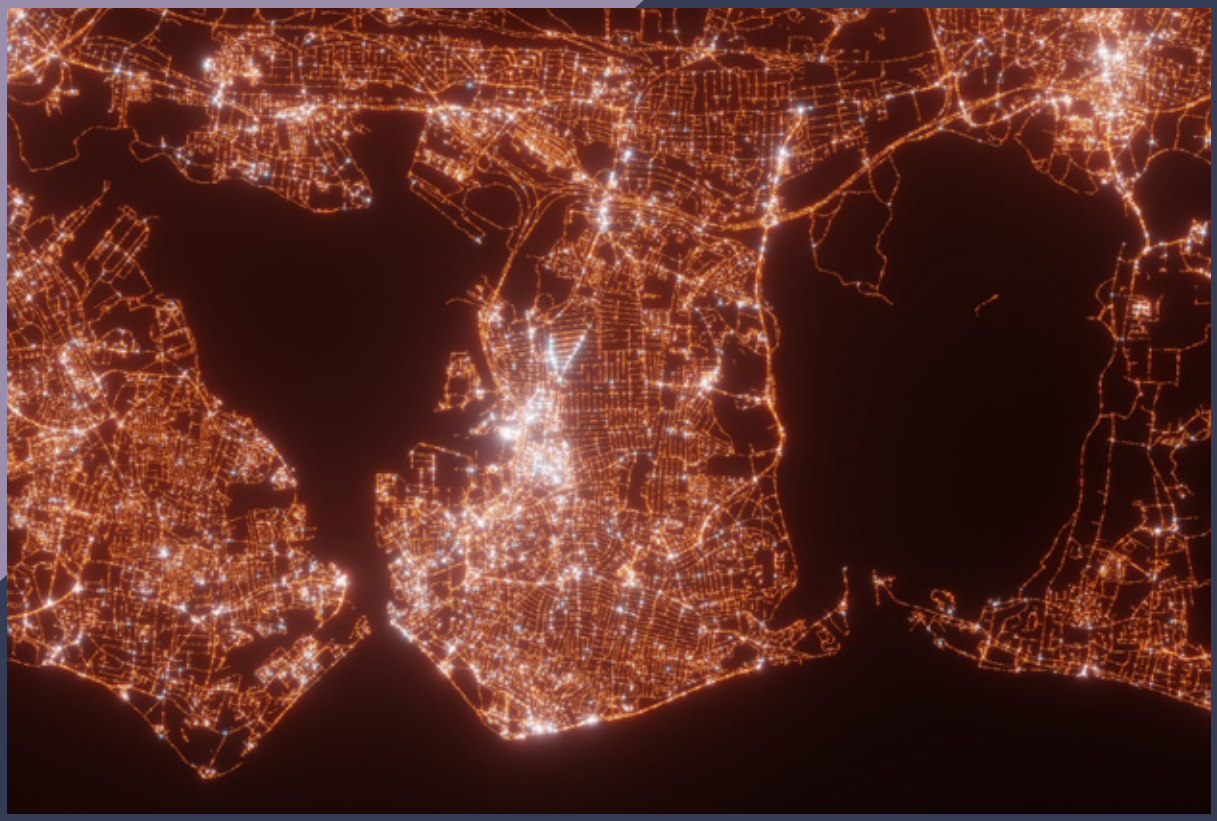
Portsmouth City Council

Homelessness Strategy

2024–2029

Making homelessness everybody's business



Introducing the strategy

Cllr Darren Sanders and Sally McNally

Thank you for taking the time to read Portsmouth's new homelessness strategy, which addresses all forms of homelessness in our changing world.

While we have made progress – securing accommodation and a pathway for rough sleepers, providing services to help homeless people find jobs, leave prison or overcome domestic abuse, reducing the need to resort to shoplifting, and building new council homes – we recognise more must be done.

As we write this, councils across the country are seeing more people coming through their doors as homeless. Portsmouth is, sadly, no exception. This strategy offers a plan to help homeless people for the rest of this decade.

It is an honest look at the many things this city does well and where it needs to improve. Its conclusions and actions come from listening to the council's partners, people with experience of being homeless, and other councils. We thank everyone who helped build this strategy.

You will find many of the principles within this strategy, underpinned by its predecessors, still hold true. The need to treat everyone as individuals, the belief that the council alone cannot deal with homelessness, the knowledge that we cannot distinguish – as the law and current government do – between priority and non-priority homelessness cases: All these things underpin what this city will continue to do.

While this city has greatly improved services for those experiencing homelessness since previous strategies, we know we must do better.

We do not prevent enough homelessness. We need to update how we allocate homes to ensure fairness to those who find themselves homeless and those who need a different home. We must build on our excellent partnership working in order to deal with what we face now. We know no single agency has all the answers, so this strategy offers five aims and a comprehensive suite of actions to back them up. They include:

- A prevention hub so there is one place to tackle homelessness in all its forms.
- A review of how this city allocates homes so we can put more of the right people in the right places.
- Making sure eviction is truly a last resort for those in supported housing, and seeing if that housing is delivering for them.
- Finding ways to help people into the private rented sector and continuing to make that sector somewhere they want to go to.
- Continuing to build and buy homes in Portsmouth that people can afford.

This strategy calls on everyone that can help prevent homelessness in the city to help. It will be challenging to deliver this. But, if we're to get where we want to be, it has to be done.

Thank you.

Cllr Darren Sanders

Cabinet Member for Housing and Tackling Homelessness

Sally McNally

Chair of the Portsmouth City Rough Sleeping and Homelessness Partnership Group

Executive summary

The number of households who experience homelessness (and rough sleeping) has grown in recent years, both locally and nationally. The local housing market remains a challenging one; privately rented accommodation and social housing can be equally unattainable for many people, for differing reasons.

This homelessness strategy sets out how Portsmouth City Council and its partners will work together to tackle homelessness, including its causes and impacts. It builds on the improvements made to services and accommodation in recent years for people who sleep rough, and focuses on preventing all types of homelessness.

The strategy is informed by a comprehensive review of homelessness and rough sleeping in the city. The review listened to the voices of people who have experienced homelessness and rough sleeping, of those that work with people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, and a range of partner agencies across the city.

The result is a partnership-focused strategy centred around five strategic aims:

1. Prevent homelessness
Prevent incidences of homelessness wherever possible. Relieve more homelessness where prevention is not an option.

2. End rough sleeping
Ensure rough sleeping is rare, brief, and not recurring.

3. Provide the right housing to relieve homelessness
Ensure people are provided with accommodation that meets their needs and lets them feel safe and secure.

4. Provide the right support
Whatever accommodation a person has, ensure they can access the right support at the right time to help them sustain it.

5. Strengthen collaborative working
Improve communication with people at risk of homelessness. Strengthen local partnerships to prevent homelessness more often.

Chapter 11. Findings and strategy recommendations provides further detail of these strategic aims, along with a detailed and measurable action plan to achieve those aims.

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1. Introduction

Local authorities are required to carry out a review of homelessness in their area and to formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on the results of that review[1]. The review should consider:

1. The levels of homelessness in the area
2. The activities which are carried out for any the following purposes (or which contribute to achieving any of them):
   - Preventing homelessness in the area
   - Ensuring accommodation is or will be available for people in the area who are or may become homeless
   - Providing support for people in the district who are homeless or who may become at risk of homelessness
3. The resources available to carry out such activities

The Portsmouth City Rough Sleeping and Homelessness Partnership Group have worked together to carry out such a review and to develop an ambitious strategy which calls on a partnership approach to preventing homelessness and ending rough sleeping in Portsmouth.

The methodology used to review homelessness in Portsmouth and to reach the findings that follow has included:

- Speaking with people who have made applications for help with homelessness about their experience
- Surveys and consultation of partner organisations and key stakeholders about the work they do in the city, the contents of the previous strategy, and what is needed from the future strategy
- Analysis of individual cases of homelessness, including learning from Safeguarding Adult Reviews
- Review of existing working practices and of the barriers that hinder the Housing Needs, Advice and Support department of Portsmouth City Council in its attempts to prevent homelessness
- Consideration of advice and guidance provided by the Homelessness Advice and Support Team from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
- Analysis and scrutiny of data relating to the types and frequency of homelessness applications made in Portsmouth, and the outcome of those applications

1 Homelessness Act 2002, s.1

In doing so, the strategy seeks to bring together and build upon two previously separate strategies[2]. The forthcoming homelessness strategy seeks to incorporate the strategic plan for ending rough sleeping in the city – an area previously covered by the non-statutory Street Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Partnership Strategy[3]. Rough sleeping is the sharpest end of homelessness but is not distinct from it. By tackling homelessness in the city, fewer people will be left with no option but to sleep rough.

2 https://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Homelessness-Strategy-2018-2023.pdf

3 https://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Street-Homlessness-and-Rough-Sleeping-Partnership-Strategy-accessible.pdf

2. The statutory response to homelessness in Portsmouth

Housing Needs, Advice and Support

A successful homeless strategy will require a partnership approach, with ownership and direction being shared by a range of stakeholders. The council cannot address the issues alone, and a single department of the council certainly cannot. That said, the council does itself have a range of statutory obligations, which the department of Housing Needs, Advice and Support (HNAS) is responsible for responding to.

HNAS responds to residents' applications for help with their housing, primarily:

- Applications from people who want to join the register for social housing because their current housing does not meet their needs.
- Applications from people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness (the focus of this chapter).

The primary team within HNAS is the **Assessment and Advice team**. The Assessment and Advice team are responsible for assessing both types of applications, being a person's point of contact with regards to their housing application, identifying the right housing solution for them, and providing the help they need to obtain such housing – for example negotiating with a landlord in order to help prevent them from becoming homeless, or assessing an application to join the housing register where social housing is identified as the right solution.

There are other teams within HNAS that deal with specific types of accommodation options:

- The **Private Rented Sector Access team** is responsible for sourcing affordable private rented accommodation, identifying applicants for vacant properties, and supporting landlords and tenants as required to sustain those tenancies.
- The **Commissioned Services and Vulnerable People team** is responsible for the commissioning and operational oversight of supported accommodation for individuals and families at risk of homelessness in Portsmouth who require extra support to be able to sustain their accommodation.
- The **Housing Accommodation and Allocations team** is responsible for sourcing and providing temporary accommodation to those to whom the council owes such a duty.
- The **Rough Sleeping Team** is responsible for the commissioning and operational oversight of numerous services aimed at people who are sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough, including the rough sleeping pathway and rough sleeping hub.

Statutory obligations

The strategy can and should aim higher than meeting the minimum required of us by statute, but it is nonetheless important to identify some of the minimum statutory requirements the council has when responding to a homelessness application.

Who does the law treat as being homeless?

A person does not need to be sleeping rough to be homeless. Most people who experience homelessness in Portsmouth do not spend a single night sleeping rough.

A person is homeless if they have no accommodation legally available to them, or if the accommodation they do have available to them is unreasonable for them to continue to occupy (for example because of a likelihood of violence). Further, a person will be homeless if they cannot secure entry to it (or have no place to put it in the case of a mobile home or houseboat).

A person is threatened with homelessness if they are likely to become homeless within 56 days, or if they have received a s.21 notice1[4] from the landlord which is due to expire within 56 days.

Prevention duty

Providing they meet the eligibility rules relating to residence and immigration status, a person who is threatened with homelessness will be owed the 'prevention duty'. This means the council has a duty to:

- Assess the person's housing circumstances, including:
  - The cause of their impending homelessness
  - The type of housing they need
  - The support they need to sustain their accommodation
- Agree with the person a plan to prevent their homelessness, including:
  - What steps the council will take
  - What steps the person will take
- Take reasonable steps to help the person secure that accommodation does not cease to be available (whether that be their current or alternative accommodation)

4 Housing Act 1988, s.21 – a so-called 'no-fault' notice a private landlord can serve to bring possession proceedings against their tenant

The prevention duty can end if any one of a prescribed list of things happen, including:

- The threat of homelessness materialises; the person becomes homeless.
- Homelessness is prevented; the person has accommodation available to them for at least six months.

Interim accommodation duty

The council must provide a person with interim accommodation (often referred to as emergency accommodation) while it makes inquiries into a homeless application if it has reason to believe that the applicant:

1. May meet the eligibility criteria relating to residence and immigration status.
2. May be homeless.
3. May be in priority need.

Relief duty

Providing they meet the eligibility rules relating to residence and immigration status, a person who is homeless will be owed the 'relief duty'. This could follow on from the prevention duty where homelessness was not prevented or could be the first duty owed to an applicant where they make their application at the stage of already being homeless. Regardless, this means the council has a duty to:

- Assess the person's housing circumstances, including:
  - The cause of their homelessness
  - The type of housing they need
  - The support they need to sustain accommodation
- Agree with the person a plan to prevent their homelessness, including:
  - What steps the council will take
  - What steps the person will take
- Take reasonable steps to help the person to secure that suitable accommodation becomes available at least six months.

The relief duty can end if any one of a prescribed list of things happen, including:

- Homelessness is relieved; the person has accommodation available to them for at least six months
- The council has complied with the relief duty and 56 days have passed

Decisions where homelessness is not successfully prevented or relieved

Where the relief duty comes to an end without accommodation being secured by the applicant, the council must determine whether the person is of 'priority need'[5] and, if so, whether they are 'intentionally homeless'[6].

A decision at this stage that a person is not in priority need would mean no further duty is owed by the council. (See Chapter 6 for the accommodation and support available to those who are not owed a housing duty but who are at risk of sleeping rough.) A decision at this stage that a person is intentionally homeless would mean only a very short-term temporary accommodation duty is owed by the council (but some duties and responsibilities may be owed by Children's Service or Adult Services in cases involving children and vulnerable people respectively, depending on the individual circumstances of the case).

