

**Report of Director of Resources and Housing**

**Report to Executive Board**

**Date: 13 February 2019**

**Subject: Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018-2022**

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

**1.0 Summary of main issues**

1.1 Since 2002 each housing authority has had a legal duty to develop a homelessness strategy for the authority area. The government published its national Rough Sleeping Strategy in August 2018 which obliges authorities to have a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy making explicit provision for tackling rough sleeping.

1.2 The current Leeds Homelessness Strategy elapses in 2019. The strategy needs updating to reflect and respond to the implementation of the 2017 Homelessness Reduction Act, the most fundamental change in homeless law since 1977, and the changed focus on rough sleeping including the introduction of the Street Support Team.

1.3 The draft Leeds Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy is rooted in a partnership approach between the Council, other statutory services, the third sector and homeless people. The strategy has been approved by the city's multi-agency Homelessness Forum.

**2.0 Recommendations**

2.1 To approve the Leeds Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018 to 2022.

2.2 Request that the Leeds Homelessness Forum is asked to oversee the delivery of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy over its life span.

## **1.0 Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 To approve the Leeds Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018 to 2022.
- 1.2 That Executive Board requests that the Leeds Homelessness Forum oversees the delivery of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy over its life span.

## **2.0 Background Information**

2.1 Homelessness is defined under s175 of the 1996 Housing Act (as amended by the 2017 Homelessness Reduction Act) as follows:

- a) A person has no accommodation available to occupy anywhere in the world.
- b) A person has no accommodation that is reasonable to occupy.
- c) A person has no accommodation that they have a legal interest in occupying.
- d) A person has no accommodation that they can secure entry to.
- e) A person lives in a moveable structure and has nowhere to legally station their home.
- f) A person is at risk of homelessness if they are likely to lose their accommodation within 56 days.
- g) A person is at risk of homelessness if they have been served a valid notice to quit (section 21) a private rented tenancy.

2.2 The definition of homelessness is distinct and wider than being roofless. For example, a person could be homeless if they are subject to domestic violence in their mortgaged home, if they are a family whose private landlord is refusing to do essential repairs (such as fixing a broken boiler) and is threatening them with reprisal if they complain or a young person who is 'sofa-surfing' with different family or friends after a relationship breakdown with parents. In each of these examples a person has accommodation that is available to occupy. The issues are whether it is reasonable to occupy, whether they have a legal interest in occupying and whether they will lose the accommodation within a 56 day period.

2.3 Around 99% of people who are homeless/at risk of homelessness do not resort to sleeping rough. The government defines a person as sleeping rough if they are found to be 'bedded down' or 'about to be bedded down' in the open air (streets/doorways/parks) or in places not designed for human habitation such as bus shelters, cars, car parks, sheds or derelict buildings. The definition covers what a person is doing at a particular point in time. It is not relevant what accommodation a person might have that is available and reasonable to occupy/legal interest in/can secure entry to. If a person, with a council tenancy, is found to be bedded down at night in a shop doorway then they are treated as a rough sleeper.

2.4 Section 1 of the 2002 Homelessness Act requires the Council to develop and publish a Homelessness Strategy at least every five years. The 2018 Homelessness Code of Guidance states (paragraph 2.4) that the strategy should cover the following areas:

- a) Preventing homelessness in the district.
- b) Securing that sufficient accommodation is and will be available for people in the district who are or may become homeless.

- c) Securing the satisfactory provision of support for people in the district who are or may become homeless or who have been homeless and need support to prevent them becoming homeless again.

2.5 The Code of Guidance therefore places an emphasis on plans to wherever possible prevent homelessness. A homeless prevention defined as an intervention on the part of a service that results in a person, who is at risk of losing accommodation, either being able to stay in their existing accommodation or to make a planned move to alternative accommodation.

