shorthold tenancy
- violent breakdown of relationship involving a partner
- parents no longer willing to accommodate.

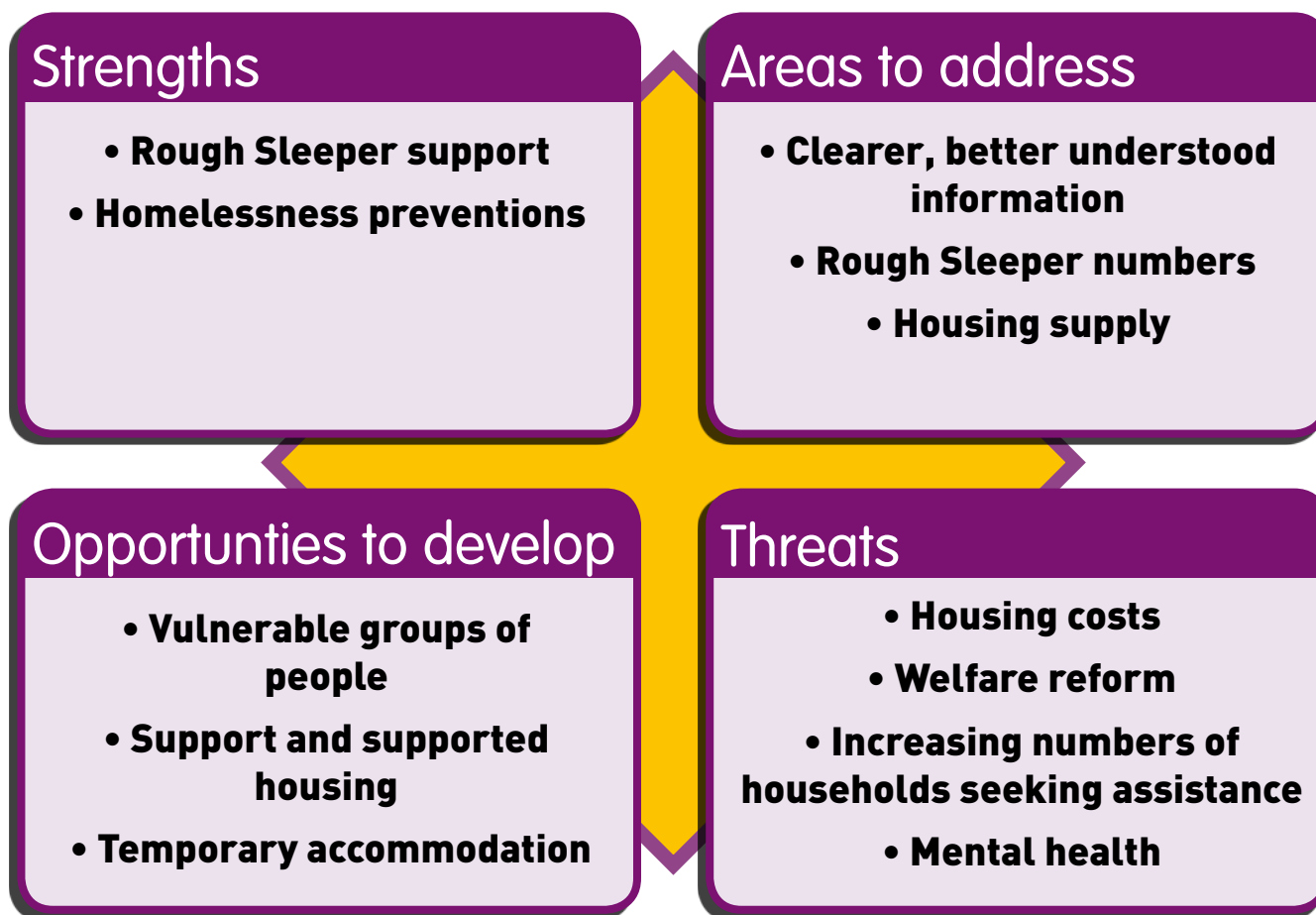
The ending of an assured shorthold tenancy as a main cause of homelessness in Kirklees brings us into line with what's happening nationally. The Crisis report into the state of homelessness in the UK (The homelessness monitor series) says:

"All available evidence points to Local Housing Allowance reforms as a major driver of this association between loss of private tenancies and homelessness"
- *(The homelessness monitor: England 2018, Crisis, April 2018)*



Homelessness in Kirklees

The graphic below gives an overview of the current picture of Kirklees with regards to areas of homelessness and rough sleeping. Each area is then detailed further in this section.



Strengths

Rough Sleeper support

People who sleep rough often experience multiple and high level complex needs and the wellbeing of people who live and sleep on the street is at significant risk. To address rough sleeping effectively and improve outcomes requires a coordinated and multi-agency partnership approach, as recognised and set out in the Governments Rough Sleeping Strategy.

The Kirklees Housing Strategy refers to transformational approaches such as using 'Housing First' principles with people who have very complex needs and who sleep rough. As part of the redesign and commissioning of housing support outreach services being enabled in Kirklees through the Kirklees Integrated Support Service, Housing First principles will be included in the service specification and we will take forward this approach to working with people sleeping rough or who repeatedly return to the streets.

In Kirklees a partnership of both statutory and voluntary sector agencies meet on a quarterly basis to share intelligence and information

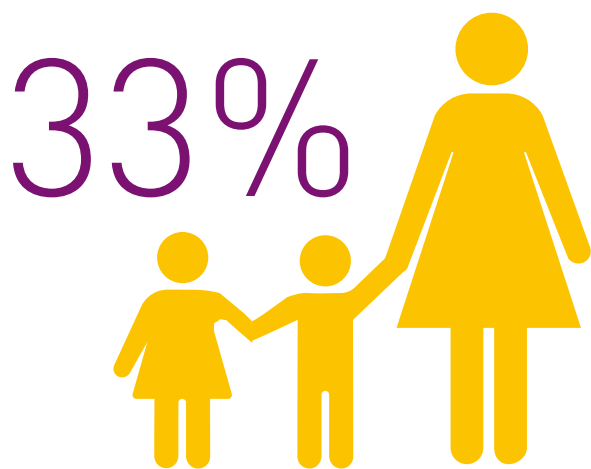
Homelessness in Kirklees

around the issues of tackling rough sleeping, what is known about individuals who are sleeping rough and what action will be taken to get people off the streets and into settled accommodation. Agreed information sharing protocols are in place, which also ensure that individuals are not “double counted”.

Homelessness Preventions

Looking at 2017/18, the number of households presenting at the Council as being eligible for assistance was recorded as 538.

The majority of these households, 33%, were female lone parents.



Applicant households found to be eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during the year 2017 / 2018

Household Type	Verified Preventions	% of Total
Couple with children	89	17%
Lone parent – male	13	2%
Lone parent – female	177	33%
Single male	157	29%
Single female	78	15%
Other	24	4%
Grand Total	538	

However, if we look at the overall number of homelessness preventions in Kirklees as submitted by statutory return, this shows 1,730 for the year 2017/18. This higher figure is due to the strength of partnerships both within and external to the Council. Examples of our partnership working include: the commissioned Sanctuary scheme operated with Pennine Domestic Violence Group (PDVG); assistance for single people by Fusion Housing; and the work done by the Council’s Housing Solutions Service around referring to specialist debt advice, negotiation and mediation, and work undertaken by our Accessible Homes Team to enable disabled people to remain in their own home.