A decision that a person is in priority need and is not intentionally homeless would mean they are owed the 'main housing duty', meaning the council has a duty to provide accommodation to them[7]. That accommodation would be considered and the duty ongoing until one of a prescribed list of events occurs, such as:

- The person is offered and either accepts or refuses an offer of suitable social housing through the housing register.
- The person is offered and either accepts or refuses a qualifying offer of suitable, privately rented accommodation.

5 Housing Act 1996, s.189 – some applicants are automatically considered priority need (e.g. households containing children or pregnant women), others may be in priority need if they would be more vulnerable when homeless than a typical person.

6 Housing Act 1996, s.191 – an applicant is intentionally homeless (e.g.) if they have lost their accommodation as a result of a deliberate act or omission, and the accommodation would have remained available and reasonable to occupy were it not for that act or omission.

7 Housing Act 1996, s.193

3. Feedback from people who have experienced homelessness and partners

Who did we ask?

It was important to us that this review focuses on the experience of people who have been homeless or threatened with homelessness. We wanted those people to have a voice in the strategy, including what worked well for them and what did not.

We had one-to-one conversations with 42 people who had used homeless services in recent months, including those who had experienced both positive and negative outcomes to their homelessness application, and those who have and have not experienced rough sleeping. The conversations were intentionally open to allow for free and in-depth answers, but topics included:

- When did you first know you needed help?
- What help was available to you when you needed it?
- How did you find out about the help available?
- What was good about the help you received?
- What help did you not get / what would you change about the help you got?

We separately consulted with some key partner agencies, including colleagues from Children's Services and Adult Social Care, and members of the Portsmouth City Rough Sleeping and Homelessness Partnership Group. Questions for our partners centred around:

- The aims of the existing strategy
- What has and has not worked well in achieving those aims
- Suggestions for what is required from a new strategy

What did people tell us?

Some strong themes emerged from our conversations with our people.

- People who came to the council for help were focused on what accommodation they were offered.
- People were not typically focused on any advice they had been given or any plan agreed with them to find their own accommodation.
- People's experience of coming to the council for help with homelessness were more positive if they had been provided with relatively settled temporary accommodation, or if they had settled accommodation at the end of the application.
- People provided with emergency accommodation were often surprised and/or grateful as to how quickly it was made available.

- There were various examples of people being frustrated with having to wait to receive the help or information they needed, for example:
  - Waiting to be informed as to the status of their homeless application
  - Waiting for the possession process to run its course
  - Waiting until crisis point until certain accommodation becomes available
  - Not having advance notice of where their temporary accommodation would be
  - Not being told in advance about a change in caseworker
- People were typically not aware of their statutory rights or of the council's legal obligations, and as a result often had relatively low expectations of what help they could expect.
- People's views of the quality of temporary accommodation they were provided with in an emergency varied. The frustrations experienced by vulnerable applicants staying in unideal accommodation with limited facilities such as hotels and bed and breakfast accommodation contrasted with the often-positive impressions of the rough sleeper pathway rooms made available to those who have been sleeping rough.
- People were very positive about the help they received from various services, including:
  - The council's temporary accommodation team staff
  - Staff who provide support in the rough sleeper pathway
  - The outreach team who provide rough sleepers with support in the community

Some strong themes also emerged from our consultation with key partners:

- There was general support for the aims of the existing strategy but with some useful suggestions.
- We should aim to end rather than reduce rough sleeping, or at least to ensure that anyone rough sleeping has an accommodation option available to them.
- There is a shortage of accommodation. The strategy needs to reflect the need for more accommodation. Focus cannot be on volume alone though; focus also needs to be on providing the right housing with the right support. This applies to temporary and permanent accommodation options.
- Homelessness cannot be tackled by the council alone. Focus is needed on building strong partnerships, for example by keeping partners informed with the use of data and measures, and by partners investing in the strategy.
- The existing open and effective collaboration between partners (internal, external and elected members) should be recognised and built upon for the effective management of the future strategy.

- The merging of the homeless and rough sleeping strategies provides an opportunity for the good partnership work that has led to the current provision for rough sleepers to be complemented by a strong focus on other types of homelessness and threats of homelessness.
- It is of utmost importance that we now do more to prevent homelessness in Portsmouth.

Themes

The lessons we learned from reviewing the existing strategy, from speaking with our people who have experienced homelessness, and from surveying our partners can be grouped into five themes:

1. Prevention of homelessness
2. Ending rough sleeping
3. Providing the right housing
4. Providing the right support
5. Effective communication
    - i. With people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness
    - ii. With each other as a partnership

4. Preventing homelessness

What is prevention?

There are national and societal factors that contribute to the population-wide risk of homelessness, such as welfare benefit rates, mortgage interest rates, and changes to housing legislation. The council can identify and attempt to influence those wider factors where possible, but references to 'prevention' in this review are primarily concerned with the help that can be given to individuals and families who are at risk of homelessness to ensure that risk does not materialise.

Examples of times when people are threatened with homelessness include:

- Being served with notice from a landlord to end a tenancy.
- Being asked to leave by friends or family.
- Being about to leave prison or being discharged from hospital with no accommodation to go to.

It is recognised that the more time available to prevent homelessness, the greater the opportunity. This review and the forthcoming strategy will therefore not confine threats of homelessness to those who are at risk of homelessness within the statutorily provided 56-day period.

Benefits of prevention

There are clear benefits to stopping homelessness before it happens. Preventing the risk from materialising can have significant positive effects:

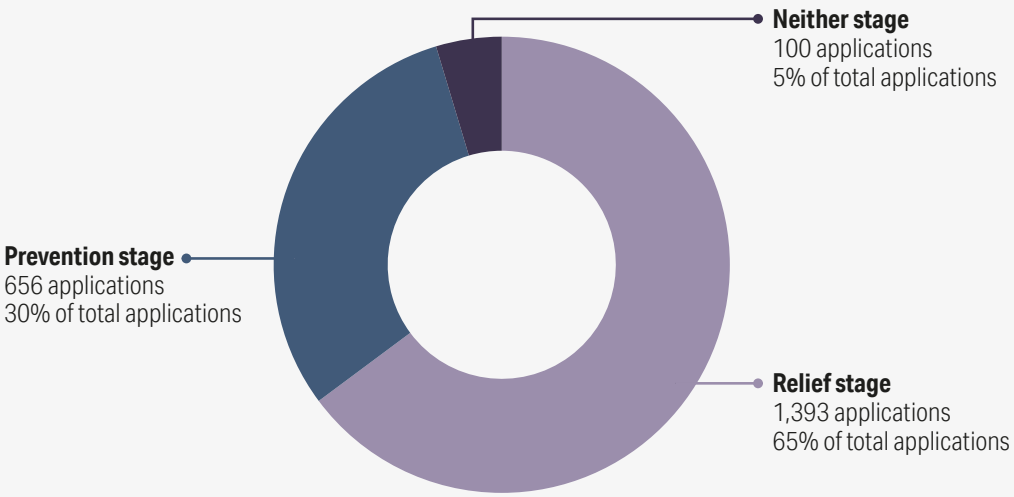
- Primarily, homelessness can be a traumatic experience, having significant and long-lasting impacts on the health, dignity, and wellbeing of those involved, including children. Avoiding homelessness can negate that lasting trauma.
- Preventing homelessness removes the need for temporary accommodation, which in turn frees up accommodation to be used instead as settled homes for people and saves the council using what is often a very expensive necessity once a household does actually become considered homeless.
- Preventing homelessness by using other tenures and types of housing lessens the pressure on the already oversubscribed social housing register.
- The cost of homelessness to the public purse in general is very high, including to the NHS, the criminal justice system, and other council services such as Adult Social Care and Children's Services[8].

8 Research in 2016 conclude savings brought by homeless prevention were more than £9000 per person, not accounting for inflation: Pleace, N. & Culhane, D.P. (2016) Better than Cure? Testing the case for Enhancing Prevention of Single Homelessness in England. London: Crisis.

Prevention in Portsmouth

Of the 2,149 homeless applications made to the council in 2022, 65% (1,393) of them were from people who were already homeless (thus owed the relief duty), meaning the opportunity to prevent had either passed or never existed. Only 31% (656) of the 2,149 homeless applications made to the council were threatened with homelessness (thus owed the prevention duty), giving the technical opportunity for prevention.

Figure 1: At what stage did the 2,149 applications start?



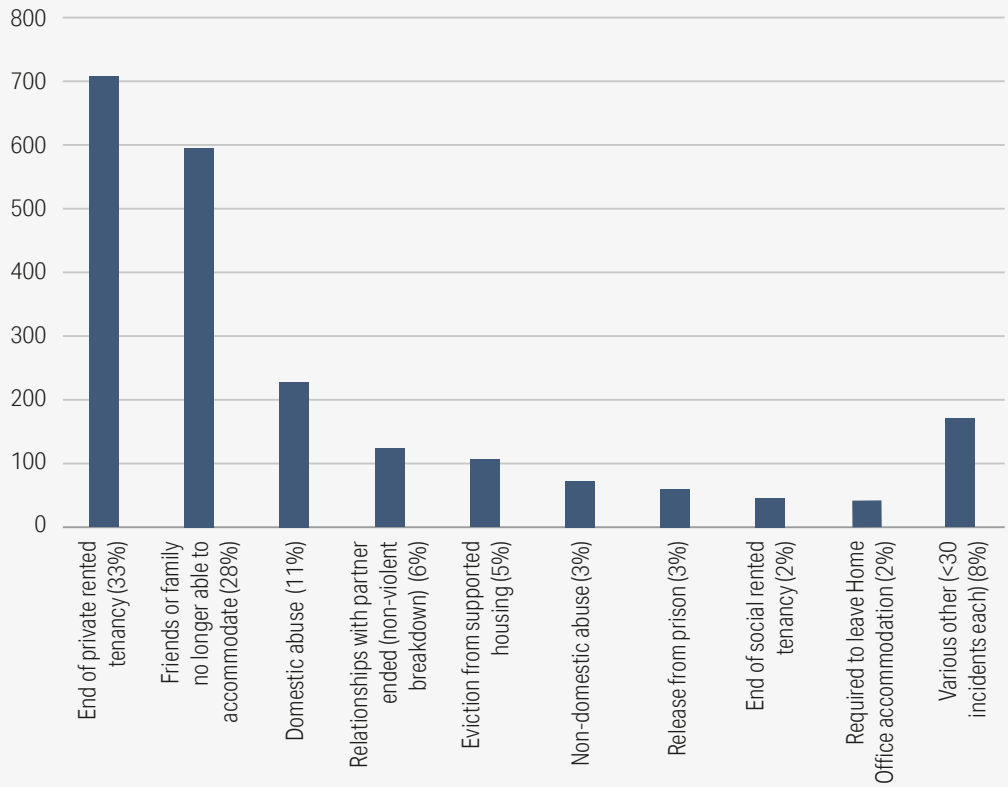
Though in the top 10% of all local authorities in the country in terms of the number of homeless applications made per 1,000 of the population (20.3 applications), Portsmouth measured in the bottom 25% for the number of prevention duties owed per 1,000, meaning there was less opportunity to prevent homelessness before it happened – and resulting in Portsmouth also measuring in the bottom 25% for the relative number of successful preventions achieved.

There are some area-specific local factors that influence the number of applications the council receives from people who are already considered homeless (and thus owed the relief duty):

- A strong outreach team exists, which identifies people who are sleeping rough and encourages them to make homeless applications.
- Portsmouth has a relatively large provision of services for rough sleepers, including the rough sleeping pathway, of which an entry requirement is to have a live homeless application to the local authority. The pathway does see some people who enter and leave accommodation several times, and the local authority takes a purposefully lenient approach to accepting that there has been a change of circumstances allowing us to take a fresh application. This would not necessarily be typical in all local authority areas.

Nonetheless, a key aim of the forthcoming strategy will be to prevent more homelessness – which includes getting help to people as early as possible and before they become homeless wherever possible. To best understand how to do so, an appreciation of what is causing people to be homeless in Portsmouth is required. The data used is based on all 2022 homeless applications but is representative of recent years.

Figure 2: Number of applications



83% of all homeless applications were caused by five high-level reasons. Evictions from privately rented properties and being asked to leave by friends and family combine to account for 61% of all homeless applications made and should receive significant attention from the forthcoming strategy, with a further combined 22% of applications being caused by either domestic abuse, a relationship breakdown, or eviction from supported housing: this too should receive attention from the forthcoming strategy, with an action plan required to set out how homelessness can be better prevented for each of these five types of applications.

