

Dover District Council

# Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

Summary Version



2025-2030

## Foreword

A place to call home is what we all want for ourselves, our children, and our loved ones. Everyone should be able to live in a safe, secure and comfortable home, where they can set down roots, work and enjoy life. Good housing provides the foundation for good health, good education, good jobs and a good life.

The numbers of households who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness has increased across the country. Our district is no different. There is no 'quick fix' to resolving many of the broader social and economic challenges surrounding homelessness, but in the context of strained Council budgets and other pressures, it is important that our plans and aims are prioritised and reflect what we can realistically achieve locally.

Our new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025-2030 places strong emphasis on early intervention and preventing homelessness, improving advice and information, reducing our reliance on private sector temporary accommodation, using the resources we have more effectively and working closely with partner organisations to reduce the occurrence of homelessness and rough sleeping.

The Strategy focuses on five strategic priorities over the 5-year term:

1. Early intervention and prevention
2. Improve advice, information and options
3. Increase available affordable housing and reduce our reliance on private sector temporary accommodation
4. Use available resources more effectively
5. Reduce and work towards ending rough sleeping

We are determined to prevent and relieve homelessness wherever we can. With demand rising, there is great pressure on existing and future resources available to the Council and our partners, but together we will do everything in our power and continue working towards ending homelessness in all its forms.



### **Councillor Pamela Brivio**

Portfolio Holder for Housing,  
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## Introduction

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025-2030 sets out how the Council along with other organisations will address homelessness and rough sleeping within the district so that households are prevented from becoming homeless, or if they are already homeless, relief support is provided.

The Strategy's overarching aim is to reduce homelessness and end rough sleeping, by focusing on early intervention and actions to prevent households from becoming homeless. The Strategy recognises the importance of working with other statutory and non-statutory organisations to achieve positive outcomes, and to provide housing support where it is needed.

A review of homelessness and rough sleeping in the district was undertaken. The information from the review was used to inform the development of the renewed Strategy and Action Plan, which sets out the specific actions we will take to achieve our 5 strategic priorities over the next 5 years.

The Council consulted with Public Authorities and statutory and non-statutory organisations when formulating the strategic priorities, objectives, and actions to achieve them. This document summarises the key points and priorities of the Strategy.

## Key statistics

### England

- 309,000 households were homeless in England, equating to 1 in every 182 people.
- There were 271,000 households in temporary accommodation (TA), including 123,000 children.
- London had the highest rate of homelessness in England, where 1 in 54 people were homeless.
- An estimated 3,898 people across England slept rough on any given night, an increase of 27% since 2022, but a decrease of 9% since 2019.
- In March 2024 the estimated cost of homelessness to local authorities across England, including the use of temporary accommodation, was around £2.3 billion.

### Dover district

- Over the past 5 years, the Council has assessed 3,478 households. 79% were owed support by the Council, either to prevent them becoming homeless or to provide relief from homelessness.
- Based on quarterly returns, on average 177 households were living in temporary accommodation per quarter. 53% of this average (94) were households with dependent children. To date, there are in the region of 300 households living in TA in the district.
- The number of individuals sleeping rough in the district on any given night has fluctuated but has reduced significantly from 20 in 2018 to 5 in 2021. However, the figure has increased; in 2023 it was estimated that there were 9 rough sleepers in the district.
- The total cost of homelessness continued to increase on average by 26% each year, and in 2023/24 the cost had doubled compared to 2019/20.
- In 2023/24 the Council spent almost £2.5 million on TA, almost double the amount spent in 2019/20.

## Our strategic priorities

1. We aim to **reduce demand for homelessness services through early intervention and prevention**, by working to keep households in their homes, or support them to identify alternative accommodation that meets their needs. To achieve this, we will:
  - Ensure tenants can access information setting out their rights and responsibilities, how they can seek help from the Council and other agencies, and where appropriate, signpost them to external support services.
  - Support households as best we can to prevent them becoming homeless, such as liaising with their landlord to prevent eviction, negotiating repayment plans or helping to address benefit issues.
  - Continue to use Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) as a tool to prevent households from becoming homeless.
  - Continue to work collaboratively and learn from other organisations to improve homelessness prevention outcomes.
2. We aim **to improve advice, information and options for homeless households** by ensuring that information and advice we provide is clear and by working towards providing a range of housing options. To achieve this, we will:
  - Ensure that our housing needs and options webpages have correct and accurate information, contain useful links to external resources and are easily understandable.
  - Consider other methods of communication we can use to inform residents about the support they can receive if they are at risk of becoming homeless, such as leaflets and posters.
  - Sign post households to external agencies so they can receive additional support they might need and make reasonable adjustments to our service where required.
  - Set out clear service expectations and responsibilities.
  - Consider using surveys to understand service users' perceptions on their experience to help us identify where we can make improvements.
  - Review our processes to ensure they are robust, efficient and reflect our statutory duties.
  - Develop and publish a Domestic Abuse Policy for Housing, and work in collaboration with specialist agencies to provide victims / survivors of domestic abuse including children, support outside the scope of housing, and continue to use the Safer Scheme to enable victims / survivors remain in their home.
  - We will consider conducting 'new tenancy risk assessments' for new general needs tenancies to identify support needed to help the household maintain their tenancy and avoid the risk that the tenancy fails.
  - Continue to review the Housing Allocations Policy to ensure it promotes good practice and reflects the needs of victims / survivors of domestic abuse for alternative accommodation.
3. We aim to **increase the availability of affordable housing and reduce our reliance on temporary accommodation (TA) in the private sector** by improving access to housing options and maximising opportunities for supply of affordable housing in the district. To achieve this, we will:
  - Continue to build constructive, positive and productive relationships with landlords to increase housing options and supply in the private sector.
  - Where it is possible, work towards bringing empty homes in the district back into use.
  - Continue to increase and enable the number of affordable homes in the district, whether owned by the Council or by one of our Registered Provider (Housing Association) partners.