We have seen particular success in preventing homelessness amongst 16/17 year olds in the

last 2 years. Most recent data shows that we prevented homelessness for 29 young people aged between 16 and 17, with only one young person accepted as statutory homeless. Positive and strong engagement with Children’s Social Care ensures that issues relating to children and young people who are at risk of becoming homeless – for example leaving the care of the local authority – are being swiftly and jointly addressed. This is reflected in the Council’s Housing Allocations Policy which awards the highest level of priority banding for housing - Band ‘A’ - to young people leaving care, who are ready to successfully move into independent living, and is an acknowledgement of the Council’s Corporate Parenting responsibility towards this vulnerable group.

Homelessness in Kirklees

The table below illustrates the range of actions taken to prevent or relieve homelessness.

Kirklees Homelessness Prevention and Relief 2017/2018 - P1E data ¹¹		
Homelessness prevented - households able to remain in existing home as a result of:	1. Mediation using external or internal trained family mediators	25
	2. Conciliation including home visits for family or friend threatened exclusions	33
	3. Financial payments from a homeless prevention fund	-
	4. Debt advice	163
	5. Resolving housing benefit problems	24
	6. Resolving rent or service charge arrears in the social or private rented sector	-
	7. Sanctuary scheme measures for domestic violence	142
	8. Crisis intervention - providing emergency support	-
	9. Negotiation or legal advocacy enabling household to remain in private rented sector	196
	10. Assistance enabling household to remain in private or social rented sector	141
	11. Mortgage arrears interventions or mortgage rescue	30
	12. Other remain in accommodation	82
Homelessness prevented or relieved - household assisted to obtain alternative accommodation in the form of:	13. Hostel or House in Multiple Occupation (HMO)	171
	14. Private rented sector accommodation with landlord incentive scheme	110
	15. Private rented sector accommodation without landlord incentive scheme	26
	16. Accommodation arranged with friends or relatives	15
	17. Supported accommodation	112
	18. Social housing - management move of existing LA tenant	9
	19. Social housing - Part 6 offer of LA accommodation or nomination to Registered Social Landlord (RSL)	231
	20. Social housing - negotiation with an RSL outside Part 6 nomination arrangement	14
	22. Other alternative accommodation	221

¹¹P1E data - statistics reported on a quarterly basis by English local housing authorities on their responsibilities under homelessness legislation.

Homelessness in Kirklees

Areas to address

Clearer, better understood information

We need to ensure that if anyone in Kirklees becomes aware that someone is sleeping rough, the Council makes it easy, clear and straightforward for people to understand what to do. For example, having timely and accessible information about what help and support is available, who can provide help and how to access that help and how people can best support rough sleepers and refer their concerns.

There are a number of misconceptions and myths about people who are seen on the street and it is important that we tackle this. Not everyone presenting as rough sleeping has nowhere to go. Some people are on the streets in order to beg for money. Our shared intelligence tells us that of the rough sleepers we and our partners are aware of, some have a tenancy, or other suitable accommodation available to them but they do not stay there.

Where people who are assumed to be rough sleeping and we know they do have somewhere

safe and appropriate to stay then we must develop more effective ways of dealing with this. This may include exploring the use of more robust actions, which the Council and partners have previously hesitated to use. Otherwise, there is a risk that our focus is diluted, that our resources, and those of the public and voluntary groups become even more stretched and potentially mis-directed and that the numbers of people on the streets increases. Such a situation is damaging for our communities, our environment and local businesses and most of all to the individuals themselves who, regardless of why they are on the streets, are at risk from living in this way.

Rough Sleeper numbers

Local authorities within England are required to submit on an annual basis, a single night snapshot of rough sleeping using street counts and intelligence driven estimates - the estimate is informed by the knowledge and triangulation of information held by partners. It is important to acknowledge that the estimate (or count, as some local authorities use) may be affected by

what is known – or not known – to partners, and the circumstances that may lead to individuals who find themselves without somewhere safe, warm and suitable to sleep at night.

“Accurately recording the number of people sleeping rough across England on any one night is a huge challenge”
– Homeless Link, 20th September 2018

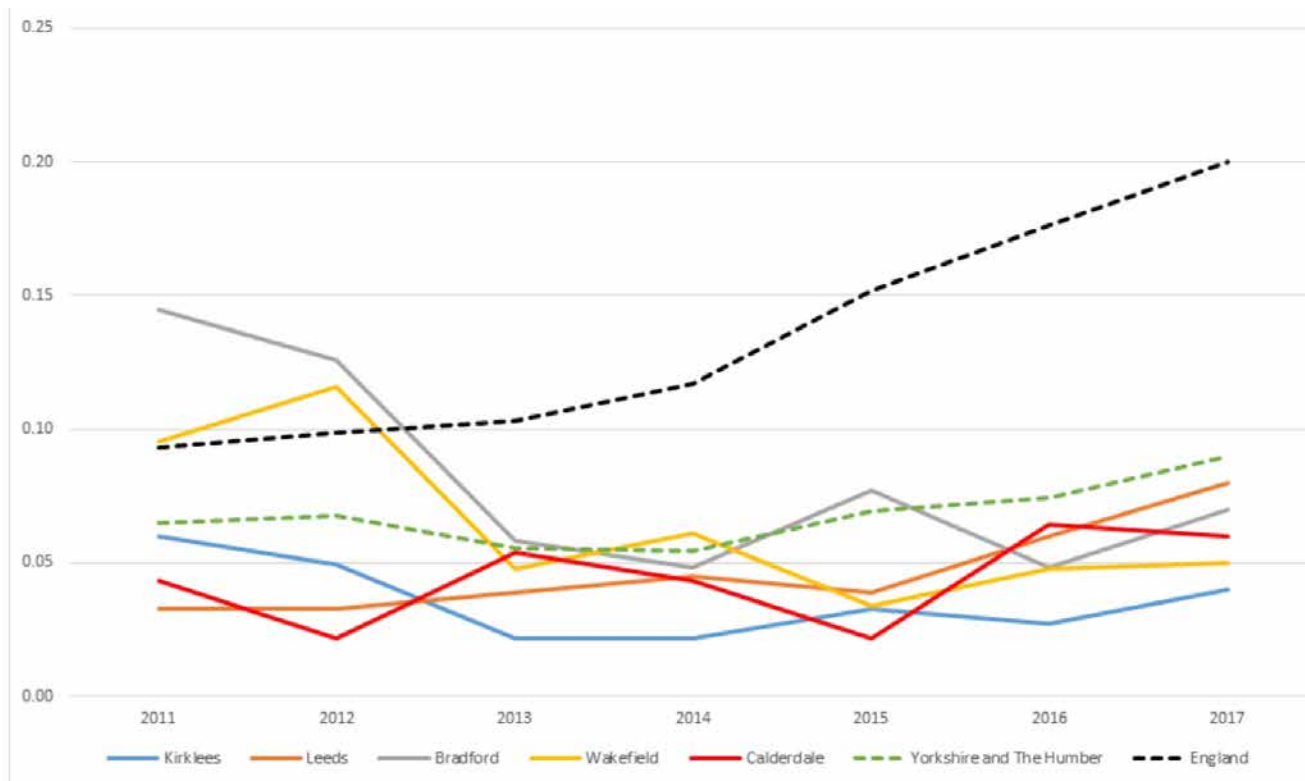
In November 2018, analysis of the intelligence held by the Council and its partners shows the figure to be 13 people. This is an increase on the numbers reported last year in 2017, when the estimate recorded was 8 people.