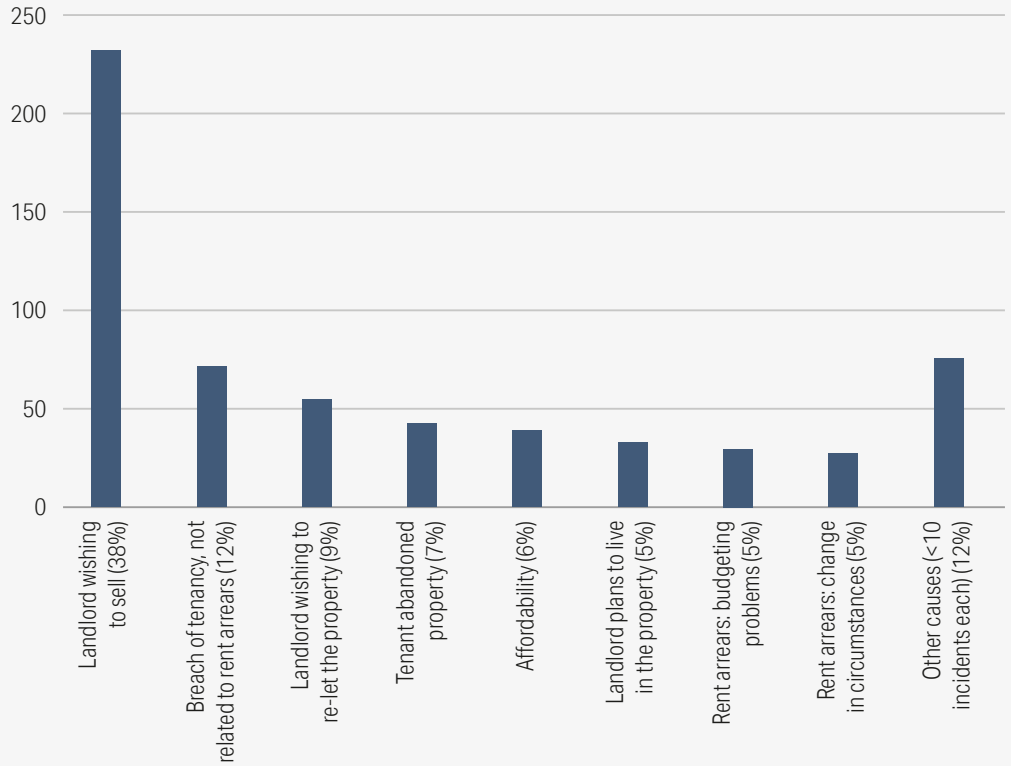
Action plans might include a focus on some of the methods and practices known to be historically successful, which have not fully recovered since changes in practice during the COVID-19 pandemic, for example:

- Improved assessments, housing plans and negotiation in cases where a person is being evicted from a private tenancy. Consideration could also be given to schemes that encourage private landlords to alert the local authority to potential evictions.

- Completing more home visits in cases where a person is being asked to leave by friends and family. This has historically proven a successful tool in preventing homelessness in family situations and is recognised as good practice in national guidance[9].
- Establishing a pre-eviction protocol for occupants of supported housing to ensure all possible options have been considered and support provided before considering eviction.

A more detailed breakdown follows for those cases where the end of a privately rented tenancy was the cause of homelessness.

Figure 3: Reasons landlords give the council for asking their tenant to leave

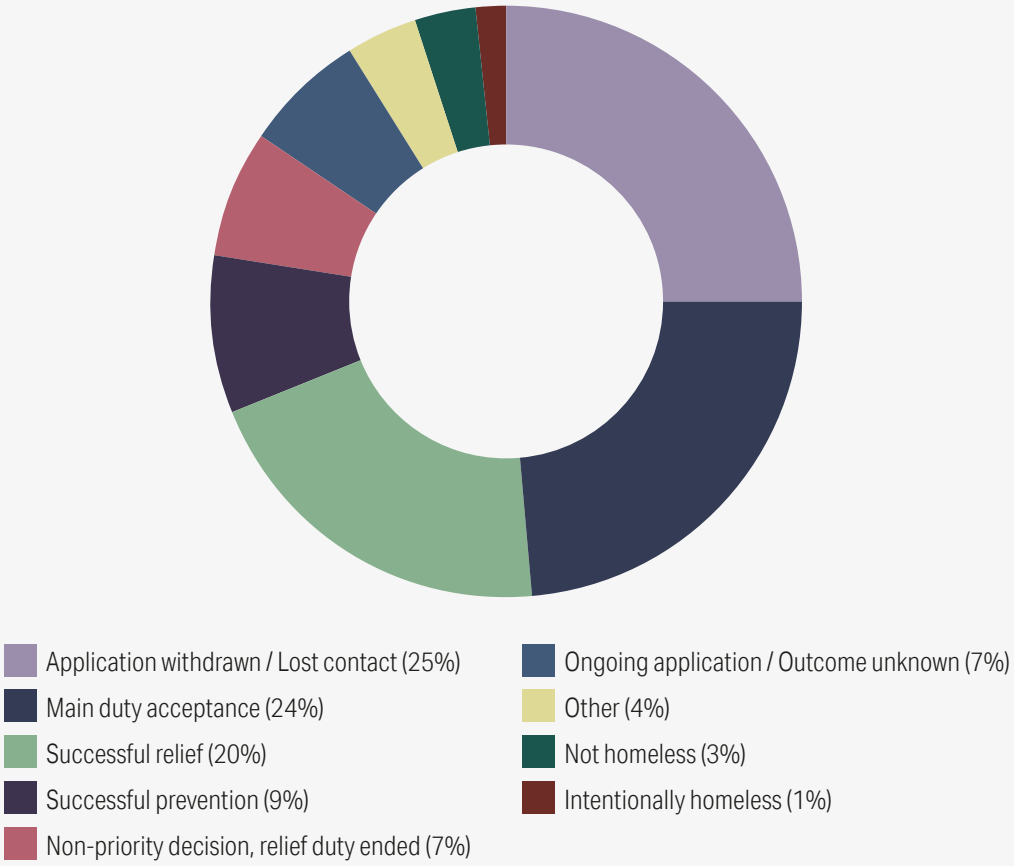


This data is based on the reasons landlords give the council for asking their tenant to leave. There is scope within many of these more specific reasons for the strategy to make plans to reduce such evictions, notwithstanding the limited impact the strategy may be able to have in addressing some of the reasons behind landlords wishing to sell their property in the current environment.

9 Joint guidance between DLUHC and DFE: Prevention of homelessness and provision of accommodation for 16 and 17 year old young people who may be homeless and/or require accommodation

Homeless application outcomes

Figure 4: 2022 applications (all outcomes)



The majority of homeless applications made to the council result in the applicant's household having suitable accommodation available to them, including all of those applications recorded as the following:

- 'Main duty acceptance'
- 'Successful prevention'
- 'Successful relief'
- 'Not homeless'

A minority of other applications will also have suitable accommodation available to them.

The council accepts a proportionally large number of 'main housing duties' to conclude homeless applications (see Chapter 2) compared to other local authorities. That will always be a more likely outcome on a given application if the homelessness application begins later than the first available opportunity – because less time will be available to instead try to prevent the threat of homelessness or to relieve the homelessness within the prescribed timescales. It is clear we need to identify threats of homelessness earlier to allow more time and opportunity to prevent homelessness.

An HNAS team that is facing ever-increasing levels of demand – and that is required to deal with threats of homelessness at all stages from the earliest identification of threat up until and beyond the crisis period – will always find it difficult to resource against or prioritise early threats of homelessness over cases of immediate crisis and emergency where people's wellbeing is at risk. Further, the early identification and addressing of threats of homelessness is often centred around an issue wider than HNAS – e.g. a financial or relationship issue. A dedicated and multidisciplinary response such a prevention hub is therefore required to maximise opportunities to prevent homelessness before they reach crisis point.

A quarter of homeless applications received in 2022 were either withdrawn before an outcome was reached or were ended because contact was lost with the applicant. This was a specifically prominent phenomenon amongst single people and applicants without children (29% of all applications compared to just 12% of applications containing children). Many such applications do later make repeat applications for assistance, but it is not known how many have or have not successfully resolved their homelessness in the meantime. A significant proportion of the single people who made applications had used rough-sleeping services, some of whom had limited methods of contact or led transient lifestyles. A review of a sample of applications that were ended for this reason showed this was also often not the case though. Further, the majority of cases were not explicitly withdrawn – more common was that the applicant made no proactive efforts to progress their application and the council's ability to act proactively was also limited. Staff time is a clear factor, with staff often prioritising other cases (there are always many other cases vying for staff's attention by making or awaiting contact with HNAS). More staff resource would allow cases to be more proactively managed and reviewed, providing a more responsive service for homeless applicants, and offering greater opportunities to prevent homelessness whilst reducing the number of applications closed for the above reasons. A consistent framework for the steps required before an application should be closed for lost contact would allow for greater consistency in such cases.

5. Homelessness prevention, relief and support activities in Portsmouth

This chapter of the review seeks to summarise the key activities carried out in Portsmouth either for the purpose of or which contribute to the following:

1. Preventing homelessness.
2. Ensuring that accommodation is available for people who are or may become homeless ('relieving' homelessness).
3. Providing advice or support for people who are homeless or who may become homeless; or who have been homeless and need support to sustain their accommodation.

The specific advice and support available for people who sleep rough is detailed in Chapter 6, and the provision of accommodation and housing-related support in Chapter 7 and Chapter 8 respectively.

Housing Needs, Advice and Support, Portsmouth City Council

HNAS is most often the main point of contact for someone who is homeless or threatened with homelessness with regard to their application for help. Previous chapters have summarised the key functions and duties of HNAS, the growing level of demand placed on the team, and demonstrated how homelessness is not prevented as often as in some areas.

HNAS is responsible for making an individual assessment of the household's circumstances, identifying the right housing solution, and agreeing a personalised housing plan with them which sets out what steps they and HNAS will respectively take. As the data in previous chapters shows, there are of course many cases where this is done effectively and suitable accommodation is made available for a household, but in the majority of cases it is not unless and until the main housing duty is owed after the ending of the statutory prevention and relief duties.

Identifying those opportunities to prevent homelessness is key, but so is having the appropriate resources to be able to provide the right help.

HNAS was historically better equipped to effectively respond to the number of homeless applications it received, both in terms of the amount of accommodation available and the caseloads of officers. The typical size of individual officers' caseloads trebled over the five years leading to 2022, allowing them less time to work on each respective case (and thus less time and opportunity to help prevent homelessness before it occurs).

In this time, more homeless applications have resulted in more demand for social housing, resulting in an almost doubling of typical waiting times for those

assessed as having an urgent need for accommodation[10], and the council's spend on temporary accommodation has grown manifold: more and more people have required temporary accommodation, less time has been afforded to progress their application, and they face longer waits for social housing where that is identified as the most appropriate option for them.

Over the course of the last year, extra staff were recruited and management and workflow processes were reviewed, but levels of homelessness and the number of applications made is clearly too great for the current size of the Assessment and Advice Team, resulting in missed opportunities to prevent homelessness, limited opportunity for proactive casework, suboptimal application outcomes, and prolonged application times (which itself has a circular and compounding impact by adding to the increased number of cases held by individual officers at any one time). Recent projects within HNAS have shown officers with smaller caseloads are able to give better attention to their applications. This leads to more thorough assessments, personalised housing plans that are truly tailored to the respective applicant, more proactive working relationships with applicants to prevent or relieve their homelessness, and as a result avoids instances of homelessness and the resulting strain on temporary accommodation and the register for social housing.

Another key obstacle to preventing and relieving more homelessness is the availability of accommodation. The supply of accommodation will be more comprehensively dealt with later in the review, but it is a key factor in HNAS's ability or otherwise to prevent or relieve homelessness. The insufficiency of accommodation relative to the high demand for housing means it is often prioritised for those who meet certain statutory criteria (in the case of social housing), and that long waiting times inhibit the ability to prevent homelessness before it happens (in the case of almost all types of accommodation, including social housing, privately rented accommodation and supported housing).

There are typically limited housing options to be considered for any given applicant, which, when combined with a shortage of time for the officer dealing and lack of perceived importance on the part of the applicant (as was borne out in the survey), often results in personalised housing plans that often do not feel overly personal or bespoke. More officer time and more accommodation options would be key to improving the quality of plans, but it should also be noted that improvement in the quality of assessments and meaningfulness of the written plans itself is required, as is the frequency at which officers make contact with the applicant and review the plan. The quality of the initial assessment of a person's circumstances and subsequent plan are integral to helping people achieve the outcome they want.

10 Those awarded a high level of priority on the waiting list waited an average of around 3 months to be offered accommodation in 2017. Average waiting times in the last year are around 6 months.

Advice services

Good and timely advice can be the difference between a person retaining their accommodation and them becoming homeless. Typical areas of such advice include the following, all of which could be categorised as either housing advice or money advice:

- Tenants' rights and rights of occupation
- What to do about harassment and/or threats of illegal eviction
- Welfare benefits entitlement
- Dealing with rent or mortgage arrears
- Concerns about the affordability or not of current accommodation
- The housing options available to people at risk of violence and abuse
- How to obtain accommodation in the private rented sector, including the practical steps required to find and secure somewhere and to apply for relevant benefits etc.
- How to apply for social housing
- Advice and assistance in relation to possession proceedings

Advice in some or all of these is available from many sources in Portsmouth.

HNAS

The survey findings found that people who had made applications via HNAS did not tend to recall or focus on the benefits of any advice that was given. Review of services shows that advice is often provided with regard to a tenant's rights of occupation, that dedicated money advisers offer help with issues relating to debt and benefits, and that a working relationship is being developed to refer people with concerns about the affordability of their rent for independent advice from Advice Portsmouth.

Advice given at the time of a person's first approach is often not retained several weeks or months hence. This is unsurprising given the difficult experience of being threatened with homelessness and the doubtless many other concerns one would be juggling at the time of approaching to the council. The advice is more often than not given verbally only.

Advice Portsmouth

Advice Portsmouth is commissioned by the council to provide free, independent, impartial and confidential advice to Portsmouth residents and to any council tenants living in neighbouring areas. The service is delivered by the You Trust, and provides advice and support in relation to debt, benefits, housing, and a range of other areas. Such assistance includes advising as to possession procedure and likely outcomes, helping to defend claims for possession, checking benefit entitlement, helping with budgeting, and providing assistance to tackle rent arrears.

