

# Approval of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023 – 2028

Date: 26 July 2023

Report of: The Director of Communities, Housing and Environment

Report to: Executive Board

Will the decision be open for call in?  Yes  No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?  Yes  No

## Brief summary

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023 – 2028 has been designed to provide the council and its valued partners a strategic direction and framework to achieve the city priority of reducing homelessness and rough sleeping. It has been informed by extensive consultation capturing a wide range of feedback from the sector.

The Strategy sets out the council's four ambitions, and the emerging themes and priorities identified for the city in consultation with the Homelessness Prevention Forum.

The Strategy outlines the steps the council and partners will take in achieving the target outcomes and offers a performance framework on how success will be monitored. At the heart of the Strategy is people, with an ambition to achieve better outcomes for everyone, where every contact counts and those who are vulnerably housed or groups who are disproportionately impacted by homelessness are reached in the first instance.

The Strategy is a legal requirement for the council, and it is required to publish a strategy, informed by a homeless review in the district, at least every five years. It will replace the 2019 – 2022 Strategy and has been designed to be a flexible and adaptable document, that translates simply in a way to support and direct services, to meet the needs of the people in Leeds against an ever-changing national and local backdrop.

## Recommendations

- a) Executive Board is requested to approve the new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023 – 2028, which is detailed at appendix 1.

## What is this report about?

- 1 This report seeks approval from Executive Board for the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023 – 2028. This will replace the existing 2019 – 2022 Strategy. It is a legal requirement for Housing Authorities to publish a Strategy at least every five years having completed a review into current and future homelessness in their district.
- 2 The Strategy has been informed by the Homeless Review completed in January 2023 which captured the current need, trends over the term of the previous Strategy, existing levels and availability of accommodation, and the impact that the Covid-19 pandemic had and continues to have.
- 3 Local progress on reducing rough sleeping was reviewed alongside the challenges and learning from our initiatives in this area to date.
- 4 The Strategy has also been designed in consultation with the Homelessness Prevention Forum, with an innovative approach taken to capture the community voice of the wider sector and those with lived experiences.
- 5 The Strategy has been developed to support the Council's wider Housing Strategy 2022 – 2027 and it's [Best City Ambition \(leeds.gov.uk\)](https://www.leeds.gov.uk/best-city-ambition). At the heart of the Best City Ambition is the mission to tackle poverty and inequality and improve the quality of life for everyone who calls Leeds home.
- 6 The proposed Vision Statement for the Strategy is '*Leeds is a compassionate City, where services work together to prevent and relieve homelessness, and ensure that no one must sleep rough*'.
- 7 The Strategy has four overarching ambitions and sets out why these are important and how they will be achieved. The ambitions aim to be flexible and adaptable to meet the changing needs of homelessness both locally and nationally.
  - a) **Universal Prevention** - Education throughout the City to promote self-help options and accessing services at the earliest point, with a focus on under & overrepresented groups.
  - b) **Targeted Prevention** - Reaching people whose homelessness is hidden from services and to prevent and reduce, repeat homelessness, rough sleeping and youth homelessness in Leeds.
  - c) **Intervention and Recovery through Strong City Partnership Working** - The Homelessness Prevention Forum has identified four key themes to enhance our intervention and recovery offer, particularly for rough sleepers or those at risk. We will drive forward the actions identified in partnership with the City.
  - d) **A Shared and Integrated Approach to Building on our Offer of Housing Options** - Our approach must be integrated to make every person matter, and every contact count. We will expand our private sector offer and build on having the right and varied temporary and supported accommodation options.
- 8 During consultation, a wide range of partners were given opportunity to feedback on emerging themes across the sector and these have been captured in the 'City Priorities' section of the Strategy. The four themes are –
  - i. Repeat and Hidden Homelessness
  - ii. Having the Right Services Working in the Right Way
  - iii. Providing the Right Accommodation and Making it Accessible

#### iv. Health & Wellbeing Support

- 9 These themes have accompanying actions for the Homelessness Prevention Forum to drive forward in partnership, and these aim to reach people vulnerably housed in the first instance, utilise expertise across the sector with strong integration and customer focussed pathways, having a mix of accommodation to make the 'right offer', and addressing health and wellbeing as part of offering accommodation.
- 10 The Strategy will support the development of a detailed Partnership Rough Sleeping Delivery Plan 2023/24, building on the work already in place, to enable next step improvements.

#### **What impact will this proposal have?**

- 11 The Strategy will provide strategic direction and framework for the Council and partners to follow in reducing homelessness and rough sleeping in Leeds.
- 12 The ambitions focus on upstream prevention so that statutory intervention isn't at a point of crisis. Early intervention is a critical part of achieving the success the Strategy sets out to achieve, with this translated into better outcomes for people.
- 13 More accommodation options, both settled, temporary and supported, will enable better and swifter outcomes for people who are homeless, threatened with homelessness, or rough sleeping.