2.6 **Numbers:** key data informing the development of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy is as follows:

- Leeds Housing Options closed 11,229 cases in 2017/18 with 9,180 of those households having the threat of homelessness prevented or relieved. This equates to a prevention/relief success rate of 82%. Two of the key homeless prevention outcomes are to make a council housing priority award to sustain a 'homeless at home' arrangement pending council re-housing or a council re-housing priority award allied to assistance to secure a private rented tenancy with the latter used as an interim housing option pending council re-housing.
- 271 households, for whom we were unable to prevent/relief homelessness, were accepted as being eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need. This meant the Council had a duty to secure suitable temporary accommodation pending longer-term re-housing.
- The remaining 1,778 cases were not assessed as being owed a temporary accommodation duty (generally because they were not assessed as being 'vulnerable' and therefore in priority need for re-housing) and were owed a housing advice duty to help them resolve their own housing difficulties.
- All people who resort to rough sleeping are considered to be 'vulnerable'/in priority need and therefore owed the temporary accommodation duty.
- No successful County Court appeals took place in 2017/18 on homeless assessment decisions
- Footfall in 2018 at Leeds Housing Options was 29,683 (sometimes on multiple occasions) people seen at the service.
- Leeds Housing Options deals with an average of 330 contacts (footfall at service, home visits, surgery visits, telephone and email contacts) per day.
- Rough sleeper headcount in November 2018 was 33 people found. Around 130 people are known to services as sleeping rough at some time.
- The number of annual council housing lettings has been reduced from 5214 in 2013/14 to 3657 in 2017/18.
- The average waiting time (across all priority bands) to secure a 1-4 bedroom property has increased from 34 to 54 weeks between 2013/14 and 2017/18.
- Temporary Accommodation placements as at 31 March 2018 (latest available comparable data) for the Core Cities for people owed a temporary accommodation duty are as follows:

	Total Number in TA	Of which in Bed and Breakfast	Total in TA per 1000 households
Birmingham	2058	574	4.72
Bristol	517	10	2.66
Leeds	32	0	0.10
Liverpool	85	9	0.39
Manchester	1483	130	6.65

Newcastle	27	0	0.22
Nottingham	223	46	1.68
Sheffield	116	12	0.48

2.7 Leeds had the lowest number of households in temporary accommodation out of the Core Cities when taken as a number per 1000 households in the population. Leeds has not placed an eligible homeless family with dependent children in bed and breakfast accommodation since February 2013.

2.8 **2017 Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA):** The HRA represents the most fundamental change in homeless law since 1977. The key provisions of the HRA are as follows:

- a) Changes the definition of at risk of homelessness from likely to lose accommodation within 56 days – previously 28 days. Also that a person is at risk of homelessness if they have been issued with a valid notice to quit (section 21) a private rented tenancy.
- b) Ensure that any person who requires it is given information on homeless prevention, securing accommodation, the legal duties of the authority/rights of homeless people, what support services are available and how services can be accessed.
- c) A duty to prevent homelessness for eligible people who are at risk of losing their home: take reasonable steps to ensure that accommodation does not cease to be available. The prevention duty is in place for 56 days.
- d) A duty to relieve homelessness for eligible people who have lost their home: take reasonable steps to ensure that accommodation becomes available with an expectation that it will be available for a minimum of 6 months. The relief duty is in place for 56 days.
- e) Every person to have a Personal Housing Plan setting out the agreed steps, to be taken by the applicant and the authority, to prevent or relieve homelessness.
- f) The authority can discharge the prevention/relief duty if a person has unreasonably or deliberately refused to co-operate with the personal housing plan process. A no co-operation decision could, in some circumstances, end the housing duty owed. The threshold for finding a person to have not co-operated is set at a high level.

2.9 The HRA is framed around the principles of early intervention, prevention and the authority/applicant having a bilateral responsibility to prevent or relieve homelessness. The new duties precede the long-standing duty to secure suitable temporary accommodation, pending longer-term accommodation, if a person is eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need.

2.10 **Rough Sleeping:** Rough sleeping is the most visible and acute form of homelessness. Rough sleeping numbers have risen significantly since 2010. The

figure recorded by year in the table below is the number of rough sleepers found on one night in November of each year.