Citizens Advice Portsmouth

Citizens Advice provide a housing casework service, offering legal help to defend possession proceedings, to assist with making or challenging statutory homelessness applications and regarding some housing disrepair issues. Eligibility for this service is subject to legal aid eligibility criteria.

Citizens Advice recognises the close relationship there can be between welfare benefits issues and homelessness, and also offers advice and representation in relation to welfare benefits disputes.

Social landlords

The ending of a tenancy by a social landlord (either the council or any of our partner registered providers (formerly 'housing associations') accounts for only 2% of causes of homelessness in the city, which is very low relative to the proportion of the city living in such accommodation; 18% of households in the city live in social housing, compared to the 29% who live in privately rented accommodation[11].

This is partly because the much greater security of tenure enjoyed by tenants of social landlords, where a court would usually have to be satisfied that specific grounds are made out and that the tenant had been given every reasonable opportunity to stay in their accommodation. There is also great value, though, in the support and associated services that come with a tenancy from the council or registered providers. By way of example, all council tenants or tenants of one of our largest partner providers, Vivid, have access to a single point of contact for advice and assistance regarding the management and sustainment of their tenancy, which includes, but is not limited to, access to specialist debt and benefits advice.

Summary

There is lots of good advice available to those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness in Portsmouth. Some of is dependent on who your landlord is or whether you qualify for legal aid, and some of it is not. It is not currently coordinated in a way that focusses on homelessness, and opportunities are sometimes missed or reduced by having to refer from one organisation to another. There is an opportunity to coordinate some specific advice service with a focus on identifying early possible threats of homelessness and providing the advice needed to eliminate that threat where possible.

11 UK Census, 2021

Families with children

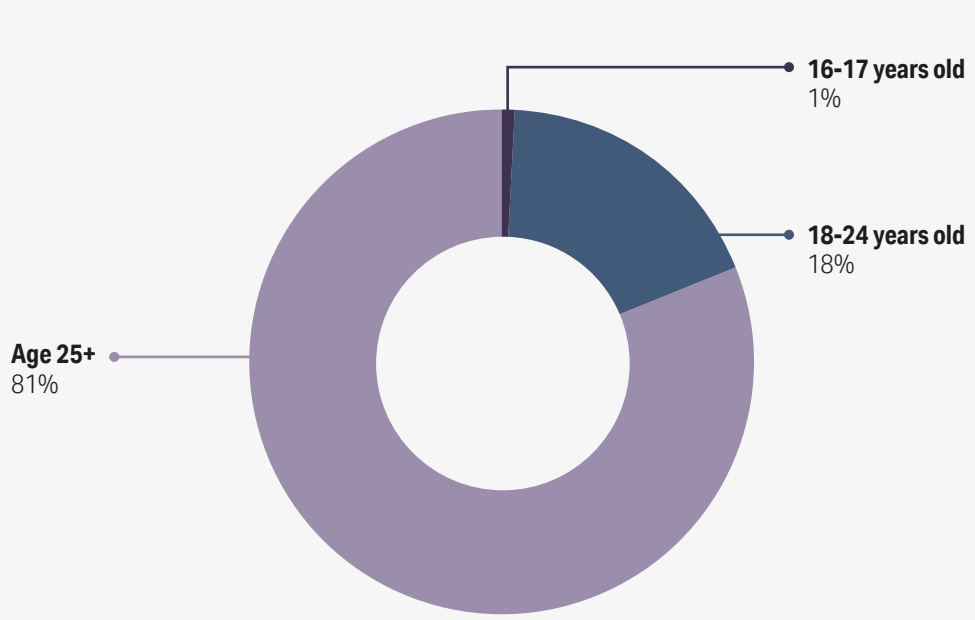
21% of the households who made homeless applications in 2022 contained children. These families receive support from many of the other services referenced in this chapter, but specific support is also available from Children's Services where there are other reasons for their involvement – whether that be from Early Help and Prevention professionals or social workers, practical help is provided to help families sustain their accommodation (e.g. budgeting advice) or to contact HNAS if there is a serious risk of homelessness.

The statutory framework Is such that these households are very likely to achieve a positive outcome: if homelessness is not successfully prevented or relieved within the given timescales, families are generally owed the main housing duty provided with accommodation on an ongoing basis unless they are intentionally homeless within the meaning of the law – which accounts for only 2% of such applications (nine families in the whole of 2022).

Those nine families, though, then find themselves amongst the most disadvantaged position of all: requiring family-sized accommodation but often not able to access privately rented accommodation because of poor references and awarded a low level of priority for scarce social or supported housing so as to make accessing those options very unlikely. Such families often find themselves in precarious accommodation by relying on the goodwill of family and friends, or are accommodated at great expense by Children's Services – often to the detriment of the children's welfare. There is a lack of a clear accommodation offer or pathway for families who find themselves intentionally homeless.

Young people facing homelessness

Figure 5: Age of homeless applicants



Young people

394 (18% of all) homeless applications in 2022 were made by 18 to 24 year olds. Of these, 50% of all applications were the result of being asked to leave by friends or family, often by parents (compared to 28% of the wider population). There is anecdotal but widely accepted learning from within HNAS and from other professionals in the field that the most successful method for preventing this specific type of homelessness often includes a visit to the family home to act as a proxy mediator or negotiator between parties and/or to provide realistic advice about the often-limited housing options available to the young person. This is a practice that has suffered from other demands on the HNAS team's time, and one that has not fully returned since the reduction in visits around the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

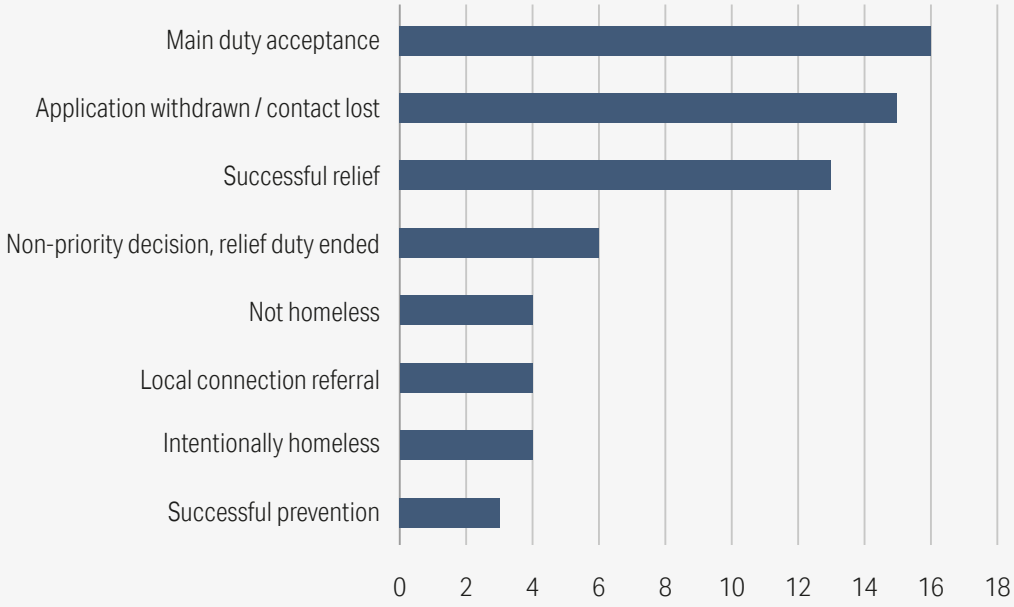
Specific supported accommodation is commissioned in the city for young people who are homeless and have tenancy-related support needs (see Chapter 7).

16 and 17 year olds

24 of the 2,149 homeless applications made in 2022 were by made by 16 or 17 year olds. A new and comprehensive joint working protocol between HNAS and Children's Services was agreed and adopted with training in 2023. As part of the new joint working, data is regularly cross-referenced so that any trends in the number or type of applications can be acted on as appropriate.

Care-experienced young people

Figure 6: Homeless application outcomes



10 of the 65 homelessness applications made by care-experienced people in 2022 resulted in a decision that no housing duty was owed following unsuccessful attempts to prevent or relieve their homelessness (six no priority need decisions and four intentionally homeless decisions). These decisions need to be averted wherever possible, meaning greater rates of prevention or relief are required.

A new and comprehensive joint working protocol was also agreed between HNAS and Children's Services in 2023 regarding the council's response to care-experienced young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Further, there is a shortage of appropriate accommodation available for young people who are about to leave or have recently left care. A review of the accommodation offer for care-experienced young people is required. Such questions to be answered include:

- What is the most appropriate accommodation offer for most care-experienced young people?
- Is the currently limited access to social housing sufficient given the current and future numbers of care-experienced young people?
- How can any intentionally homeless decision be averted for this group of applicants? This question is a sensible one for all homeless applicants – and if we successfully prevent or relieve homelessness then any such decision would be avoided – but our specific role as a corporate parent requires consideration in this context.

People at risk of domestic abuse

A person is homeless if they experience or are likely to experience domestic abuse in their only available accommodation. Domestic abuse is the third most common cause of homelessness in Portsmouth, accounting for 11% of all applications made in 2022.

Stop Domestic Abuse are commissioned to provide support to people at medium or high risk of domestic abuse in the community and a range of support to those who witness domestic abuse. Homelessness can sometimes be prevented – and safe accommodation be secured – by helping make a person's current accommodation safe for them, e.g. by 'target-hardening' the property where this is possible, and what the person wants.

Stop Domestic Abuse also provide 16 refuge units of accommodation in Portsmouth for those who cannot be safe in their current accommodation. Further work is required to understand how this accommodation could benefit Portsmouth residents.

A further five refuge units within a supported housing setting are commissioned for those with more complex support needs, where additional workers are available to provide support and counselling is provided by the You Trust.

Further support is available for families with a child under a child protection plan from the Family Safeguarding Service, where qualified Independent Domestic Violence Advocates, substance misuse workers and mental health workers are available to provide a coordinated response for families experiencing domestic abuse.

The homeless data returns that HNAS must return to central government ('H-CLIC') only concern approaches where a homelessness application is made and progresses to a certain stage. This means many people who contact HNAS for some initial advice only are not captured in a measurable way. HNAS is in the process of making amendments to their in-house database so that the true level of demand from those experiencing domestic abuse is better captured.

Former service-personnel

3% of all homeless applications made in 2022 were made by a household containing a former member of the armed forces. Aside from those who were homeless as a result of having to leave forces accommodation, the causes of homelessness for these applicants were broadly representative of the causes experienced by the wider population.

As part of the council's commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant, former members of the armed forces who are within five years of discharge do not need to demonstrate a local connection when applying for social housing in Portsmouth and are afforded additional priority as a result of their service.

Detail of the accommodation options specifically available to former service personnel is covered later in the review and further detail about the wider housing offer in the city is published on the council's website[12, 13].

People with an offending history

The council employs a Criminal Justice Navigator to help people who are about to leave or have recently left prison to navigate their housing options, and to access homeless services if so required. The role works closely with HNAS, probation services, and rough sleeper services to ensure the specific needs of the individual are met.

The council also commissions Safer Communities, a housing provision for ex-offenders working with Portsmouth Probation. The scheme focusses on the housing and resettlement needs of those who pose high risks to the public, who would otherwise have very limited suitable housing options available to them.

12 https://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/services/community/portsmouths-armed-forces-community/portsmouths-armed-forces-housing-services/

13 https://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/armed-forces-covenant-solent-full-feb-2023-aa-accessible.pdf

Asylum and immigration

There are a number of specific, national immigration schemes that can result in recipients with access to public funds and, as such, entitlement to help with homelessness if it occurs. The schemes are as follows:

- Asylum dispersal
- Homes for Ukraine and the Ukraine Family Visa schemes
- The Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy and the Afghan Citizen Resettlement Scheme
- Hong Kong British Nationals Overseas scheme
- Support for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Minors
- Community Sponsorship

The impact the schemes have on housing pressures and homelessness varies greatly from one scheme to another – for example only one family has arrived in Portsmouth via Community Sponsorship where a local charity commits to providing the family with the accommodation and support they need – whereas much greater numbers are accommodated in the city at any one time by the Home Office via asylum dispersal, many of whom are later awarded access to public funds and go on to make homeless applications to the council.

Those who are awarded immigration status from asylum dispersal accommodation are often given only a short period of notice to leave the emergency accommodation provided by the Home Office, they may or may not make an application to the council at the earliest opportunity, and they may or may not be owed an accommodation duty by the council upon having to leave the emergency accommodation. A specific procedure would be warranted for this group of applicants given the short notice often given and the specific vulnerabilities associated with people who are in asylum dispersal accommodation.

The immediate such schemes have on demand for local housing is relatively well known but Coordination of the various schemes is required to fully understand the impact they have on local services as a whole, and to understand any areas where services could be improved. An Asylum and Immigration Coordinator has been in post since August 2023 on a two year fixed-term contract.

The council recruits officers and commissions support staff (via the Roberts Centre) to specifically work with people who have arrived under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme and Afghan schemes. These staff work with the individuals and families to ensure they have safe and appropriate accommodation, and that they have the support they need to access other services and suitable permanent accommodation in the future.

Some migrants present in Portsmouth do not have recourse to public funds, meaning they are not entitled to most forms of help from the state – including housing and homelessness assistance, and most welfare benefits. The British

Red Cross, Portsmouth City of Sanctuary, and Friends Without Borders all offer advice and assistance to people without recourse to public funds, as well as to asylum seekers, refugees, and those with insecure immigration status. The help offered usually comprises of advice, case working, signposting, and referring to other services. There is an absence of provision of accommodation for those without access to public funds. In limited circumstances, for example where a household contains children or a very vulnerable adult, accommodation is provided by Children's Services or Adult Social Care, often in an unplanned way, in accommodation that is far from ideal, and on an indefinite basis at great expense.