The trend in numbers of people who are rough sleeping is increasing and this is seen at both a national and local level.

Rough sleeping numbers for England, broken down to a local authority level are published by MHCLG and can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/rough-sleeping-in-england-autumn-2018>

Homelessness in Kirklees

Rough Sleeping per thousand households – West Yorkshire, Yorkshire & Humber and nationally



Housing Supply

A key issue that contributes to people's homelessness is a lack of housing and especially, affordable housing. Without ready access to settled and affordable (primarily social) housing, people are accommodated in temporary accommodation and in Kirklees, there is an increasing trend in the numbers of people being accommodated in this way. The Kirklees Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) identifies that between 2013 and 2031, there is a need for 1730 new homes every year. Of this, there is an annual net imbalance of 1,049 affordable homes over the next five years.

In recognition of the need for more homes that are suitable for a growing population with a range of circumstances, the Council launched its Big Build programme - an ambitious intent to see 10,000 new homes in Kirklees by 2023, of which 1,000 will be on council owned land.¹²

¹² <https://kirkleestogether.co.uk/2018/03/13/announcing-the-big-build-for-kirklees/>

Homelessness in Kirklees

Demand for social housing is growing, and as at November 2018 there are just over 13,500 households registered with Choose n Move, the choice based lettings scheme that the Council operates. On average, between 2,000 and 2,500 allocations are made per year, and so the gap between the numbers of people wanting and needing social housing, and the availability of stock, is evident. Social housing is a diminishing resource which adds to the pressure on people for whom finding a “market” solution to meet their housing need is out of reach.



Opportunities to develop

Vulnerable Groups of people

Homelessness is not restricted to the lack of a roof over someone’s head and generally, people who are homeless will have much broader unmet needs. The reasons why people become homeless are complex. They include structural issues, such as lack of housing supply and housing costs as described above. People losing their private rented tenancy, and being unable to afford to move into another private rented property is now one of the main reasons for presenting as homeless in Kirklees, as it is across the country – and also, more individual or personal issues.

There are particular groups of people within our population who are vulnerable and who, through a number of factors may experience homelessness either as a single crisis point in their lives, or more repeatedly. People are vulnerable because of a number of reasons. These include: people with disabilities; people who have mental health issues and other complex factors; learning disabilities; drug and alcohol dependencies; young people; older

people; people whose relationships have broken down and where violence is a factor. People who find it difficult to live independently and need support are also vulnerable to homelessness for example refugees to this country who may be transitioning to a new and different way of living. The Kirklees Mental Health and Wellbeing Needs assessment¹³ identifies situations arising where people leave hospital or are released from prison without an effective referral pathway in place to plan for their settled accommodation needs.

Recently, the Police and Crime Commissioner has highlighted the risks of human trafficking and modern slavery to vulnerable people, including homeless and socially excluded groups, as set out in the Government’s Homelessness code of guidance. This acknowledges that such criminal activity is normally more prevalent amongst the most vulnerable groups, and within minority or socially excluded groups.

¹³ <https://kirkleestogether.co.uk/2018/03/13/announcing-the-big-build-for-kirklees/>

Homelessness in Kirklees

Support and supported housing

Support for people who struggle to find, keep and successfully maintain a tenancy is a particular focus for the Council and its partners who are working to prevent homelessness. Equipping young people with the skills and abilities they need to achieve independent living, and addressing the needs of people with a mental health issue who are accepted by the Council as homeless are significant issues considered by this strategy. Mental health was the second highest reason for homelessness priority in 2017, after households with dependent children.

For people with lower levels of support needs, managed tenancies which provide more light touch support and which enable people to successfully move onto suitable, sustainable and affordable accommodation in a planned way can be helpful.

The Council's re-modelled housing support outreach services (Kirklees Integrated Support Service) will be commissioned to support people with vulnerabilities into independent living by addressing and combating issues that affect their health and wellbeing, such as domestic violence or substance misuse.

This will see a clear focus on tenancy sustainability, so that providers effect real and lasting change which assist those people who need support, to maintain a settled and successful move into independent living. Key to this will be the development of people's employability skills, coping strategies and resilience.

Temporary Accommodation

The Council place households into interim, or temporary accommodation when permanent suitable housing is not available, or when pending a decision by the Council on the homelessness application. The temporary accommodation is available for homeless households who are in priority need¹⁴ and who are not intentionally homeless¹⁵.

Around 90% of temporary accommodation is sourced from the Council's own supply of stock and Kirklees does not use private sector landlord supply. Of concern though is the increasing use of costly Bed and Breakfast accommodation in Kirklees, and the number of nights this is used. The council does not use Bed and Breakfast for 16/17 year olds and

is committed to not using Bed and Breakfast accommodation for families, unless this is as an emergency response. Where such accommodation has to be used for families, this will be for a short a time as is possible and in any event, will not exceed a 6 week stay, which is the specified length of time for homeless households with children using Bed and Breakfast.

Under the new legislative framework, the Council has reviewed the data recorded around temporary accommodation and we will be considering how long households spend in temporary accommodation before securing a suitable home.

Analysis of data for the first quarter of 2017/18 shows that the average time spent in temporary accommodation was 67 days, and the average monthly number of new households placed in temporary accommodation was 40.

¹⁴ Priority need individuals are defined in [section 189\(1\) of the Housing Act 1996](#) and the [Homelessness \(Priority Need for Accommodation\) \(England\) Order 2002](#) Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) (England) Order 2002

¹⁵ Intentional homelessness is determined in section [191 of the Housing Act 1996](#)

Homelessness in Kirklees

The impact of the Housing Reduction Act on the need for the local authority to provide temporary accommodation is not yet clear; however, early indications nationally suggest that numbers will increase, as will the length of time that households remain in temporary accommodation.

Issues around availability of council owned homes for households to move into, from temporary accommodation, and delays in turning around properties so that they are ready to let can contribute to a “silting up” of temporary accommodation. There is also limited appropriate move on options for people with complex needs, and who return to the Council’s Housing Solutions Service for assistance when their previous accommodation arrangements have broken down.

There is a limited availability of private rented sector accommodation that is both affordable (in line with Local Housing Allowance levels), and of a good quality. The Council plans to work in partnership with a key provider in the voluntary sector to increase access to the sector and so expand housing supply. Our Action Plan gives more detail about this.

Threats

Housing Costs

The Kirklees Housing Strategy notes that the average (mean) house price for the period April – June 2017 was £166,728, a difference of £13,700 for the same period in 2007, when the average house price in Kirklees was £153,028. Although Kirklees is a relatively affordable place to live, there are some wide variations in people’s incomes, with some parts of the district seeing an average household income of just over £26,000.

Affordability then is a real issue and some groups of people such as younger households, households on low incomes (and increasingly, more intermediate incomes) are particularly affected by the lack of affordable supply and the rising costs of housing. This includes private rent as well as home ownership. Enabling the increase in the number and range of homes delivered in Kirklees and access to a suitable and settled home is a priority for the Council and will help to address the issues of growing homelessness that we face.

Welfare Reform

The impact of benefit changes is not new and was clearly identified as an issue in the previous Preventing Homelessness Strategy. The sustained period of benefits being frozen or severely limited increases (well below that of inflation) has had, and continues to have, a negative impact on households’ abilities to manage all their essential expenditure. Juggling finances and trying to cover the costs of rent, fuel, council tax, food and other outgoings is seen to be a contributory factor to people’s mental health and wellbeing. Both the Council’s Housing Solutions Service and Kirklees Neighbourhood Housing (KNH) report they are dealing with a sharp increase in the number of people with mental health issues.