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
No. of rough sleepers found	6	11	11	13	15	13	20	28	33

2.11 Leeds has a low level of rough sleeping compared to the other Core Cities with Leeds having the second lowest level when calculated as number per 1000 households. The figures shown are for November 18 – the latest available comparative data:

Authority	No. of rough sleepers	No. of rough sleepers per 1000 households
Leeds	33	0.10
Manchester	123	0.57
Bristol	82	0.42
Birmingham	91	0.21
Nottingham	34	0.26
Liverpool	15	0.07
Sheffield	26	0.11
Newcastle	15	0.12

2.12 The government has set a target to halve rough sleeping numbers, using 2017 as the baseline, by 2022 and to end rough sleeping by 2027. The government’s target for Leeds is therefore to have no more than 14 rough sleepers by 2022. The starting point of our approach to tackling rough sleeping is to ensure that an accommodation option for every rough sleeper when they require it. We need to ensure that a wide range of housing options, including self-contained accommodation with intensive support, which reflects a person’s needs and preferences is part of the housing offer. It has become increasingly evident that the reasons why people start, continue and return to sleeping rough relate more to issues around addiction and mental ill-health rather than access to housing. A multi-agency Street Support Team (led by Safer Leeds and including staff from Leeds Housing Options, police, LASBAT, CGL Street Outreach Team and Forward Leeds) was established in September 2018 to adopt a more joined up holistic wrap around approach to tackling rough sleeping, begging and street based lifestyles with bringing addiction/mental health services onto the street and then helping people access mainstream services thereafter. The team emphasis is always initially on support with enforcement action being, if required, a secondary option. The development of the Street Support Team is the cornerstone of the city’s approach to reducing rough sleeping.

**2.14 Temporary Accommodation:** The Council has a legal duty to secure suitable temporary accommodation for homeless households in the following circumstances:

- The applicant is homeless, is owed the relieving homelessness duty, believed to be in priority need and requires temporary accommodation pending the relief duty being applied

- The relief duty has not been successfully applied, the applicant is homeless, believed to be in priority need and requires temporary accommodation pending further inquiries being carried out into their circumstances
- The applicant is eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need and requires temporary accommodation pending longer-term accommodation being secured
- The applicant is eligible for assistance, homeless but intentionally so, has a priority need and requires temporary accommodation for a reasonable time period to facilitate securing alternative accommodation

2.15 The table at paragraph 2.6 shows temporary accommodation placement numbers for each of the Core Cities. Leeds spent £2m on supported accommodation for homeless people in 2017/18. It is likely that, were Leeds to have temporary accommodation numbers comparable to the highest Core City numbers, then costs would be well in excess of £20m per year. The low temporary accommodation numbers/costs enable the Council to invest in homeless prevention services. The investment in homeless prevention contribute to the Council being able to maintain low levels of temporary accommodation placement and cost.

2.16 Shelter has published research into the number of children in temporary accommodation and Leeds has the second lowest number and the lowest number per children in population:

Authority	No. of children in TA	Rate per children in population	Authority ranking
Birmingham	4028	71	38
Manchester	2051	59	32
Bristol	846	111	50
Nottingham	410	166	73
Liverpool	83	1127	204
Sheffield	68	1716	230
Newcastle	17	3384	204
Leeds	28	5938	273

**2.17 Priority Groups:** the 2017 Homelessness Reduction Act states that housing authorities should pay particular regard to the following groups of people in relation to preventing and ending homelessness:

- Prison Leavers
- Care Leavers
- Former members of the armed forces
- Victims of domestic abuse
- Person suffering from mental ill-health
- Other groups identified as being at particular risk of homelessness by the authority.

**2.18 Partnership:** the development of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy has been rooted been in the partnership between the Council, other statutory services, the third sector, community groups and people with lived experience. The city has a multi-agency Homelessness Forum that is chaired by the Chief Executives of GIPSIL and Turning Lives Around. The forum meets every two months and has overseen the development of

the draft strategy. The forum has endorsed the draft strategy as a precursor to it being submitted to the Executive Board. The forum will lead on the delivery of the agreed strategy. The Homelessness Forum is a satellite forum of the city's Strategic Housing Forum. There are a number of community group/people with lived experience forums, chaired by a worker from St George's Crypt, relating to rough sleeping, addiction/mental health, asylum/refugees/migration with the chair relaying feedback to the Homelessness Forum.

### 3.0 Main Issues

3.1 The draft Leeds Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy is framed around five themes:

- Minimise rough sleeping
- Maximising Homeless Prevention
- Future Role of Housing Related Support
- Youth Homelessness
- Focus on Priority Groups

3.2 **Minimise Rough Sleeping:** the government has set a target to halve rough sleeping numbers, from the 2017 baseline, by 2022 and to end rough sleeping by 2027. This would mean Leeds reducing rough sleeping numbers found on the November headcount to 14 by 2022.