People experiencing poor mental health

It is very common for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness to experience mental health problems. 180 applicants (8% of all applications) in 2022 were deemed more vulnerable than the typical person specifically as a result of their mental health, but a far greater number of applicants experienced mental health problems than this figure suggests – for example those who have relatively moderate mental health problems, or those who are already considered 'vulnerable' by virtue of another reason. The data currently available is what is captured by HNAS according to reporting criteria required by central the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

Further, it is well established homelessness, or the threat of homelessness can of course itself have a significant impact on a person's mental wellbeing.

Further understanding is needed regarding the link between homelessness and mental health, including any lasting effects of trauma relating to homelessness.

The extent of help offered by (and whether there is an accommodation duty owed by) a local authority can depend on the extent and impact of a person's mental health problems. Assessments can be complex and must be based on the individual circumstances of the applicant – but these assessments are often carried out by staff without specific mental health training and with limited statutory or local guidance as to who should be classed as vulnerable.

Certain support is available for people receiving secondary services related to their mental health. Adult Mental Health services in the city are fully integrated (social care and health services). Such support can include access to a social worker and/or mental health practitioner, psychology, wellbeing clinics, therapy and more. Where a person needs support with a threat of homelessness, support can be given to help with the underlying cause (for example, a hoarding issue or a refusal to give access for a gas safety check), but a referral to HNAS would be typical.

For those not in receipt of secondary services, support for mental health is available by self-referring to Solent Mind's Positive Minds service, where one-to-one support is offered in relation to a person's mental health or wellbeing.

Queries that relate to housing or homelessness are likely to result in a referral for independent advice or to HNAS.

See also the section below regarding people with complex needs and vulnerable adults.

People with learning disabilities

Of the 2,149 households who made homeless applications made in 2022, 52 were recorded as containing a person who has an identified learning disability. Although only a very small proportion of all homeless applicants, these are often people who need a tailored package of support.

The city has a fully integrated service for people with learning disabilities, with multidisciplinary support offered from social workers, medical professionals, housing officers, and more. Each person working with the learning disability team will have a single named worker who can support them with their housing problem (for example if they are experiencing difficulties managing their tenancy). Depending on the help required, the named worker can provide support themselves, can call on the expertise from within their multidisciplinary team, or can refer or signpost for help and advice from elsewhere.

Neurodivergent people

An increasing proportion of applications for housing assistance are related to households where someone is neurodivergent, often impacting on the type of housing that would be suitable for their needs. Any future changes to how the council allocates social housing should consider the specific needs of such households. HNAS should work in collaboration with Adult Social Care and Children's Services to understand whether there are gaps in specialist provision of accommodation.

Room One is a developing service managed by autistic people, for autistic people in Portsmouth. The space is a one-stop shop for autistic and neurodivergent adults, their family and friends, and the professionals supporting them.

A significant amount of the demand the service receives is in relation to housing problems. This includes queries regarding a person's current accommodation, and their relationship with their current landlord. These can offer early opportunities to prevent threats of homelessness. Room One are currently able to signpost or refer to relevant services (for example, Housing Needs, Advice and Support) but no formal working relationship or referral mechanism is currently in place.

Substance misuse

Substance misuse can be an impediment to the successful management of a tenancy and is sometimes a contributory – or the underlying – cause of homelessness (for example, a factor as to why a person did not pay their rent or was more likely to engage in antisocial behaviour).

The drug and alcohol treatment services the council commissions from the Society of St James includes wider assessments of need, including what help a person using those services might need with their housing – with relevant signposting and referrals made based on those assessments.

Intuitive Thinking Skills provide peer-led, independent advocacy and mentoring in the city, which includes issues people are experiencing with their housing or homelessness.

Specific accommodation is commissioned for those recovering from drug and alcohol misuse, which is detailed later in the review.

Complex needs and vulnerable adults

Some people who experience homelessness and/or rough sleeping in the city have multiple and complex needs. These are often people who have tried but not been able to sustain some of the accommodation options available in the city.

The Portsmouth Homeless Drug and Alcohol Team (PHDAT) (often referred to as the complex needs team) is made up of one social worker, recovery workers, life skills workers, and mental health practitioners including a team of psychologists.

The team typically has smaller caseloads than comparable professionals in other teams and are able to offer wrap-around support which, amongst other things, includes carrying out care assessments, mental health assessments, offering support to access detox and rehabilitation services, and providing psychological support for those experiencing or at risk of experiencing rough sleeping.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding vulnerable people is a responsibility shared by everyone.

There has been an increase in incidences of vulnerable individuals needing a safeguarding response in Portsmouth in recent years; the reasons for this are complex and the trend is consistent with the national picture. Many teams and services working with homeless people in the city (including HNAS) frequently attend and participate in the various multi agency risk management panels and processes (for example, MAPPA, MARAC, MARM, MET) that take place in Portsmouth. There is active engagement with and participation in the work of the Portsmouth Safeguarding Adults Board and the Portsmouth Safeguarding

Children Partnership. This includes supporting safeguarding reviews, learning events and the recent Homeless Thematic Review commissioned for the city[14].

There is an identified need to review accommodation and support provision across the city, particularly in respect of the needs of service users with more complex or multiple needs, and to use this learning to inform HNAS's commissioning strategy. HNAS is also completing an internal review of its processes and policies around safeguarding, training requirements, risk assessment and risk management processes.

14 The review was published by the Portsmouth Safeguarding Adults Board: https://www.portsmouthsab.uk/scrs-2/

6. Ending rough sleeping in Portsmouth

Rough sleeping

Rough sleeping and homelessness are often incorrectly equated as the same thing. The vast majority of people who sleep rough are homeless, but most homeless people do not sleep rough.

Examples of people who are homeless who do not sleep rough include:

- Someone who has accommodation physically available to them, but that accommodation is not reasonable for them to continue to occupy in the longer term
- Someone who has nowhere permanent to stay but is being temporarily accommodated by friends or family whilst they find a longer-term solution
- Someone to whom the council has provided temporary accommodation as a result of certain statutory criteria being met

Councils only have a duty to provide temporary accommodation to a homeless person if they have reason to believe that person may be in 'priority need' according to the law. Those in 'priority need' include households containing children, pregnant women, and those who would be more vulnerable when homeless than a typical person (for example as a result of physical or mental health problems or having served in the forces) to name just a few. This does mean, though, that many homeless people are owed no statutory accommodation duty at all, leaving them having to try to source their own accommodation to avoid sleeping rough, or relying on non-statutory services being provided.

Services should be specifically aimed at helping those who sleep rough or at risk of doing so, but the most effective way of reducing rough sleeping is to reduce homelessness in general (for example via preventative work).

The approach in Portsmouth

Rough sleeping can damage a person's physical and mental health, affect their levels of dignity and wellbeing, and exclude them from opportunities available to others. Many people sleeping rough also experience substance misuse problems.

A lack of housing impacts on a person's ability to learn and work effectively and therefore has a wider impact on the city in the long term.

The council has had a long-term commitment to trying to ensure that nobody should be left with no option other than sleeping on the streets. Some formal provision of shelter or accommodation has been provided for people who sleep rough since 2018, with significant changes being made to the offer in the fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic after the national 'everyone in' directive to accommodate all rough sleepers. This directive provided the opportunity to,

initially, expand our night bed accommodation provision and then to develop this into a rough sleeping accommodation and support pathway.

Rough sleeper pathway

The rough sleeping pathway exists to provide safe, sustainable accommodation for people rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping. The accommodation is provided whilst support is given to facilitate a move on into more suitable and settled accommodation.

The pathway accommodation consists of 105 bed spaces located over three sites, one for people assessed as having low or no support needs, one for those who require a medium level of support, and one for those who require high levels of support. All sites have support staff located either on the premises at all times, or in very close proximity (on the low support site). The commissioned support provider is Society of St James (SSJ).

All accommodation includes bathrooms, cooking facilities and facilities to wash clothes. SSJ offer support to those who wish to accept it but carry out daily welfare checks as a minimum.

The rough sleeper pathway is contracted and funded until 31 March 2025.

Rough sleeping hub

The rough sleeping hub is a place rough sleepers can go for support and practical assistance. The service is also operated by SSJ and is open every day of the year. Help available includes:

- Breakfast and drinks
- Showers
- Laundry facilities
- Access to computer and internet
- Support with health care needs
- Storage lockers
- A named keyworker
- Access to housing advice
- Access to substance misuse and recovery advice

Work is referenced within the action plan to review the operation of our rough sleeping hub.

Outreach and navigator support

The council commissions a homeless outreach team who engage with those who are already sleeping rough, some of whom are reluctant or find it difficult to access services in the traditional way. The outreach team perform an important and varied role, with tasks including:

- Encouraging or facilitating the person to access advice and assistance regarding their homelessness (for example by making a homelessness application and/or accessing the rough sleeper pathway).
- Helping to ensure the person's basic needs are met whilst sleeping rough.
- Encouraging or facilitating the person to make use of the facilities at the rough sleeping hub.
- Helping the person to make or attend medical appointments or appointments with substance misuse services.
- Helping the person to make applications for welfare benefits or to access local food banks and other food provisions.

The council also employs a team of 'navigators', including a criminal justice navigator to work specifically with people working with Portsmouth Probation, and health navigators to work specifically with people who attend Queen Alexandra Hospital. These posts are funded by grant funding until March 2025.

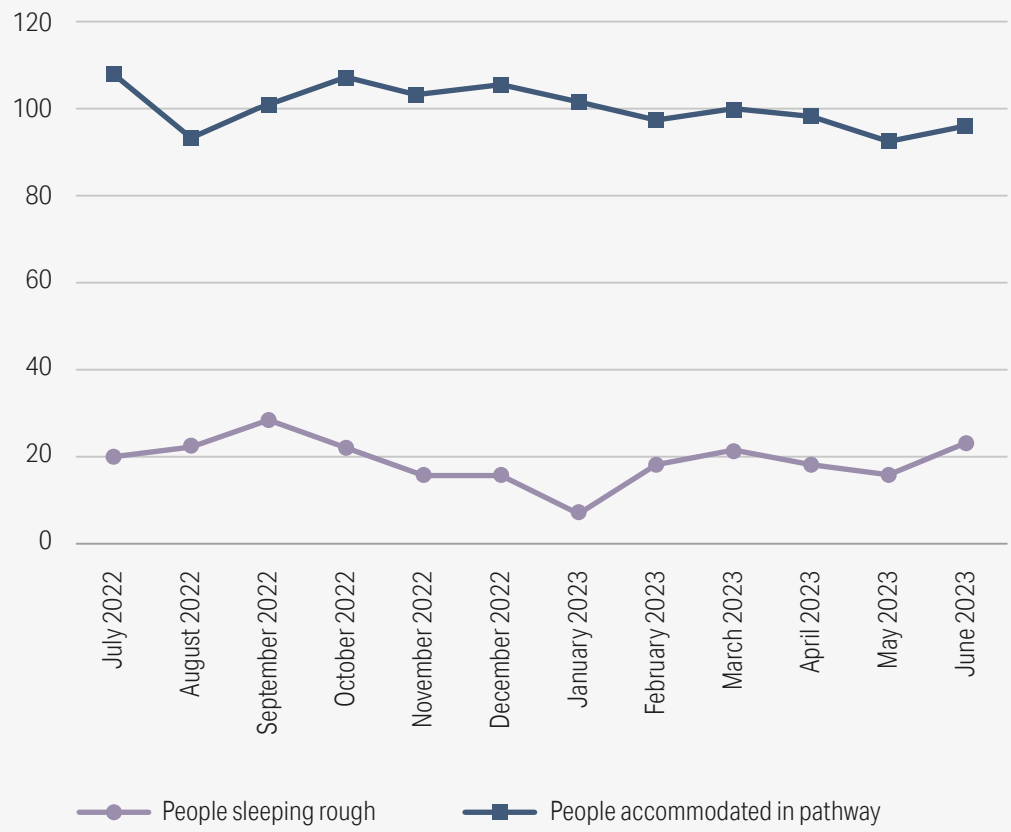
The navigators are based in the community, at the rough sleeper hub, at Probation's offices and at the hospital, where their role includes:

- Coordinating multi-agency support for complex or high-risk individuals who have no immediate housing solution.
- Helping people who are at risk of rough sleeping to take the practical steps needed to avoid it – for example by assisting with applications relating to nationality or residency.
- Helping people with the costs of travelling to another area where they have or would have accommodation available to them.
- Encouraging and helping people to engage with statutory and non-statutory services so that all accommodation duties and options are considered.
- Working with partners to identify housing solutions for people released from prison with no accommodation.

How many people sleep rough in Portsmouth

The provision of services for rough sleepers in the city has led to far fewer people sleeping rough than if they did not exist and have helped people have somewhere safe and secure to stay when they had no other options. Around 100 people are typically accommodated in the rough sleeping pathway at any one time.

Figure 7: Rough sleeping in Portsmouth



A great number of people have also been helped to move on to more settled accommodation – around 5 to 10 people per month. There are still too many people sleeping rough at any one time though (an average of 19), so more work is needed.

Ending rough sleeping in Portsmouth

Further steps are required to reduce the levels of people sleeping rough in the city, and to ensure incidents of people sleeping rough are rare, brief and not recurring[15] .