Universal Credit has had a significant impact on household finances. Households that have previously managed their money well soon fall into difficulties. Where people take payment advance on their Universal Credit claim they may then find that the monthly repayment obligation compromises their ability to continue budgeting adequately.

Homelessness in Kirklees

As a “snapshot”, from October 2018 shows that locally, Universal Credit (UC) claimants represented 32% (2,442) of the 7,586 rent accounts in arrears but were responsible for 50% (£1.3m) of the debt owed to the Council. There has been a slight downward trend in the percentage of numbers of tenants in receipt of UC who are in arrears but this same snapshot shows that the total rent arrears were £2.6m, an increase of £110,000 on the previous month.

Since UC was introduced, 48 council tenants claiming UC have been evicted and the majority of UC claimants who have terminated their tenancy have left owing rent arrears. Having rent arrears may adversely impact on people’s ability to access social housing in the future. Linked to this, we know that private rented sector landlords are less likely to rent to people who are on Universal Credit, because of the increased risk of arrears. Government has acknowledged that in the private sector, only 5% of private sector landlords have their rent paid directly to them.¹⁶

Poverty, and particularly poverty in childhood, has been shown to be a significant indicator of risk of homelessness in adulthood.¹⁷

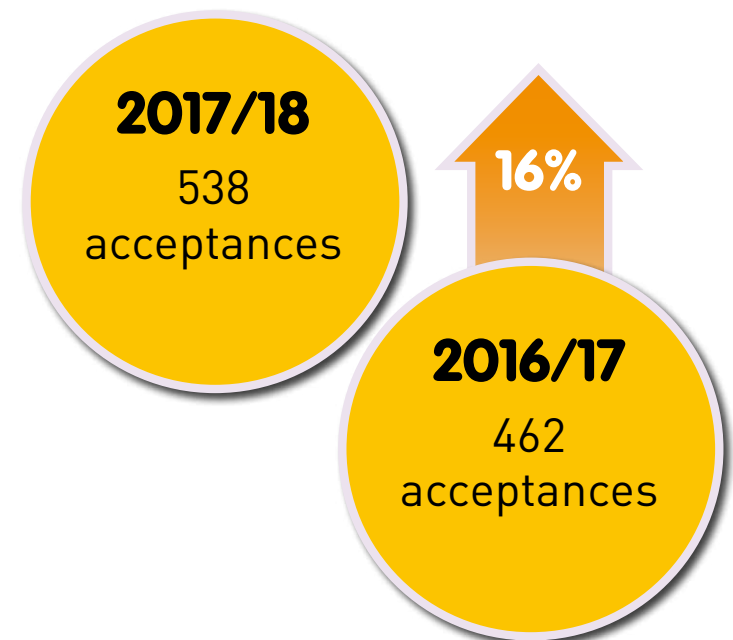
Tackling the negative impacts on people’s lives from changes to benefits, and enabling more people to access and maintain a job that strengthens their economic security are fundamental to the approach we continue to take in preventing homelessness.

Increasing numbers of households seeking assistance

The numbers of homeless households in Kirklees for whom we accept a main housing duty is increasing. After many years of a significant decrease, we have seen an upward trend since 2016. And, the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act, whilst not widening the groups of people for whom the Council has statutory duties to accommodate, will impact on the way we work with people in housing need.

In 2017/18 the Council recorded 538 homelessness acceptances as compared to 462 households in 2016/2017. This represents a 16% increase.

2018 is the second financial year where there has been an increase in the number of homelessness acceptances, following 10 years of significant reductions. Over the last 3 months of 2017/18, the Council’s Housing Solutions Service dealt with nearly 4,000 face to face enquiries, and so we anticipate that this number will rise, as the new Act beds in.

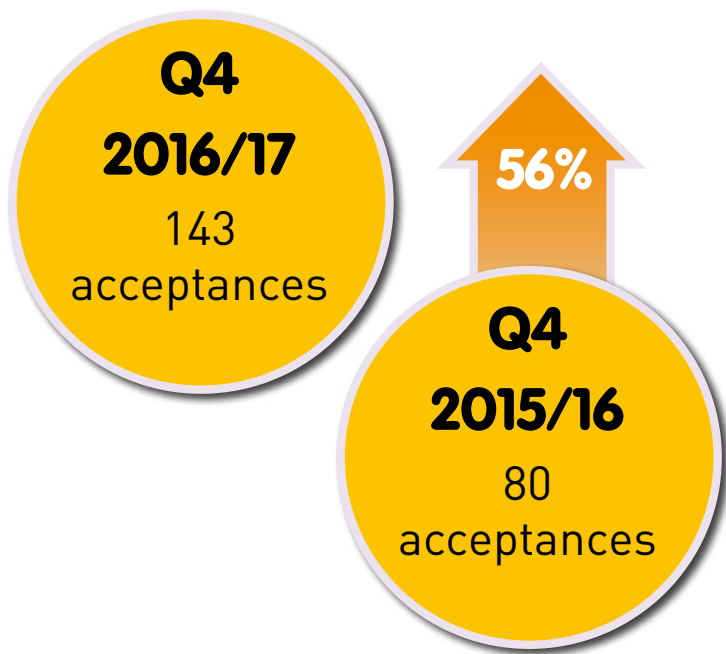


¹⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/universal-credit-personal-welfare>

¹⁷ “Homelessness in the UK – who is most at risk” July 2017, Professor Glen Bramley & Professor Suzanne Fitzpatrick