3.3. The November 2018 head count figure was 33 people found sleeping rough. The Leeds Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy has set a target to have no more than 14 rough sleepers by November 2019 and to have no more than 8 rough sleepers by November 2022. These are extremely demanding targets. Nevertheless, it is felt that the strategy needs to set stretch targets in order to minimise rough sleeping. The strategy will set out how the city will offer intensive support to help people off the street. A person's support needs may well be inhibiting the process of helping them off the street. The support needs to be tailored to a person's needs and persistent until the person comes off the street. There will be a small group of people who, have capacity, but do not want to stop living a street based lifestyle – especially linked to begging. It may well be that for such cases interventions are ultimately focused on enforcement measures.

3.4 The cornerstone of the Leeds approach is the establishment of the Leeds Street Support Team led by Safer Leeds. The team comprises representatives from West Yorkshire Police, LASBAT, Leeds Housing Options, Adult Social Care mental health social work service, City Centre Liaison service, Bevan Health Care, CGL Street Outreach Service, Forward Leeds and Beacon housing support service. The service is adopting a joined up, targeted and tailored approach to helping rough sleepers off the street. There is a strong emphasis on helping people access mental health and addiction treatment services; the previous absence of which has led to people starting, remaining and returning to sleep rough.

3.5 The government has allocated Leeds £352k in 2018/19 and provisionally £385k in 2019/20 to help meet the target reductions in numbers. Leeds has used the funding to put in place additional staffing resources (including additional street outreach, prison in-reach, addiction support, mental health social worker, physical health nurse and mental health nurse) within the Street Support Team. A 'Rough Sleeper' Fund of £120k in 18/19 (£80k in

19/20) has been established to help fund interventions that prevent and end rough sleeping and sustain housing options. The funding is dependent upon the government being satisfied that the city is making progress to reduce rough sleeping. The 2018 November head count figure of 33 was deemed by the government to be within tolerance – given that 2018/19 funding was allocated in mid-2018 and the need to mobilise resources. Nevertheless, the government will be expecting that significant progress will be made in number reduction in 2019.

3.6 The government published its national strategy on reducing rough sleeping in August 2018. The strategy is founded on three ‘pillars’:

- To **prevent** new people from starting to sleep rough
- To **intervene** rapidly when people start to sleep rough to help them off the street
- To promote a person’s **recovery** so once they are off the street to build positive lives and don’t return to rough sleeping

3.7 The city is applying a ‘Housing First’ approach to helping rough sleepers to rapidly come off the street. ‘Housing First’ is about fast-tracking people into their own independent tenancies, minimising the need to stay in temporary accommodation or supported housing, with high levels of support provided. In 2018 106 rough sleepers were re-housed into their own council tenancies. Support is being provided by Engage Leeds, Street Support and, where applicable, more specialist support. The majority of people are sustaining their tenancies and some people have wholly turned their lives around since coming off the street. However, a significant minority of people are continuing to gravitate towards a street based lifestyle: 6 of the 33 people found sleeping rough on the November headcount had live council tenancies. We need, under the banner of recovery and with an emphasis on mental health/addiction, help build break the link to street based living and build successful lives.

3.8 Helping rough sleepers to access mental health and addiction services is a key part of the plan to reduce rough sleeping. The mental health social worker and nurse provide on the street care and help people to access mainstream services thereafter. This is part of a wider plan to embed ‘street medicine’ services for rough sleepers and other people living a street based lifestyle. Bevan Health Care, commissioned by the CCG, provides primary care services for homeless people through the York Street practice. The Bevan Bradford service is considered by the DoH and MHCLG to be one of the best practice services for homeless people in the country – partly because of the emphasis on outreach street based services. We want to make sure that Leeds has the right level of street based health services for rough sleepers. Bevan is providing a bus based service in the city centre to bring health care services closer to people living a street based lifestyle.