- **Prevention**: ambitious and collaborative partnership working has been central to the successes of rough sleeper services in the city in recent years. There is a shared appreciation, though, that the focus of that partnership working needs to be expanded to include a greater focus on prevention. Preventing a person's homelessness not only removes the threat of having to sleep rough for that person, but also reduces demand (and thus competition) for alternative accommodation such as temporary accommodation, social housing or supported housing – meaning it reduces the likelihood of others rough sleeping too.
- **Accommodation**: there are times when the rough sleeper pathway is filled to capacity, meaning people continue to sleep rough until a vacancy becomes available. Meanwhile, some people have been in the pathway for a long time without any move-on accommodation being found, often but not always as a result of them having complex support needs or them having exhausted many accommodation options in the city already. The rough sleeper pathway is not intended to be permanent accommodation: an improved move-on pathway is required.
- **Ensuring everyone has an option**: rough sleeper services usually know a lot about a person who is sleeping rough and the reason they are either choosing to or have no other option. Examples of those who continue to sleep rough include those who have been excluded from all suitable accommodation options and those who do not want the options that are made available to them. A flexible, individual-based approach needs to be taken to ensure everyone who is sleeping rough as a suitable offer of accommodation available to them if they want it. This may include offering accommodation and support that is tailored to the person's specific needs.
- **Planning**: current service provision is funded by grant funding until March 2025. A review of the suitability of the current accommodation settings of the pathway and the support offered will be required ahead of then to plan for future provision. Improved co-location of services (for example the hub, healthcare, substance misuse) could be considered as part of any review.

15 As defined by Government: Rough sleepers helped to rebuild their lives with new strategy backed by £2bn government support – GOV.UK (https://www.gov.uk/government/news/rough-sleepers-helped-to-rebuild-their-lives-with-new-strategy-backed-by-2bn-government-support)

7. Supply of accommodation

The availability and suitability of accommodation is fundamental to the prevention and relief of homelessness.

We learned from our survey of people who had used homeless services and of partner agencies:

1. Accommodation is what people want from the council when they are homeless or threatened with homelessness.
2. Focus cannot be on volume of accommodation alone, it also needs to be on providing the right housing and the right support to enable the person to live safely, comfortably, and have the best possible chance of sustaining their accommodation.

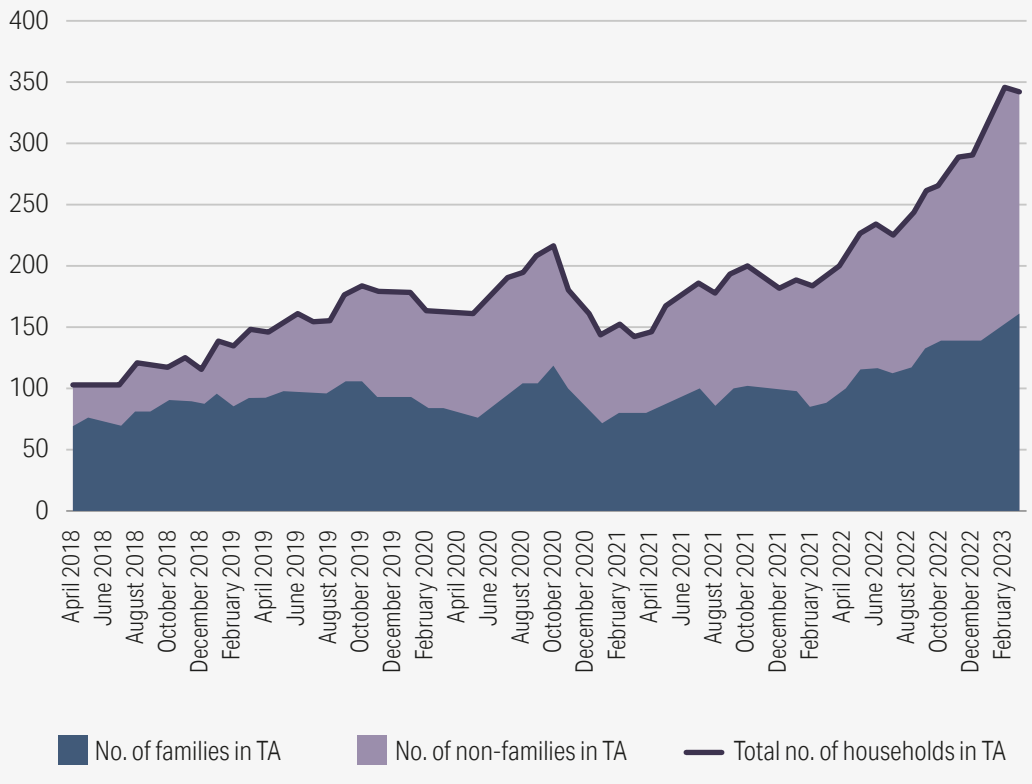
Accommodation will be the right housing for a person if it meets their specific needs, it allows them to live in the property as their home (e.g. cleaning and washing facilities as highlighted from our survey responses), allows them to feel safe and secure in their surroundings.

Temporary accommodation

Demand for temporary accommodation

The number of homeless households provided with temporary accommodation has grown very significantly over the course of the last five years.

Figure 8: Total number of households in temporary accommodation



End of month date	No. of families in TA	No. of non-families in TA	Total no. of households in TA
30/04/2018	73	29	102
31/05/2018	78	25	103
30/06/2018	75	27	102
31/07/2018	73	32	105
31/08/2018	83	38	121
30/09/2018	86	33	119
31/10/2018	91	27	118
30/11/2018	93	33	126
31/12/2018	89	27	116
31/01/2019	98	42	140
28/02/2019	88	47	135
31/03/2019	94	55	149
30/04/2019	95	53	148
31/05/2019	100	51	151
30/06/2019	100	61	161
31/07/2019	98	57	155
31/08/2019	99	58	157
30/09/2019	107	71	178
31/10/2019	108	76	184
30/11/2019	96	85	181
31/12/2019	95	84	179
31/01/2020	95	84	179
29/02/2020	87	77	164
31/03/2020	86	77	163
30/04/2020	82	79	161
31/05/2020	78	83	161
30/06/2020	87	89	176
31/07/2020	95	95	190
31/08/2020	105	91	196
30/09/2020	108	102	210
31/10/2020	121	96	217
30/11/2020	98	82	180
31/12/2020	86	78	164
31/01/2021	75	71	146
28/02/2021	82	70	152
31/03/2021	81	62	143
30/04/2021	83	65	148
31/05/2021	90	78	168
30/06/2021	95	81	176
31/07/2021	101	85	186
31/08/2021	88	90	178
30/09/2021	102	93	195
31/10/2021	103	96	199
30/11/2021	101	90	191
31/12/2021	101	82	183

End of month date	No. of families in TA	No. of non-families in TA	Total no. of households in TA
31/01/2022	99	89	188
28/02/2022	88	97	185
31/03/2022	91	101	192
30/04/2022	102	104	206
31/05/2022	117	111	228
30/06/2022	119	117	236
31/07/2022	113	115	228
31/08/2022	119	120	239
30/09/2022	135	125	260
31/10/2022	140	128	268
30/11/2022	140	149	289
31/12/2022	140	152	292
31/01/2023	144	175	319
28/02/2023	155	191	346
31/03/2023	163	179	342

The temporary reduction during Autumn 2020 was most likely attributable to the COVID-19-related restrictions on landlords' ability to recover possession of their property.

The rising use (and cost) of temporary accommodation is a result of other factors rather than a standalone problem that can be addressed in isolation, for example:

- A significant increase in homelessness demand in general makes a resultant demand on temporary accommodation very likely. A significant increase in demand for temporary accommodation forces the local authority to have to rely on more expensive types of accommodation to meet this demand.
- Preventing homelessness prevents the need for temporary accommodation; if prevention rates are low then more people become homeless (thus more people require temporary accommodation).
- A greater supply of permanent accommodation would mean more accommodation for people to move on to from temporary accommodation, thus reducing the number of households in temporary accommodation, as well as the time spent in temporary accommodation and the authority's reliance on more expensive types of accommodation.

Duties and powers

Temporary accommodation is provided by the council in performance of various statutory functions relating to homelessness. These include:

- The **duty** to secure that accommodation is available whilst dealing with a person's application if there is reason to believe they might meet certain statutory criteria (eligibility for assistance, homelessness, priority need)[16]
- The **duty** to secure that accommodation under the so-called 'main housing duty' where a person meets all of the statutory criteria, until that duty is ended (for example because an offer of suitable, permanent accommodation in private rent sector or through the waiting list has been made)[17]
- The **power** to provide a homeless person with accommodation as a 'reasonable step' agreed in their personalised housing plan, even though they are not owed a statutory duty[18]

Types of temporary accommodation

Temporary accommodation takes various forms. The type of accommodation a person is offered can depend on their individual needs and the availability of accommodation at that time. Examples include:

- **Council-owned or leased accommodation**: the council has around 180 properties they either own or lease from private owners, which it uses exclusively for homeless temporary accommodation. This accommodation is managed by a local team of three Housing Access Officers and one Estate Manager, with support provided to help applicants manage their temporary licence/tenancy.
- **The Temporary Accommodation Service (TAS)**: an accommodation service commissioned to manage around 50 properties used exclusively for homeless temporary accommodation. As part of this commissioned service EC Roberts Centre also provide support to applicants, with specific attention paid to issues such as budgeting and money management, their responsibilities as a tenant, managing their home and neighbourliness, parenting and education, physical or mental health and emotional wellbeing, training, and maximising employment opportunities. This support is aimed at helping people to prepare for their future tenancies, in the hope this reduces the likelihood of them becoming homeless in the future.
- **Hotels, Bed and Breakfast, and similar**: this type of nightly paid accommodation is the most expensive and, in most cases, the least suitable. Provision does vary but there is often an absence of basic facilities (for example the ability to cook healthy meals or wash clothes in a cost-effective way).

16 Housing Act 1996, s.188

17 Housing Act 1996, s.193

18 Housing Act 1996, s.189B

- **Remain in occupation**: sometimes the temporary accommodation duty is fulfilled by the council being satisfied that an applicant can temporarily stay in their current accommodation. Accommodation can at once be unreasonable to occupy on an ongoing basis (so as to make the person homeless), but suitable for a short while as temporary accommodation whilst other, more suitable accommodation is sought.

  Whether a person's current accommodation is suitable as temporary accommodation should be considered on a case-by-case basis, but it is not unusual for an applicant to be advised of their right stay in their privately rented accommodation beyond expiry of their s.21 notice as temporary accommodation, whilst the council takes steps to help them find suitable permanent accommodation (in performance of the relief or main housing duty).
- **Supported housing and other hostel-based accommodation**: for example, in rough sleeper pathway accommodation, or within a supported housing hostel. Further detail is provided below.

The team includes Independent Supported Housing Assessors (ISHAs) whose role it is to understand what the applicant needs from temporary accommodation – both in terms of property and support. The ISHAs help determine the best and most suitable type of temporary accommodation for each applicant.

The right temporary accommodation

Temporary accommodation made available to someone should be of a suitable standard, provide facilities to prepare healthy meals and wash clothes, allow them to feel safe and secure, and meet their individual needs.

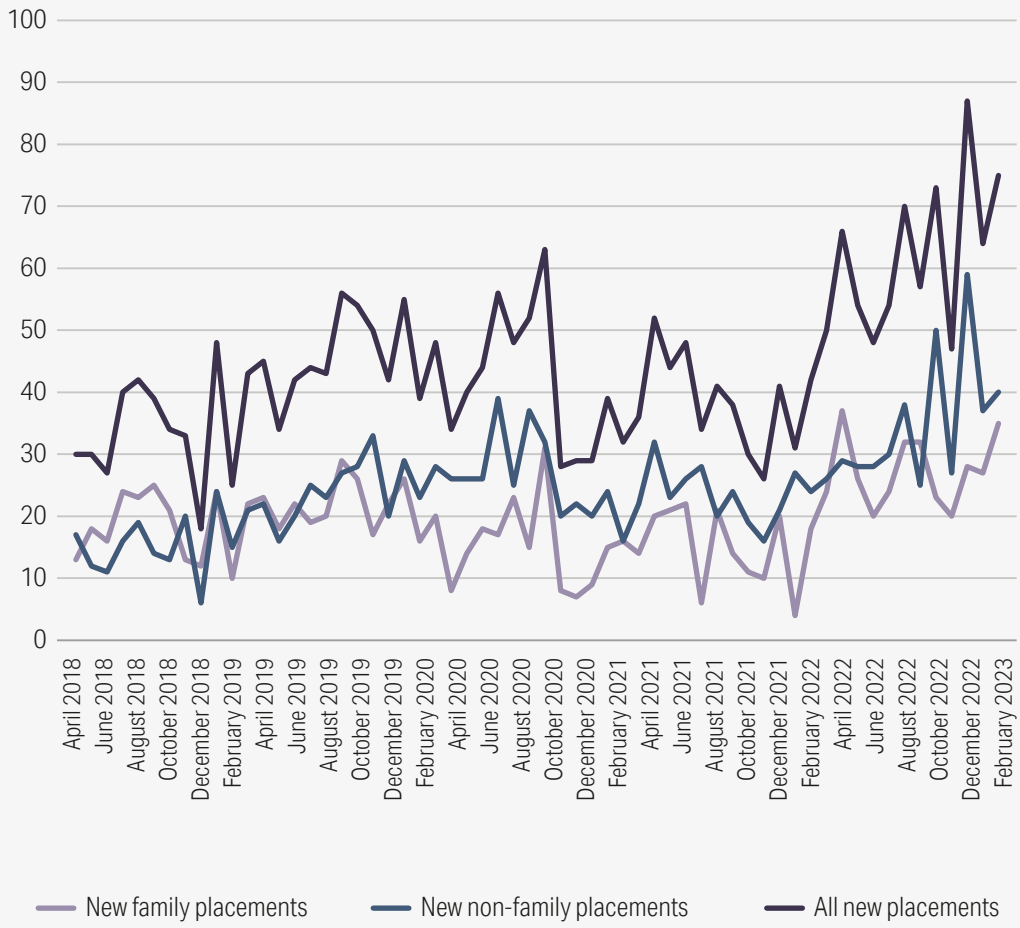
The council's Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy[19] governs what a suitable temporary accommodation placement looks like. Suitability considerations include the size, condition, location, affordability of the property, and the characteristics of alternative temporary accommodation available at the time. An ISHA (Independent Supported Housing Assessors) is tasked with understanding the individual needs of applicants in temporary accommodation so the most suitable accommodation and/or support can be provided.