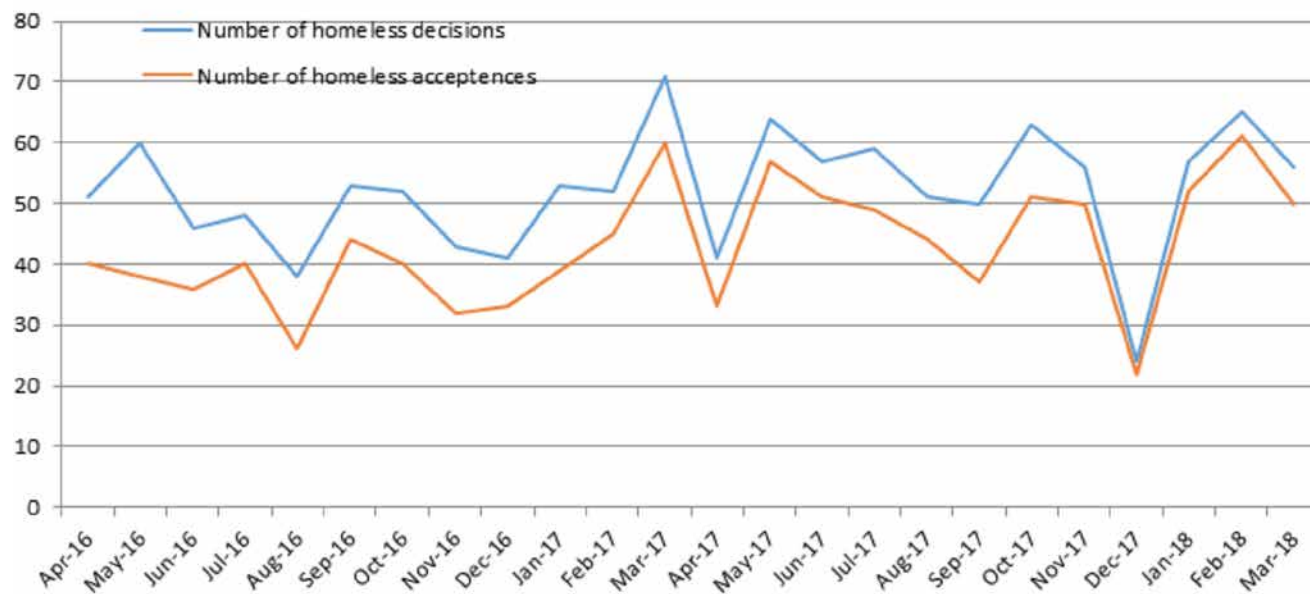
Homelessness in Kirklees

The biggest increase over the last 2 years in the numbers of people coming to the Council as homeless and for whom we accepted as statutory homeless was in Q4 of 2016/17 where we saw a rise to 143 households. This compares to a figure of 80 for Q4 in 2015/16.



The table below shows the trends in homelessness acceptances since 2015/16 and is broken down into monthly reporting.

Homeless Decisions and Acceptances



The number of acceptances is far below the position at the peak of in the mid 2000's and is relatively low historically, but is nevertheless an 80% rise from the low point of 296 acceptances in 2014/15, and a similar rise compared to the picture described in the previous strategy:

“In 2013/14, statutory homeless acceptances reduced by 26% to 294 for the year, with a similar reduction in decisions”
(Kirklees Preventing Homelessness Strategy, 2013 - 2016).

Homelessness in Kirklees

Mental Health

Across the board, and as confirmed at a recent local partnership event, there is an increase in the numbers of people presenting to a range of agencies with mental health issues. The main reason for priority amongst single homeless people approaching the Council as homeless is poor mental health. National data¹⁶ shows that the most prevalent health problems among homeless individuals are substance misuse (62.5%), mental health problems (53.7%) or a combination of the two (42.6%). Poor mental health is both a cause and consequence of homelessness. Mental illness can trigger, or be part of, a series of events that can lead to homelessness. Additionally, mental health issues might well be exacerbated or caused by the stresses associated with being homeless.

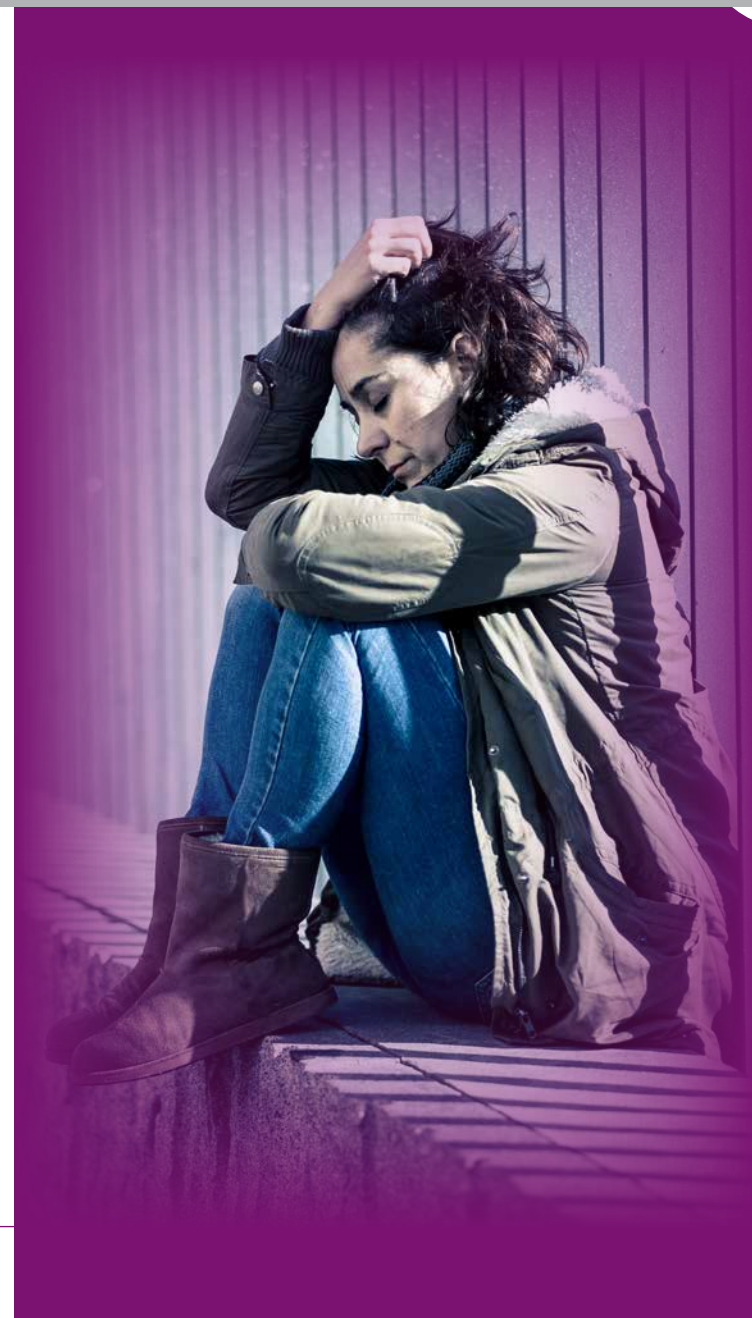
Council data for 2017/18 shows that of the total number of homelessness acceptances, 23% of individuals had a recorded mental health issue. If we look at the main reason for priority amongst single households without dependent children - couples, and singles without children - the figure is particularly stark. 41% of households in this group had mental health

recorded as a priority need. For rough sleepers, our intelligence suggests that the majority have drug/alcohol dependencies coupled with poor mental health. Mental health issues are likely to be under-reported due to constraints on the way data has been recorded. Going forward there will be more opportunities to record support needs, including mental health needs, for all customers who are homeless or threatened with homelessness - not just statutorily homeless.

There is no simple measures to resolve the problems associated with homelessness and poor mental health, but the prevention of mental ill health is a key place to start.

“There are more people than ever with complex and multiple needs... Mental health services are overstretched and unable to cope.”
(Homelessness Monitor England, April 2018)

¹⁶ www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7596/2200485.pdf



Priority Outcomes



Priority 1: Preventing Homelessness and enabling access to support

Early intervention and prevention with improved inter-agency working, intervening before crisis and more effectively supporting vulnerable people.

We recognise that the most effective way to avoid homelessness is to intervene early, before people's situations reach crisis, and to connect them to the right support when this is needed. We also know that where people continue to struggle before finally approaching the Council for help and advice, their housing situation becomes more difficult to resolve and a sustainable, successful outcome is harder to achieve.

The Council's Housing Solutions Service is focussed on successful implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act ensuring meaningful advice is provided which helps prevent housing crisis. In line with the Act, we are working with a broader range of partners to ensure our focus is maintained on intervening early with all households who are at risk of becoming homeless to prevent homelessness as much as possible, achieve better outcomes for people and so avoid costly and crisis interventions.

We are developing a more systemic approach to prevention across different parts of the Council and key partners, reinforcing a partnership culture that the prevention of homelessness is an integral element of delivery for all services, not just for Housing. We want to ensure that the importance of decent, affordable housing and the prevention of homelessness is a key consideration, for other services and agencies, for example with Children's Services, Adult's Social Care and Health partners.