3.9 It is increasingly evident that a model of securing housing, conventional support and furniture is not enough when people have acute mental health and addiction issues and suffer from isolation and boredom when they move to a tenancy away from the street based community. We need, under the banner of recovery, to help people build fulfilling lives including accessing employment, training, education and leisure services. The ‘Big Change’ initiative, which will fund small grants funded by people’s donations, will play a key part in the recovery approach as it will help fund a range of bespoke opportunities for people to build successful lives away from the street.



**3.10 Maximising Homeless Prevention:** a homeless prevention is defined as an intervention on the part of a service that results in a person, who is at risk of becoming homeless, being either able to stay in their existing home to make a planned move to alternative settled accommodation. Leeds has successfully embedded a culture of homeless prevention over a number of years. 9,180 people had their homelessness prevented in 2017/18 – a prevention success rate of 82%.

3.11 Leeds Housing Options has applied an innovative interpretation of homeless and allocation law in order to facilitate homeless prevention. Essentially households who are living care of family or friends (are ‘homeless at home’) are given the same priority for council re-housing as those who require temporary accommodation. This removes any unnecessary incentive for a household to move into temporary accommodation and certainly means that council re-housing will take the same amount of time if living care of family/friends as being in temporary accommodation. People can often stay temporarily with family and friends if they know there is realistic prospects of council re-housing within certain timescales. The priority award helps achieve this.

3.12 The private rented sector is becoming an increasingly important tenure to help people address their housing difficulties especially within the context of a reducing number of council housing lettings and an increase in the average waiting time to secure council housing. Council housing remains the ultimate tenure of choice for many people in housing need because of the security of tenure, affordable rent, high standards of housing management and significant investment in the stock. Nevertheless, people are invariably willing to accept a private rented tenancy option as an interim pending council re-housing. This often enables to stay/return to their area of choice, maintaining school placements/employment/social networks, whilst they wait for a council offer. The key to this practice is that the applicant retains their council re-housing priority award after they accept an offer of a private rented tenancy until they are made a council housing offer. The policy basis for this is that a private rented tenancy can have security of tenure for as short a time as 6 months and Leeds has decided that this does not equate to full resolution of the housing need that has resulted in a housing duty being owed. More importantly it is making housing options work for tenants, landlords and the Council. Landlords are made aware that tenants have a longer-term aim of securing council housing and the Council facilitates the process of moving one tenant out into council housing and finding the private landlord another tenant.

3.13 The practice of awarding people the same council re-housing priority if they are ‘homeless at home’ or in temporary accommodation and permitting people to retain their council re-housing priority award if they accept a private rented tenancy represent no cost to the authority. A person will still present with an unmet housing need and, if the award was not made, then in all likelihood the household would need to move into temporary accommodation with the Council incurring the accompanying costs. It is understood that many authorities that are experiencing high levels of temporary accommodation placement have not adopted such practice. The practice is now delivered through the Personal Housing Plan process required under the Homelessness Reduction Act.

3.14 Leeds has a Homeless Prevention Fund of £500k per year. This is funded through the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant (FHSG) allocated by government. Leeds received £1.794m in 2018/19. The FHSG replaced Temporary Accommodation Management Fee (TAMF) in 2017/18 which was payable through the housing benefit system for temporary accommodation placements sourced through private landlords. Leeds

received approximately £25k TAMF in 2016/17 and therefore is a significant net beneficiary of the change in funding arrangements. This is because the FHSG is calculated partly on the basis of homeless prevention outcomes rather than temporary accommodation placements made. Other authorities, who have high levels of temporary accommodation placement, are experiencing a significant shortfall in funding from the change to FHSG from TAMF. Leeds principally uses its Homeless Prevention Fund to secure private rented tenancies through bond and rent in advance payments. Bonds are held, in the name of Leeds City Council, with one of three national bond protection schemes. Any bond return, after damage or loss costs are deducted, is returned to Leeds City Council. The Homeless Prevention Fund is also used to cover the cost of furniture/white goods etc. to help people make a success of longer term housing options once secured. The Homeless Prevention Fund can be used to cover the cost of any preventative intervention, which helps someone to stay in their existing home or secure alternative accommodation, especially when the cost is lower than that of making a temporary accommodation placement. The investment in the Homeless Prevention Fund is a fraction of the cost of temporary accommodation placements that otherwise would need to be made.