The council has increased its provision of more suitable temporary accommodation in recent years (to include more suitable alternatives to hotel and bed and breakfast type accommodation). Between April 2022 and June 2023, the council increased its provision of more suitable temporary accommodation by approximately 60%. The number of homeless applicants requiring temporary accommodation has increased concurrently though, and at a greater rate.

19 Temporary accommodation placement policy 2020-2025 – Portsmouth City Council (https://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/services/council-and-democracy/policies-and-strategies/temporary-accommodation-placement-policy-2020-2025/#:~:text=Wherever%20reasonably%20practicable%2C%20temporary%20accommodation,Portsmouth%20as%20can%20be%20found)

Over the same period, demand for temporary accommodation increased by approximately 70%.

Figure 9: Number of new TA placements



Month	New family placements	New non-family placements	All new placements
April 18	13	17	30
May 18	18	12	30
June 18	16	11	27
July 18	24	16	40
August 18	23	19	42
September 18	25	14	39
October 18	21	13	34
November 18	13	20	33
December 18	12	6	18
January 19	24	24	48
February 19	10	15	25
March 19	22	21	43
April 19	23	22	45
May 19	18	16	34
June 19	22	20	42

Month	New family placements	New non-family placements	All new placements
July 19	19	25	44
August 19	20	23	43
September 19	29	27	56
October 19	26	28	54
November 19	17	33	50
December 19	22	20	42
January 20	26	29	55
February 20	16	23	39
March 20	20	28	48
April 20	8	26	34
May 20	14	26	40
June 20	18	26	44
July 20	17	39	56
August 20	23	25	48
September 20	15	37	52
October 20	31	32	63
November 20	8	20	28
December 20	7	22	29
January 21	9	20	29
February 21	15	24	39
March 21	16	16	32
April 21	14	22	36
May 21	20	32	52
June 21	21	23	44
July 21	22	26	48
August 21	6	28	34
September 21	21	20	41
October 21	14	24	38
November 21	11	19	30
December 21	10	16	26
January 22	20	21	41
February 22	4	27	31
March 22	18	24	42
April 22	24	26	50
May 22	37	29	66
June 22	26	28	54
July 22	20	28	48
August 22	24	30	54
September 22	32	38	70
October 22	32	25	57
November 22	23	50	73
December 22	20	27	47
January 23	28	59	87
February 23	27	37	64
March 23	35	40	75

This has meant the use of B&B accommodation has increased, despite an improved and increased provision of temporary accommodation – including the recent procuring of significant amounts of extra accommodation. More suitable temporary accommodation options are essential to ensure people have suitable temporary accommodation when they need it, and to reduce the cost to the council.

Over the past five years the number of applications from adults with complex needs has increased significantly. Many of these people have support needs beyond the traditional scope of temporary accommodation but engaging with other services and ensuring this support is in place can be challenging.

In a small but increasing number of cases, applicants who require temporary accommodation are assessed as posing a high level of risk to others. The existing offers of temporary accommodation may not be able to manage the level of assessed risk or may have been exhausted already as a result of the applicant's behaviour. There is a lack of ideal accommodation available to accommodate the most high-risk individuals when there is a statutory duty to do so.

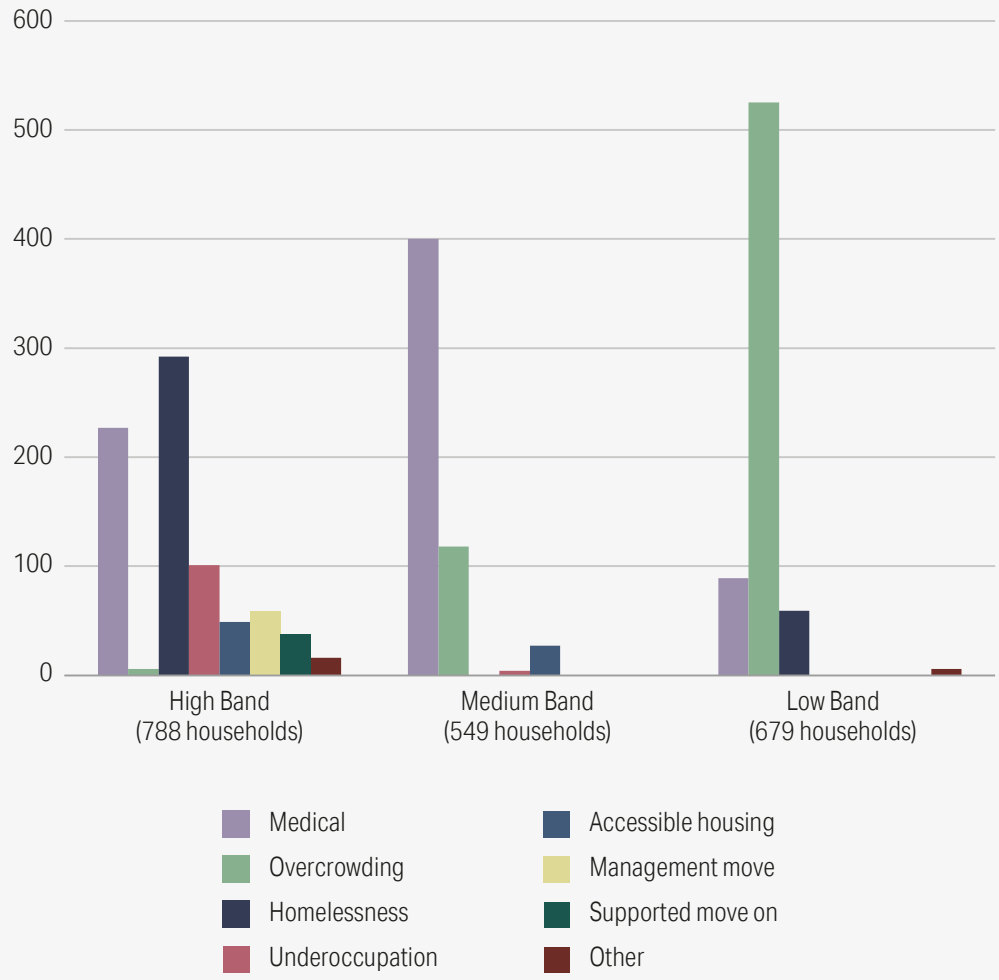
Significant improvements have been made to the provision of more suitable temporary accommodation in recent years, but supply of new accommodation has not kept pace with the increased demand on the service. The demand for temporary accommodation has increased exponentially and the council remain reliant on the use of B&B accommodation. The council continues to plan for and to grow the provision of suitable temporary accommodation and considers the expected levels and types of demand in the coming years, this work includes consideration of the varying and specific needs of homeless households, including the needs to ensure people's disability-related needs are met and that children's ability to attend school from their temporary accommodation is considered.

Portsmouth Housing Register

The Portsmouth Housing Register (PHR) is the means of accessing social housing in the city, provided by both the council and registered providers of social housing (RPs), and also council-owned accommodation in some out-of-city areas (Leigh Park, Crookhorn, Wecock Farm).

The PHR is oversubscribed with demand far outstripping supply of suitable accommodation. The size of the register varies but comprised of 2,091 households as of July 2023. Demand is predominantly made up of households who live in accommodation that does not meet their needs, with a minority of the list consisting of households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

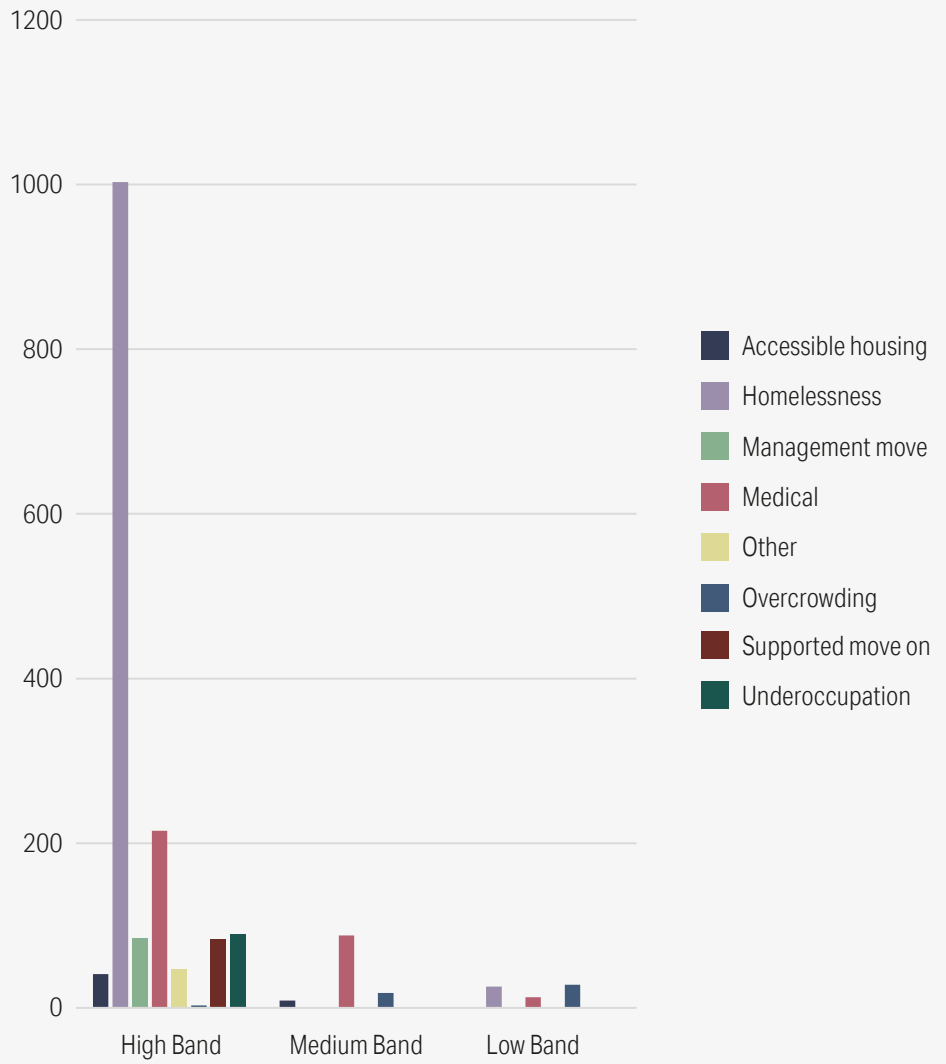
Figure 10: Make up of Portsmouth housing register



Count of Id	Column Labels								
Row Labels	**Medical**	**Over crowding**	**Homelessness**	**Under occupation**	**Accessible Housing**	**Management Move**	**Supported Move On**	**Other**	**Grand total**
High Band (788 Households)	227	6	292	101	49	59	38	16	788
Medium Band (549 Households)	400	118	-	4	27	-	-	-	549
Low Band (679 Households)	89	525	59	-	-	-	-	6	679
Grand Total	**716**	**649**	**351**	**105**	**76**	**59**	**38**	**22**	**2016**

Although homeless-related households only makeup a relatively small proportion of the PHR, they are allocated a majority of the social housing available in the city. A 12-month snapshot illustrates who the available properties are allocated to.

Figure 11: Properties allocated by type of need



Count of Id	Column Labels								
Row Labels	Accessible Housing	Homelessness	Management Move	Medical	Other	Overcrowding	Supported Move On	Under occupation	Grand total
High Band	41	1003	85	215	47	3	83	90	1567
Medium Band	9	-	-	88	-	18	-	-	115
Low Band	-	26	-	13	-	28	-	-	67
Grand Total	**50**	**1029**	**85**	**316**	**47**	**49**	**83**	**90**	**1749**

This has meant that the PHR has ceased to effectively function as a waiting list for all but those with an urgent need to move. The high band is so oversubscribed, properties are only rarely offered to anyone with a low or medium level of priority.

There are 582 households on the waiting list assessed as having a significant need to move (e.g. because their family have two bedrooms fewer than what they need, or because their accommodation is having a significant impact on health, seriously affecting functional abilities and activities of daily living). Even those assessed as having an urgent need to move wait almost twice as long on average as they did five years ago.

The PHR is relied on so often to satisfy the council's statutory duties where a main duty is or will soon be owed for several reasons.

- Because homelessness is not prevented often enough, meaning alternative accommodation is instead needed. More prevention is needed.
- Alternative accommodation in the private rent sector is often too expensive or otherwise out of reach (for example because of guarantor requirements). Better access to privately rented accommodation is needed.
- The council's allocations policy awards a high level of priority to applicants who are or will soon be owed the main housing duty, regardless of the suitability/tenure of their temporary accommodation. A review of the allocations policy is required.

A full review of the council 's allocations policy could consider how homelessness interacts with and has an impact on the PHR.