- Consider publishing a strategy or plan to address how we will achieve the delivery of a range of new affordable housing in the district.
  - Aim to reduce our reliance on private sector TA by continuing our programme of building and acquiring good quality properties for TA that are owned and managed by the Council.
4. We will **use available resources more effectively** by reviewing our internal processes and where possible make efficiencies, access government grants that can be used to prevent and relieve homelessness and rough sleeping, or funding that will enable us to deliver more affordable housing. To achieve this, we will:
- Continue to access and / or apply for grant funding to alleviate homelessness and rough sleeping, and / or to increase the supply of affordable housing.
  - Share knowledge, information and expertise with partner organisations and use this when applying for grant funding.
  - Conduct a review of our internal processes for void management to improve the turnaround time for properties to be relet.
  - Conduct a review of our Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy.
  - Continue to review the Housing Allocation Policy to assess effects the Policy has on homelessness and homeless households.
5. Our aim is to **reduce and work towards ending rough sleeping**, by improving our understanding of the root causes of rough sleeping and working collaboratively with other Public Authorities, and statutory and non-statutory organisations to support rough sleepers off the street and into suitable accommodation. To achieve this, we will:
- Continue to work closely with our partners via the Rough Sleeper Case Review meetings, to share best practice, training and information to improve our knowledge and identify practical solutions to reduce the occurrence of rough sleeping.
  - Access government grant funding geared towards helping rough sleepers to move off the street, and into accommodation.
  - Signpost rough sleepers to external agencies who can support them with any mental & physical health issues.
  - Consider ways that we can transform our service to ensure we support rough sleepers with respect, care and compassion.

**The full version of the Strategy and Action Plan, which sets out each of our priorities in detail, is available on the Council's website.**

# Action Plan 2025-2030

## Strategic Priority 1: Early intervention and prevention

Objectives	Actions
Improve collaboration with support services for better prevention and relief resolutions.	Promote co-location or increase work shadowing with partner agencies to help build relationships and understand each other's roles and responsibilities.
	Share data, knowledge and expertise to improve better homelessness outcomes.
Improve early intervention to prevent evictions in private sector housing.	Continue to fully utilise the use of the Discretionary Housing Payments as a prevention tool.
	Continue to build on and improve relationships with private landlords.
Improve tenancy support and sustainment of tenancies, preventing homelessness or repeat homelessness.	Continue to conduct risk assessments at the start of new tenancies in General Needs.
	Sign-post new tenants to external training and useful tools on how to maintain a tenancy.
	Improve links with Registered Providers and their housing teams.

## Strategic Priority 2: Improve advice, information and options for homeless households

Objectives	Actions
Communication and messaging to deliver consistent information regarding housing options and challenges, to manage client and partner expectations.	Provide training and information on housing issues for housing staff.
	Review and update the Housing Options webpages.
	Consider ways to communicate service expectations.
	Consider alternative communication methods to inform residents about housing advice and options.
	Establish a communication plan so that information on housing issues and challenges is far reaching.
	Investigate using surveys to monitor and improve services.
Providing vulnerable households a range of options to access appropriate support, adjustments and advice	Vulnerabilities are documented and reasonable adjustments are made where required.
	Develop a Domestic Abuse Policy for Housing.
	Review the Disabled Adaptations Policy

### Strategic Priority 3: Increase the availability of affordable housing and improve the provision of temporary accommodation

Objectives	Actions
Improve access to Private Sector accommodation to meet the needs of those homeless or at risk.	Increase engagement with private landlords
	Review the Private Sector Housing Strategy.
Facilitate and increase the delivery of high-quality affordable housing.	Increase the number of Council-owned affordable homes in line with the Corporate Plan objectives.
	Purchase properties on the open market using recycled right to buy receipts.
	Identify site for affordable housing development and property acquisition opportunities.
	Support Registered Providers with data and analysis for affordable housing acquisitions and purchases.
	Build on and improve working relationships with Registered Providers and Developers.
Work towards increasing the number of Council-owned temporary accommodation units to reduce our reliance on the private sector.	Improve the quality of temporary accommodation through the provision of council-owned units.
	Reduce our use of private sector temporary accommodation.

### Strategic Priority 4: Use available resources more effectively

Objectives	Actions
Make best use of government funding and where eligible apply for grants geared towards preventing homelessness and rough sleeping.	Apply for government grants to support and alleviate homelessness and rough sleeping.
	Review how grant funding is used and allocated to promote efficiencies and maximise impact.
	Access Homes England grant funding to help facilitate the acquisition and development of new affordable housing.
Make best use of existing housing stock.	Review our internal void management processes so they are effective and efficient.
	Review the Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy
	Establish a 'Hard to Let' Protocol
	Review the Housing Allocations Policy

### Strategic Priority 5: Reduce and work towards ending rough sleeping

Objectives	Actions
Improve our understanding or the causes of rough sleeping and identify practical solutions to reduce its occurrence.	Continue to attend and contribute to the Rough Sleeper Case Review.
	Review areas of delivery to work toward the target of zero people on the street.
Support people to move off, and stay off, the streets	Work in partnership with other organisations to identify support solutions.
	Consider ways that we can transform our service to ensure we support rough sleepers with respect, care and compassion.