3.15 Homeless prevention interventions/investment is targeted at the main causes of homelessness with these being relationship breakdown with partner involving violence, parental eviction and loss of private rented tenancy. Leeds operates a Sanctuary scheme which offers people who have experienced domestic violence/hate crime, where the perpetrator is not living in the same property, security measures to create a 'safer' living environment. Approximately 400 households take up the offer of a Sanctuary installation per year. The Youth Mediation service, provided through Leeds Housing Options, offers three way mediation between the mediator/young person/parent or guardian, to help a young person reconcile their differences with their parent/guardian so that they can return home indefinitely and make a planned move to independent accommodation. Approximately 200 young people are helped to return home every year through youth mediation. There is a limited defence in law to the issuing of a valid notice to quit a private rented tenancy. The minimum 'no fault' notice (where the tenant has not breached the tenancy agreement) is two months. The longer time remaining within the notice period then the greater likelihood that alternative housing can be found. Leeds Housing Options has on a long-standing basis taken homeless applications as soon as a person approaches for help rather than telling them to come back when 28 days are left on the notice – previous time scale for threat of homelessness. The change in the definition of threatened with homelessness to 56 days reinforces the need for early intervention but Leeds had already adopted such practice.

3.16 The Homelessness Reduction Act, through the change in definition of threatened with homelessness/prevention and relief duties/introduction of Personal Housing Plans, has embedded homeless prevention within the legal framework. All people approaching Leeds Housing Options, who are eligible for assistance and either homeless or at risk of homelessness, have a Personal Housing Plan developed jointly between the Council and the applicant. The Leeds Housing Options has placed an increasing focus on case management which is more straightforward with the introduction of Personal Housing Plans. Leeds was also able to invest in more first tier management posts, through 'New Burdens' grant funding received from government, that have focused on case decision making and management. The homeless prevention and relief outcomes for cases closed in December 2018 was 95%. The Homelessness Reduction Act, with the new more intensive legal duties, represents a significant increase in work-loads for local authorities. Nevertheless, through

the focus on case management, average officer case-loads have been reduced from 33 to 13.

3.17 The Homelessness Reduction Act places a 'duty to refer' on all public services to refer people, who they are in contact with and who they believe to be homeless or threatened with homelessness, to the local authority for assistance. On-going work is occurring to ensuring that all public services are aware of the duty and make referrals as swiftly as possible. The 'duty to refer', once embedded, will promote early contact and prevention outcomes.

3.18 Housing related support and housing management services have a vital role to play in promoting homeless prevention. Engage Leeds achieves a tenancy sustainment rate of 98% of people they supported. The reduction in council housing lettings can be significantly attributed to improved tenancy sustainment outcomes. Services are achieving homeless prevention without necessarily defining the outcomes as such. A priority will be to encourage services to consider homeless prevention and to carry out work under a prevention banner.

**3.19 Future Role of Housing Related Support:** The Council has a legal duty to secure suitable temporary accommodation (please see paragraph 2.14) for homeless households who meet certain criteria. Leeds has a very low number of temporary accommodation placements compared to other similar authorities. The low number of placements can be significantly attributed to the focus on homeless prevention. The Leeds Housing Options service has placed an emphasis on proactive move-on work from temporary accommodation and this has also contributed to the low number of placements. Leeds incurs low costs relating to temporary accommodation placements and this means the Council avoids costs and can invest funding in other ways including homeless prevention or on other Council provided or commissioned services.

3.20 The commissioning of housing-related support is founded on the three pillars of prevention, sustainment and integration. Service commissioning has resulted in having fewer contracted services albeit with expanded contract capacities and with longer-term contracts. Housing-related support can be linked to temporary accommodation including emergency accommodation at St George's Crypt or the Leeds Women's Aid refuge service and longer-term supported housing provided through the Beacon consortium. Visiting support, connected to the person, is provided through the Engage consortium and specific services such as the CGL Street Outreach Service working with rough sleepers. Housing-related support can therefore respond to emergency housing situations/avert crisis, can help people to achieve and sustain independent living outcomes and help people build successful and fulfilling lives.