A recent local partnership event (November 2018) brought together a range of services and agencies, to focus on the issues which contribute to the risks of homelessness in Kirklees, including people who are vulnerable through chaotic lifestyles, mental ill health, drug and alcohol addictions and challenging behaviours, where tenancies may not be sustainable.

A range of actions from this event have been identified and will be worked up in more detail as part of the Council's wider work with our communities and neighbourhoods.

Our strategy identifies that people's economic circumstances and their ability to manage financially is a key issue in preventing or relieving homelessness. We will continue to address the challenges and impact of debt, and welfare reform

for affected residents in Kirklees, such as the freeze on Local Housing Allowance rates (LHA)¹⁷ and the ongoing roll out of Universal Credit, working with partners such as KNH to ensure that effective support and referral arrangements are in place to flag issues around debt and rent arrears early and enable successful prevention work to take place. This includes commissioning provision of and connection to debt advice, support to enable people to move to more affordable housing and putting Discretionary Housing Payment plans into place.

Support is also provided through our third sector/voluntary sector partners and other agencies, to enhance people's ability to access training and employment opportunities and so reduce their reliance on welfare benefits through increasing their financial resilience.

Our partnership actions help to mitigate the effect of losing their home on people's lives and their wellbeing, including mental wellbeing and protects the Council's rental income stream through more sustainable tenancies.

¹⁷ Local housing allowance (LHA) is used to work out how much housing benefit an individual can get if they rent their home from a private landlord. A single private renter under the age of 35, is usually only entitled to housing benefit at the shared accommodation rate. In Kirklees this is £55 a week. Some people are exempt.

Priority Outcomes



We will:

- **provide meaningful and effective advice which is timely and outcome focussed, for everybody who approaches the Council with a housing need, including people referred via the Duty to Refer;**
- **develop and secure agreement to a Personal Housing Plan with all customers to either prevent or relieve their homelessness whilst continuing to secure accommodation for those in priority need groups;**
- **build on our active networking and strengthen engagement with partners and services across and beyond the Council to develop a joint action plan that ensures early and “upstream” preventative action, where partners identify people who are struggling and who may be at risk of homelessness. This includes people leaving prison or discharged from hospital, young people asked to leave the family home where the family relationship has broken down;**
- **explore innovative and different approaches to intervening earlier, which effectively address issues and ensure clear pathways to support are in place;**
- **continue and develop our shared approaches to reducing and mitigating the impacts of welfare reform and other financial pressures, including a focus on enabling people to access and maintain employment, and achieve better paid work.**

Increase and maximise the housing offer through enabling more affordable and sustainable housing including housing with support.

Increasing the amount of specialist and supported accommodation, and affordable accommodation is a challenge that this strategy, and the Council’s overarching Housing Strategy seeks to address. Enabling housing growth, including affordable and supported housing that meets the needs of people who are homeless or at risk is a clear priority for the Council.

Our Housing Delivery Plan sets out the ambition of 10,000 new homes in Kirklees by 2023, including 1,000 homes on Council owned land. Additionally, the Local Plan identifies the supply of affordable homes that are needed in Kirklees. To support the delivery of our ambition the Council’s Specialist Accommodation Programme ensures that Kirklees has sufficient supply of the right kind of specialist accommodation, including housing with support such as hostel accommodation, domestic refuge, and supported accommodation for young people.

Priority Outcomes



The Programme will collate information on current provision and determine future levels of demand and models of supported housing in order to inform increasing supply, so we have the right type and quantity of housing that enables people to develop the skills and independence needed to sustain their own home, and move on from homelessness.

We are particularly focussed on provision for younger people, and single people in receipt of Local Housing Allowance (LHA) who face challenges in accessing and affording a home of their own. We are pro-actively maximising funding opportunities which will help us develop new arrangements for homelessness prevention, and strengthen existing ways of working, to enhance the housing offer to vulnerable groups. We have previously explored how we make more and better use of the private rented sector (PRS) in Kirklees. As part of this work, we have bid to the MHCLG Private Rented Sector access scheme fund. If successful, this funding will assist us to deliver on our strategic approach to working with private landlords to secure and deliver increased access to suitable and sustainable tenancies in the private sector at affordable (LHA) rents for a clearly identified group of people for whom this offers an appropriate, timely, and sustainable solution to their housing need.

The Kirklees Integrated Support Service that the Council will commission is anticipated to come on stream in the summer of 2019 and will provide essential housing support for around 2,000 vulnerable people on an annual basis.

Some changes to the Kirklees Housing Allocations Policy have been made which will help the Council meet its duties arising from the Homelessness Reduction Act by giving priority to additional groups of people who are at risk of being homeless, or to bring their homelessness to an end.

We will:

- **improve access to the private rented sector for single households who have lower levels of support needs through a commissioned extension to existing arrangements with our voluntary sector partners;**
- **relaunch and reinvigorate the Kirklees Landlord accreditation scheme;**
- **explore development of our private lettings scheme to target families who need larger affordable homes;**
- **develop proposals for enabling provision of more supported accommodation for single homeless households in North Kirklees;**
- **ensure the Housing Allocations policy continues to effectively meet the needs of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness;**
- **work with our partners in the voluntary sector to support them in submitting funding bids and enabling increased provision.**



Priority Outcomes



Access to help which sustains tenancies, improving people's lives and achieving positive outcomes.

To prevent homelessness we must have the right type, level and access to the support that people need who would otherwise be more likely to lose their home. Identifying what support needs people have is part of our approach to prevention under the Homelessness Reduction Act, as reflected in Personal Housing Plans that are developed in partnership with the individual.

Pre-tenancy training, equipping people with the life skills, abilities and resilience needed to manage and maintain successful independent living and reaching people at the right stage in their lives – for example, with schools and colleges before young people fully transition to independence - are all vital parts of a successful homelessness prevention approach. These are also approaches that a wide range of partners, services and community stakeholders need to adopt and embed, if we are to achieve our ambitions of preventing people from becoming homeless.

Case study interviews – John and Chris*

John* discussed the importance of “...good budgeting advice...” and “...how to make savings...” He explained that some information on this is already available but it needs to be “...something a bit more effective than what's in place now.”

Chris* lived with his mother for most of his life and was her carer. His mother owned the home and when she became ill, the family home had to be sold to pay for the care home. He was offered a property via the Council but struggled to live on his own as well as managing finances, bills and rent as it was all new to him.

Chris' Employment and Support Allowance was stopped after an assessment determined that he was fit to work and needed to claim Job Seeker's Allowance instead. Issues arose and there was a period where neither of the two allowances were paid and Chris fell into arrears. He had no support and wasn't sure where to go for help.

Chris began sleeping rough in a local park and spending days with mum at the care home. His mother wasn't aware that he was homeless and he didn't want to worry her.

Chris finally approached the Council's Housing Solutions Service and was offered a referral to a supported housing scheme – he heard nothing from his interview and went back to sleeping in the park.

Eventually a stranger who took him coffee in the park put him in touch with the hostel in Huddersfield and via this contact he managed to get a place at the hostel. He initially kept himself to himself but eventually through a persistent key worker he mixed with other residents and attended activities.

Chris was a resident in the hostel for 14 months but has now been successfully re-housed in his own Kirklees tenancy. He was fully supported with the tenancy process. He still attends the hostel, accessing his 'floating support worker' and helping out with the Sunday dinner for current and previous residents.