#### **How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?**

Health and Wellbeing

Inclusive Growth

Zero Carbon

- 14 Maximising a focus on homelessness prevention at the earliest opportunity will achieve better outcomes for people and their health and wellbeing – for both adults and children.
- 15 Our rough sleeping approach is designed to ensure people are safe from harm and enjoy a healthier lifestyle.
- 16 In partnership, we will offer practical support and treatment for physical and mental ill health issues.
- 17 Support will be in place for people to access training and secure employment opportunities.
- 18 The Strategy provides direction to shape services to be inclusive and supportive of the diverse communities and groups of Leeds.

#### **What consultation and engagement has taken place?**

Wards affected: All Wards Have ward members been consulted? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes Executive Board leads consulted/some member attendance at the 'Prevention Forum'.
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- 19 Wide consultation and engagement took place during 2022 through the Homelessness Prevention Forum. The forum is represented by involved partners in the sector, elected members, and people with lived experiences.
- 20 Workshops were delivered so that stakeholders could share their experiences, highlight their priorities and emerging themes for the city.
- 21 Once the Homelessness Prevention Forum identified it's four priorities, sub-groups were created who completed a series of activities to feedback on the following –
  - a) What the City wants to do differently

- b) How we make the change,
- c) What would successful change look like
- d) Who would take ownership of this.

- 22 In January 2023, partners connected to Leeds Street Support were brought together to review how better outcomes could be achieved. This input has informed and shaped the Strategy.
- 23 In February 2023, the draft Strategy document was presented to the Homelessness Prevention Forum and internal stakeholders with positive feedback received.

### **What are the resource implications?**

- 24 This is an over-arching Strategy with a five year term so there are no immediate resource implications for the Council however, some initiatives within the Strategy will have their respective resourcing implications. The Strategy aims to bring the wide range of partners in the sector across Leeds to effectively and efficiently use collective resource to deliver on our ambitions and city priorities.
- 25 Existing service delivery and the target outcomes set out in the Strategy are largely budgeted for by grant funding. The two largest grants the Council receives are the Homelessness Prevention Grant and the Rough Sleeping Initiative. The Council is set to receive a total of £5,065K in grant funding in 2023/24 in reducing homelessness and rough sleeping. Temporary accommodation is one of the largest costs incurred by the Council, exacerbated by accommodation costs being higher than the maximum level of housing benefit subsidy the Council receives. The preventative and early intervention themed Strategy is designed to reduce temporary accommodation placements by tackling the root causes of homelessness.

### **What are the key risks and how are they being managed?**

- 26 The Strategy is written in the context of a frequently changing national and local backdrop, where people are impacted with homelessness by the cost of living crisis, the pandemic, rising interest rates, housing market growth, and availability of suitable and affordable accommodation. The main risk is that the Strategy does not meet the needs of the city and needed levels of available accommodation is not met.
- 27 This risk has been minimised through extensive consultation, a thorough review of homelessness in Leeds, and the views of partners captured on how homelessness will look over the next 5 years. The Strategy has been designed to be flexible and adaptable, and delivery against the Strategy will be kept under regularly review.
- 28 The council can accommodate existing spend associated with temporary accommodation however, increases in placements is a key risk given the cost pressure on the Council it would create. Successfully achieving our ambitions and target outcomes set out in this Strategy is important in achieving both the best outcomes for people in line with our Best City Ambition, but also reducing the risk of increasing further, the existing cost pressures on the council – particularly by maintaining existing, or reducing, temporary accommodation placements. Local service delivery will reflect invest to save and spending money wisely principles in tackling root causes of homelessness before the point of crisis, averting the need for temporary accommodation.

### **What are the legal implications?**

29 In accordance with the Homelessness Act 2002, the Council must publish a Strategy having reviewed homelessness in their district. The Strategy must be renewed at least every 5 years. This Strategy replaces the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 – 2022.

### **Options, timescales and measuring success**

#### **What other options were considered?**

30 None. It is a legal requirement that the Council publishes a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy at least once every five years.

#### **How will success be measured?**

31 The strategy sets out our overarching ambitions, each accompanied with actions to be taken during the term of the strategy. Success will see progress in these areas and in achieving our target outcomes. These performance metrics are outlined in the final section of the Strategy and progress against these and the Strategy ambitions, will be offered to relevant Boards.

#### **What is the timetable and who will be responsible for implementation?**

32 The Strategy will be promoted across the Council, key partners, and through the Homelessness Prevention Forum once approved by Executive Board. The Strategy aims to provide a framework over its five year term to shape service design and achieve its ambitions. In partnership with the Homelessness Prevention Forum, plans for taking a collaborative approach will be agreed. The Head of Homelessness and Head of Community Safety Services will be responsible for its implementation.

### **Appendices**

33 The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023 – 2028 is attached at appendix 1.

34 The Equality, Diversity, Cohesion and Integration (EDCI) impact assessment is attached at appendix 2.

### **Background papers**

- None