3.21 Collaboration is one of the key themes relating to the development of housing-related support services. Service managers from the Beacon supported housing service are co-located with the Leeds Housing Options Service at Merion House and this has promoted joint working and improved outcomes for customers. The Engage visiting support service also has a dedicated presence within the Leeds Housing Options service. The development of the multi-agency Street Support service is another example of the collaborative partnership based approach. The collaborative work has been underpinned by the development of a case management IT system (Gateway) that provides a single system that all service providers can use to record and access information on people being supported.

3.22 The Homelessness and Rough Sleeper strategy sets out a commitment to look at the supported housing offer, especially emergency provision, that is being offered to people to ensure that it meets their needs. One of the key challenges relating to rough sleeping is the number of people who sleep rough who state that they will not use existing communal living emergency accommodation options. Likewise feedback from services such as Basis is that there are gaps in the emergency housing offer to sex workers. We need to make sure that the supported housing/temporary accommodation offer meets the needs of all groups including rough sleepers and sex workers.

**3.23 Youth Homelessness:** the Homelessness Reduction Act states that local authorities should give specific regard to the needs of care leavers. Long-standing homeless law, maintained with the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act, sets out that young people aged 16-17 and care leavers who are under the age of 22 should be treated as having a mandatory priority need for re-housing. Case law ('Southwark judgement') directs that homeless young people aged 16-17 should be assessed as 'looked after children' by authority Children's Services and owed all the same duties that after 'looked after children' receive.

3.24 Better meeting the needs of homeless young people is therefore one of the five top priorities of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper strategy. The partnership between housing related services and Children's Services is a critical one to prevent and end youth homelessness. The 'Duty to Refer' on Children's Services is an important starting point to ensure that young people, who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, get help as quickly as possible. A fortnightly Young Person's Housing Group, comprising representatives from Housing Leeds, Children's Services and third sector, is well established and presents an opportunity to take a joined up approach to helping specific young people. The group considers referrals to the Flagship service, which provides 150 units of supported housing for young people, with the aim being that young people will receive support and build up the independent living skills required to make the transition from supported to independent living.

3.25 A review of commissioned supported services for young people is currently being undertaken. The review includes young people at risk, homelessness, teenage parents, young offenders, looked after children and care leavers. The review is considering the changing needs of the client groups, whether existing services can meet this need and changes to commissioned services need to be made. It is expected that the new commissioned service offer will be implemented in 2020.

**3.26 Focus on Priority Groups:** The Homelessness Reduction Act requires local authorities to have specific regard to specific groups of people in respect of homelessness. The Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy responds to this duty and commits to delivering targeted and tailored services so that no group of people is disproportionately affected by homelessness. The strategy identified a number of groups and details what commitments have been made to better respond to the homeless related needs of these groups. This report picks up the detail of some of the groups of people included within the strategy. A recurring theme is the need to proactively go out to deliver services in places where people feel most comfortable.

3.27 The needs of homeless sex workers is a priority included within the strategy given that they are one of the most excluded and disadvantaged groups of homeless people. Many sex workers are street homeless and others are homeless if they are living in sub-standard or temporary housing or where they are subject to violence, abuse or forced to do things they don't want to do in the accommodation they are occupying. The Leeds Housing Options service is working in partnership with services such as Basis and the Joanna Project to deliver surgery and street based housing services. Both Basis and the Joanna Project are of the view that many sex workers will not access the current emergency housing options available and a priority action will be to see how the service offer can better meets the needs of this group.

3.28 National research by the Albert Kennedy Trust identified that 24% of young homeless people are LGBT+. Stonewall Housing Trust identified that two thirds of LGBT+ homeless young people believed that their sexual or gender identity was a relevant factor in them becoming homeless. A number of actions have been put in place to improve the service offer to homeless LGBT+ people. Leeds Housing Options now has a specialist LGBT+ service manager and housing advisor, service standards relating to the housing offer for LGBT+ homeless people have been published on the Council's website, a drop in surgery is carried out with MESMAC and outreach work is carried out with the 'Angels of Freedom' group. The strategy and services will continue to review how the service offer can be improved.

3.29 The service offer to victims of domestic violence is a key priority for the strategy. The Leeds Housing Options service has a dedicated presence at the daily Front Door Safeguarding Hub and ensures that every person discussed at the hub, who has a housing need, has a Personal Housing Plan developed setting out the action to be taken to resolve their housing needs. This could include a priority award for council re-housing, assistance to secure a private rented tenancy, putting in place security measures to create a safer living environment or a referral to a refuge or other emergency housing.