Priority Outcomes



Building on people's strengths and maximising the assets or abilities of individuals and communities is a theme that underpins how the Council plans to achieve its ambitions for Kirklees residents and the places they live in. Using these same principles in how we work with people to address homelessness and enable them to achieve positive life outcomes reflect and support this wider approach and aspiration for Kirklees.

We will:

- **strengthen our joint planning and commissioning approaches and build on existing good practice between Children's, Adults and Housing Services including KNH and Pinnacle to focus on homelessness prevention and tenancy sustainability and achieve better outcomes;**
- **strengthen our relationship with private landlords, focussing on enabling successful tenancies;**
- **review and extend the current models of temporary accommodation and reduce our use of Bed and Breakfast;**
- **ensure effective referral pathways into the new outcome focussed housing support services to be commissioned by the Council through the Kirklees Integrated Support Services.**

Priority Outcomes



Priority 2: Tackling rough sleeping

Improved responses for people who sleep rough, getting people off the streets and maintaining ongoing engagement to break the rough sleeping cycle.

This strategy identifies that we are recording an increase in rough sleeping in Kirklees. This is a highly visible form of homelessness in our communities. It is not acceptable that people sleep on the streets and rough sleeping has wide and long lasting negative impacts. This increasing visibility, which can be seen across the country, has understandably led to an increase in the number and range of groups and organisations involved with people who are living on the streets, many of whom will have complex and multiple needs which go way beyond the need for settled housing.

We want to ensure that the impact that all our efforts have on reducing and eliminating rough sleeping is maximised to the fullest effect and that duplication of resources is avoided. Our focus then is on a coordinated, responsive and targeted approach which helps to address not

just the crisis point of someone being on the streets, but starts to address the root causes and barriers as to why individuals may not be at the stage where they are in and sustaining more settled accommodation.

We engage directly at an individual level with people who sleep rough. Our approach is proactive, personalised and tailored to the individual, their specific issues and circumstances and experiences.

We recognise the need to promote individuality within the homelessness and rough sleeping community, and that this is not a homogenous group where a one size fits all approach will work.

When service users were asked about sharing living accommodation for example, they gave differing responses:

Case study interviews

Mark* said he “...*didn't mind...*” living in supported shared accommodation, but when he leaves there that “... *[I] wouldn't really want to live with people I didn't know...*” and that in relation to feeling safe and others' potential drug usage “...*their backgrounds would always be at the back of my mind...*”

On the other hand, John* said: “*I like company so didn't mind sharing...*” he did add though “... *providing everyone behaves.*” Now John has moved into his own flat, he did say “...*it can be lonely...*” and that regarding the hostel “... *[I] miss living here, miss the company*”.

Priority Outcomes



Where an individual is not ready to engage with support we will attempt to minimise the risks of sleeping rough (which may include taking more formal action) but continue to offer that support, until such time this is taken up and the individual is able to move on from rough sleeping.

We will seek more transformational approaches to the rising numbers of people who are homeless including people who sleep rough in Kirklees. An example of this is Housing First. This is an approach that has been shown to work in the US, Canada and parts of Europe and is being implemented now (with government funding) in areas across the UK including Newcastle, London, the Midlands, Greater Manchester, on the South Coast and in Wales and Scotland.

Housing First supports people who have a history of homelessness and/or rough sleeping and who have high needs, which may be multiple and complex in nature. The principles are to provide settled and secure accommodation for the individual in their own home, at the outset, rather than move people through a range of temporary solutions such as a hostel. Having a home of their own is viewed as a stable platform from which other issues affecting the individual can be addressed, via a tailored, strength based and individualised programme of support. This flexible support is offered as a “wrap around” and is an offer, not an imposition or a condition. It builds on the stability of a settled home, with no pre-conditions around the person showing housing or tenancy “readiness”. Support will be provided by the Kirklees Integrated Support Service.

We recognise the importance of follow up support and maintaining engagement with people past the immediate crisis of rough sleeping, to break the cycle and put in place measures which can prevent people from going back onto the streets. This must have a focus on building people’s resilience, their support networks and improving their health and wellbeing, and ability to access and maintain suitable employment.

We will:

- **improve and extend our emergency responses to rough sleeping, including arrangements for dealing with the impacts of adverse weather conditions on rough sleepers and quickly getting people off the streets;**
- **ensure that as part of the follow up response to people who are enabled to come off the streets the Council’s Housing Solutions Service has an onsite presence at the Huddersfield Mission, one of our key partners, to facilitate our engagement with people who have been sleeping rough;**
- **use a tailored and person centred approach in developing solutions with people sleeping rough;**
- **work to better understand and tackle the underlying reasons some people chose to sleep rough, despite having accommodation available to them;**
- **adopt the principles of Housing First where this is an appropriate approach and where more traditional approaches have been unsuccessful (via the Kirklees Integrated Support Service);**
- **identify and better support “hidden homeless” households such as women who are living in very insecure and unsafe situations and who may be vulnerable to exploitation and abuse through sex work.**

Priority Outcomes



Develop a more collaborative, “working with” relationship with rough sleepers.

We want to understand what, as a partnership and including agencies or services with whom we are not yet effectively engaging, we should be doing at an earlier stage to avoid anybody ending up on the streets, and what works in terms of enabling people to move away from this situation and onto a more settled, secure and happier outcome.

Our engagement with people who have experienced rough sleeping has told us that when rough sleepers are willing to engage, we need to ensure we use that opportunity to rapidly support them to get them off the streets. This may mean engaging in different ways, or different locations.

Case study interviews

After being made homeless when his private landlord had the house repossessed, Mark* spent a week of rough sleeping before he was advised to go to Housing Services for support. Mark said about sleeping on the streets that he “...couldn’t take any more and didn’t want to be alive.” Mark mainly slept in the subway but said

it was a “...scary place” and was “...terrified at night and couldn’t sleep.”

Mark has now been at the hostel for just a short while, but feels “...really well supported...” Mark has had support with drug and mental health issues, has now got access to a GP for his serious medical condition and is also due to visit a dentist which staff have arranged.

When asked what could have been done differently before he became a rough sleeper, Mark said: “...**there should be something that somebody can do to help people feel safe ...**”

We need to recognise that even when engaged with services, uncertainty is a key factor in people’s wellbeing and we must try and minimise this where possible.

Although John* was glad of the offer of the ‘crash pad’, this was only on a 24 hour basis and described the feelings of uncertainty with this as “...horrible...” and “...hard on your mind...” He also added that “...24 hours is not very long...” and you feel “...in limbo...” not knowing you would get a place at [name of hostel] or somewhere else.

The Council’s approach is much more around “working with”, rather than “doing to / for” people who need our support. We use an asset based approach, and the principles of restorative practice. This recognises and values people’s individual and community based strengths which can and should be drawn on and developed, to reach outcomes that are sustainable and in keeping with the outcomes that the person themselves wants and values.

We want to strengthen our approach for proactive outreach work with rough sleepers and we will seek funding opportunities to enable this. Our intention will be to use a personalised and psychologically informed approach to working with rough sleepers, developing positive and trusting relationships, improving pathways and achieving better outcomes for the individual, reducing rough sleeping.

Priority Outcomes



We will:

- **continue to embed across the Council and externally, a wider understanding of the links between preventing and ending rough sleeping and successfully achieving wider health, wellbeing and economic resilience outcomes;**
- **collaborate with partners to develop a more person centred and holistic focus to support people who are rough sleeping;**
- **implement our approach to the Navigator role, developing one to one, trusted and engaged relationships with people who have complex needs to achieve meaningful change;**
- **incorporate the lived experience of homelessness perspective into service planning and action plans.**

Building on and strengthening our partnership arrangements including the growing and emerging range of voluntary groups, food banks and street kitchens.

A key principle of this strategy, and which underpins how we will avoid situations where people in Kirklees sleep on the streets, is the strength and effectiveness of how we work across services and agencies as partners. People whose housing situation has broken down to the extent that they are sleeping rough, even if accommodation is available to them, will have a range of needs and be facing a number of issues that require a proactive coordinated and holistic response across agencies.

A sub group of the Kirklees Homelessness Forum, with support from Homeless Link, the national homelessness organisation, has recently developed the Kirklees Street Outreach Good Practice Guide. The Guide contains a common standard of good practice in street outreach for charities, organisations and individuals supporting rough sleepers and other vulnerable people living on the streets. Whilst it will not exclusively end rough sleeping, it provides a valuable reminder and resource for

new and existing groups who want to contribute to this goal; and through sharing information and experiences aims to improve effectiveness of, and minimise duplication among, the street outreach services throughout Kirklees.

Early identification and intervention from a range of partners and the wider community, putting supporting actions in place before the crisis of rough sleeping occurs is key to its elimination. This links to our plans to take forward the work already started, to grow and embed the understanding and awareness of homelessness prevention amongst front line services, and maximise the opportunities for preventative action which reduces the risks of homelessness and this tipping into rough sleeping.

Linked to this is the need to ensure that we also strengthen arrangements for members of the public, who have concerns that someone is sleeping rough, so that they know how to, and feel confident in, referring their concerns. As part of this we want to explore better, more effective ways for people to support rough sleepers, such as enabling more on line options for people to donate.

Priority Outcomes



We will:

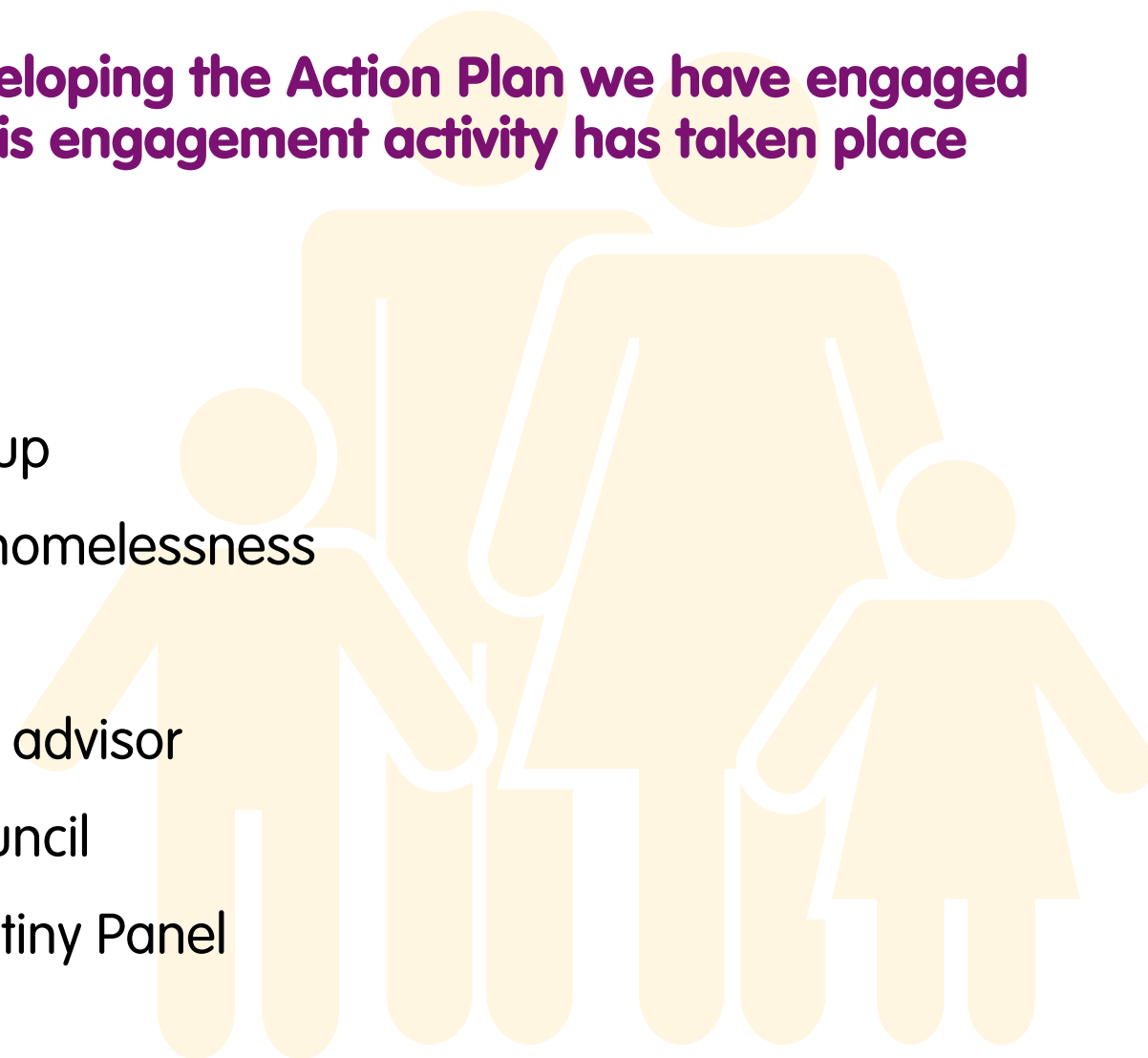
- continue to build relationships across services and to look for opportunities to work in a more integrated way to prevent rough sleeping and the risk of people returning to the streets;
- ensure that our referral mechanisms are clear, accessible and understood by partners;
- support the ongoing roll out and awareness raising around the Homelessness Forum's Street Outreach Good Practice Guide;
- regularly review the information available to anyone who is concerned about rough sleeping in Kirklees to make sure it is readily available understandable and accessible and supports the provision of longer term solutions to rough sleepers.





In preparing this strategy and developing the Action Plan we have engaged with a number of stakeholders. This engagement activity has taken place during 2018 – 2019 and includes:

- Kirklees Homelessness Forum
- Kirklees Supported Housing Group
- People with lived experience of homelessness
- Home Group (Clare House)
- MHCLG specialist homelessness advisor
- Officers from across Kirklees Council
- Elected Members, including Scrutiny Panel



8 Monitoring and Review



We cannot achieve the outcomes we want to see on our own. We have worked closely with our partners in developing the Kirklees Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and the evolving action plan, recognising the strengths, assets and resources that our partners bring.

The action plan will show through a set of clear performance measures, how we will demonstrate the progress we are making.

The Action Plan will be kept under review and will be reported on in line with the review arrangements for the Council's Housing Strategy. Progress will be monitored and reviewed by the Council on an annual basis and will be refreshed in line with that review, for the duration of the strategy.

Outcomes from these review arrangements will drive revisions to the Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and Action Plan updates.



**Kirklees Preventing Homelessness
and Rough Sleeping Strategy**
2018 - 2023