3.30 The housing needs of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants is another priority included within the strategy. Asylum seekers are ineligible for housing assistance and are accommodated through the Home Office commissioned provider (currently G4S) through the COMPASS contract. The housing offer made to asylum seekers, including standards and concentrations in specific localities, is included as a point of interest in the strategy. Refugees are given a 28 day notice to leave COMPASS accommodation once they receive a positive asylum decision. This places refugees at a disadvantage to other group in society who will be given a longer notice period if they need to leave accommodation: private rented tenants who are given a minimum of two months' notice to leave a tenancy. EU nationals are only eligible for housing if they hold 'worker' status. Many migrants will be living in sub-standard/over-crowded private accommodation and maybe reluctant to report issues in case they lose accommodation. We need to encourage people to come forward to advise us of issues (including through services) so that we can offer a joined up housing inspection and support service.

**3.31 Strategy Structure:** Each of the five themes of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper has a number of actions and accompanying performance indicators/targets. The success of the strategy will be assessed on the basis of progress against the actions and targets.

**3.32 Strategy Governance:** The delivery of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy will be overseen by the multi-agency Leeds Homelessness Forum. The forum brings together representatives from a range of statutory services, third sector, community groups and people with lived experience to discuss and take forward priorities on homelessness. The forum is co-chaired by the Chief Executives of GIPSIL and Turning Lives Around. The forum therefore embodies the strategy vision whereby people and services work together to prevent and end homelessness. The forum meets every months. It is proposed that, on a sequential basis, the forum consider each of the five themes of the strategy considering progress against the actions and targets. Different Council officers will take responsibility for collating progress against each of the five themes as follows:

- Rough Sleeping – Safer Leeds Street Support Team
- Homeless Prevention – Leeds Housing Options
- Housing Related Support – Adults and Health Commissioning
- Young People – Leeds Housing Options
- Priority Groups – Leeds Housing Options

3.33 The Leeds Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy is appended to this report.

## **4.0 Corporate Considerations**

### **4.1 Consultation and Engagement**

4.1.1 Extensive consultation, with a range of stakeholders, was carried out to inform the development of the strategy. The draft strategy was endorsed by the Homelessness Forum on 10 October 2018.

### **4.2 Equality Diversity Cohesion and Integration**

4.1.2 An Equality Impact Assessment has been appended to the report. Homelessness is one of the most prominent manifestations of disadvantage. The strategy includes specific themes on tackling youth homelessness and for other priority groups.

### **4.3 Council Policies and Best Council Plan**

4.3.1 The Best Council Plan 2018/19 to 2020/21 Housing Priority includes an aim 'To minimise homelessness through a greater focus on prevention'.

### **4.4 Resources and Value for Money**

4.4.1 The report contains no specific resource implications. The continued and increased focus on homeless prevention generates substantial savings to the Council in respect of prevented temporary accommodation placements.

### **4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In**

4.5.1 The 2002 Homelessness Act made it a legal duty for all housing authorities to have a Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy.

4.5.2 A range of homeless decisions are subject to statutory review and potentially County Court appeal. The focus and investment in homeless prevention means that Leeds has a low level of review and appeal.

## **4.6 Risk Management**

4.6.1 It is a legal obligation to have a Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy. There is a possibility that future government funding could be linked to having a fit for purpose strategy. A shift away from a focus on homeless prevention could result in significant additional costs, relating to increased temporary accommodation, to the Council.

## **5.0 Conclusion**

5.1 The Leeds Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy is framed around five themes of minimising rough sleeping, maximising homeless prevention, modernising housing-related support, tackling youth homelessness and a focus on priority groups. A focus on homeless prevention runs through the strategy. The strategy is rooted in strong partnership work and will be delivered through the Leeds Homelessness Forum and the Leeds Strategic Housing Forum.

## **6.0 Recommendations**

6.1 Approve the Leeds Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2018-2022.

6.2 Request that the Leeds Homelessness Forum oversees the delivery of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy over its life span.

## **7.0 Background Documents**

7.1 None

<sup>1</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.