- The level of priority that should be awarded in different types of homelessness and threatened with homelessness situations, for example differentiating between a household living in unsuitable temporary accommodation from one that in suitable, temporary accommodation with no risk of losing it.
- How certain groups of applicants should be treated by the policy (for example those requiring accessible or sheltered accommodation).
- What level of choice could and should be awarded to homeless households (for example in relation to the area in which they live and/or whether they can take the pets with them), and how this might impact on waiting times.
- Whether social housing should be prioritised for those applicants who would most benefit from the accompanying support (for example those leaving care or with known tenancy-related support needs).

The private rent sector

The PHR cannot meet all existing demand from those in unsuitable housing, those who are homeless and those who are threatened with homelessness. Other types of housing tenure must be utilised in order to help people into the accommodation they need, including accommodation in the private rent sector (PRS).

Relatively few homelessness applications come to an end as a result of the applicant accessing PRS accommodation (with or without the council's assistance). There are many barriers to people accessing PRS accommodation in the city.

- Affordability: the maximum amount benefits agencies will pay towards housing costs (the Local Housing Allowance – LHA) is set by central government and has been frozen since April 2020. In the meantime, PRS rents in Portsmouth have risen significantly, meaning most PRS properties are unaffordable for anyone relying on help with their housing costs, as well as many other people who do not rely on benefits. The discrepancy between the local LHA rate and the average rents in Portsmouth are greater than they have ever been by some distance.

  Significant increases in energy bills and other expenses in recent months has and will only have an even greater impact on the problem of PRS properties being unaffordable for many households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

	LHA rate	Median rent	Typical shortfall
Shared accommodation	£342	£550	£208
1 bedroom property	£583	£700	£117
2 bedroom property	£723	£895	£172
3 bedroom property	£912	£1,100	£188
4 bedroom property	£1,197	£1,600	£403

- Guarantors: landlords and letting agents often require the commitment of a guarantor (who earns a salary of a certain level) before agreeing to let properties; many of those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness do not have access to a guarantor. Consideration needs to be given to what would make such prospective tenants more attractive to local landlords and letting agents and to consider if the issue of affordability is what sits behind this request for guarantee of payment for the landlord.
- Preference: people often prefer the idea of social housing to PRS accommodation, either because of the more attractive tenancy terms, the greater security of tenure offered, or because of previous experiences of the PRS. The oversubscription of social housing means it might need to be prioritised differently, requiring more people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness to be offered PRS accommodation instead.

HNAS has a dedicated PRS team to improve access to the PRS by sourcing PRS properties from private landlords, helping homeless households with the financial top-ups needed to afford the rent, and to support the tenant and landlord on an ongoing basis to sustain that tenancy. The team is currently separate from the (Advice and Assistance) team that works with people to help prevent them from becoming homeless, with different approaches taken to help person into a PRS property depending on who found the property. Some properties are reportedly missed out on by HNAS because of delays.

Providing financial assistance with rent top-ups to make a tenancy affordable for a homeless household has been successful in preventing or relieving some threats of homelessness. 90 households were accommodated by this dedicated team across the financial year 2022 to 2023. This represents around 4% of all homeless applications taken across the same period.

The majority (52) of the households given such assistance were previously accommodated in some form temporary accommodation, thus crucially reducing the strain in those areas. The approach does have some significant limitations though.

- The number of households being successfully matched to a PRS property is relatively low compared to the 2,149 homeless applications made across 2022, and needs to be greatly increased in order to have a significant impact on the council reliance on temporary accommodation and/or the functioning of the PHR.
- The cost of each intervention is relatively expensive: the average initial financial award for each new tenancy created was £1,103. In some cases, this figure will grow further when the council helps with the financial costs associated with renewing the tenancy at the end of the fixed term. The intention is often that the household's financial circumstances will change during the fixed term to make the rent affordable and enable them to live self-sufficiently, but the personal circumstances and wider financial landscape means that is often not possible.
- By helping households to meet increasing rents in the city, the council could potentially contribute to the ongoing inflation in average rents, rather than encouraging landlords and letting agents to let properties at a more affordable rent.
- By the council providing time-limited financial awards to help people afford their rent, some households' affordability problems are potentially being stored up for a later date (unless their financial circumstances change over the course of the tenancy).

Other options for helping households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness into PRS accommodation on a larger and more cost-effective scale are yet to be fully explored, for example incentivising landlords and letting agents to let properties at a lower rent or offering some level of guarantee in case of unpaid rent.

Portsmouth City Council also has a Private Rental Sector Strategy[20] for Portsmouth 2021 – 2026 . The strategy includes sections related to those for whom the private rented sector does not work and also looks to quantify what a well-functioning PRS would look like.

20 https://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Private-Rental-Sector-strategy-2021-2026.pdf

Supported housing services commissioned by HNAS

The Commissioned Services team within HNAS is responsible for commissioning and overseeing the operation of a range of supported housing for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, who require extra help to sustain their accommodation and/or lead safer and healthier lives.

The commissioned services comprise of three primary supported pathways:

- **Core Homeless Service for single adults aged 18 to 65**
  (Two Saints are commissioned to operate this service)
- **Young Persons' Supported Living Service for young people aged 16 to 25**
  (Two Saints are commissioned to operate this service)
- **Family Supported Housing Pathway for vulnerable families**
  (The Salvation Army are commissioned to operate this service)

Supported housing offers life-skills and tenancy management support, which can help develop a person's ability to manage their accommodation and as a result reduce the risk of homelessness in the future. However, the range of presenting needs that service users may require support with can be varied and complex, and often extends beyond housing-related support.

For instance, service users within the Core Homeless Service may frequently require support around significant mental health conditions or problematic substance use; these can provide additional challenges which impact on the overall likelihood of successful move on from that pathway.

Depending on the stage of a homeless application, supported accommodation can qualify as either temporary accommodation, or as longer-term accommodation capable of ending the council's prevention or relief duty.

HNAS also commissions the rough sleeper pathway, where support is provided along with temporary shelter to rough sleepers, as detailed in Chapter 6.

There are several areas where potential improvements could be explored.

- There is not enough supported accommodation. Vulnerable people who need extra support to sustain their tenancy often wait in unsuitable accommodation (e.g. in unsuitable temporary accommodation) whilst they wait for a vacancy to become available. Waiting lists for accommodation vary across the various projects, but a snapshot sample showed the following:
  - Some services have no or very small waiting lists at present; the young persons' pathway in general has current typical waiting times of between no wait time to two months.
  - Some specific services within the pathways have too few rooms when compared with the volume of demand, resulting in consistently high waiting times. Some services have current typical waiting times of 7, 8 or 12 months for people who have been assessed as needing extra support to manage their accommodation.

- Although all three services are often referred to as pathways, only the family service consistently achieves effective move-on from supported housing into permanent accommodation, where the outcome of permanent, settled accommodation is the target of focus at the start of a family's journey. Factors behind this include the often-increased support needs of those in some of the other services and reduced rates of eviction from the pathway – partly due to the additional statutory support often available to support prevention of that eviction via Children's Services. The predominant factor, though, is the increased access to social housing afforded to those in the Family pathway compared to the other two pathways at a time when accessing the private rent sector is challenging across the board.
- With limited access to the PHR and the aforementioned difficulties in accessing the PRS, the other services have limited move-on accommodation to offer, and as a result the 'pathways' can become blocked, with not enough vacancies becoming available as a result.
- Service users in supported housing sometimes face difficult choices around employment since the cost of supported living can be high and the assistance from welfare benefits may significantly reduce once a person is in receipt of wages. This can result either in the accrual of rent arrears, or it may disincentivise the person from continuing to work.
- Supported housing services operate largely in isolation from each other, functioning as silos. There appear to be various reasons for this including differences in commissioning approach for specific services, the respective contractor for each service and its support delivery model, variations in contract terms and conditions, and the varying funding sources for different contracts, some of which come with legal conditions on spending. The model could instead be more individual-focussed and organised according to achieving the right outcome for those individuals.
- There has been no recent review of the citywide supported housing provision to ensure existing accommodation is suitable, nor that it is the right setting for the type of supported setting required. Examples raised in survey and consultation responses include whether some of the hostel settings that have been used by the council over many years are suitable.
- There some specific gaps in provision evidenced through demand data/ impacts on other areas of service, such as:
    - A supported housing offer suitable for adult couples without children
    - Very limited access to supported housing for vulnerable families who are intentionally homeless according to the law, but nevertheless require accommodation and support to help them manage it
    - A housing option for young people with high support needs but who have been assessed as posing too high a risk to live alongside vulnerable young people in a young persons' supported housing setting

- A bespoke accommodation solution for people with high levels of support needs and/or who are assessed as posing a high risk to others
- A wider and more flexible range of options to support people in more independent and/or self-contained housing settings. Not everyone who needs housing-related support is able to, or wants to live in a more traditional supported accommodation setting such as hostel/shared living

Other supported housing services, including those commissioned by other parts of the council

Substance misuse recovery housing

The recovery housing pathway is commissioned by Public Health (on behalf of Adult Social Care) to help those with substance misuse issues. The pathway includes around 53 units of accommodation, ranging from high support for those still using, to lower-level support abstinent housing.

Some of the same concerns around the physical suitability of accommodation, and the ability to have a suitable offer for people with the most complex problems exist here as they do within the HNAS-commissioned accommodation.

There is a possible gap in provision to allow people to maintain their accommodation whilst actively managing their dependency (for example a controlled drinking project), which could result in fewer people losing their accommodation.

Recent safeguarding adult reviews in the city have highlighted the need for better city-wide coordination between commissioners of accommodation settings, and use of the resources available in order to meet the challenges of housing complex individuals safely and successfully. Consideration could be given to whether this should be via establishing closer joint-working practices or via the joint commissioning of homeless services.

Further abstinent based, low-level supported housing service is provided in the City by ANA, designed for people who are in early recovery from addiction who have recently completed treatment.

Mental health supported accommodation

The mental health supported housing pathway consists of 60 units of accommodation for those who need supported housing and who are care-coordinated under the integrated adult mental health service. The pathway consists of a mixture of rooms in shared houses and self-contained flats, with floating support provided by Two Saints.

People who are ready to move on from the supported housing pathway can gain the confidence and tenancy management skills required via a sublet process whereby the council lets a property to Two Saints who in turn temporarily let the

property to the person, whilst providing the required support. The person would usually go on to become a secure tenant of the council property.

Learning disability supported accommodation

The learning disability supported housing service performs a different function to most other supported housing in that it is not usually intended as a pathway or a step towards other accommodation, but rather is permanent accommodation provided alongside tailored support for the person with a learning disability.

The learning disability supported housing portfolio consists of 178 tenancies and licences across 65 properties. It includes a range of flats and shared houses across the city for single people and couples, most of whom are working with the learning disability team.

There is strong joint working within the service, with an excellent track record in helping people maintain their accommodation in a tailored and responsive way, avoiding any threat of homelessness.

Other supported accommodation

There is other provision of supported housing offered in the city with limited or no ties to the council. Such accommodation varies in the level of support that is offered. Providers include charitable organisations such as Hope Into Action.

Specific accommodation for other groups of applicants

People at risk of domestic abuse

The 21 refuge units of accommodation commissioned by the council (across two projects) were referenced in Chapter 4.

Women's refuges often refuse to accept women with higher support needs, giving them fewer options of safe and supported accommodation. The council commissions a Respite Rooms service within a hostel location for women at risk of domestic abuse and who have complex support needs to be met. There is not enough of this accommodation aimed at providing safe refuge for women with high support needs. The service currently comprises four units of accommodation; there is typically a waiting list for the accommodation, with waits of several months not being unusual.

The current location of the service has proven to be a barrier for some women. Any consideration of the suitability of supported accommodation in the city should also include this service.

The council's forthcoming Safer Accommodation Strategy should address the level and types of safe accommodation needed for those at risk of domestic abuse.

Care-experienced young people

A recent OFSTED report[21] of the council's offer to care-experienced young people concluded that most do live in suitable accommodation, which is safe and meets their needs, but that a small number live in unsuitable accommodation.

There is a shortage of appropriate accommodation available for young people who are about to leave or have recently left care. Consideration should be given to whether a review of the accommodation offer for care-experienced young people is required, asking such questions as:

- What is the most appropriate accommodation offer for most care-experienced young people?
- Is the currently limited access to social housing sufficient given the current and future numbers of care-experienced young people?
- How can any intentionally homeless decisions be averted for this group of applicants?

People with an offending history

The council commissions a small, supported accommodation scheme for ex-offenders comprising 10 units of accommodation: Safer Communities. The scheme is ringfenced to clients of Portsmouth Probation, focussing on the housing and resettlement needs of those posing high risks to the public for whom a hostel environment is not suitable.

Former service personnel

There are several providers of veteran-specific housing within the local area. Providers include:

- Agamemnon Housing Association (warden assisted independent living for people over 60 years of age, giving priority to those who have served in the Armed Forces and their surviving partners or relatives).
- Alabaré (temporary accommodation to British Armed Forces Veterans who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless).
- CESSA Housing Association (sheltered housing to veterans, their spouses, partners, widows/widowers, parents and children who are aged 60 or over).
- Haig Housing Trust (rental properties for ex-Service people).

21 Inspection of Portsmouth City Council local authority children's services May 2023: https://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/2023/07/03/portsmouths-childrens-services-rated-good-by-ofsted/

Maximising existing property/land in the city

Empty properties

The council is due to publish a new empty homes strategy in 2024. The strategy should identify how the council can better understand the extent of any empty properties in Portsmouth and how they could be better used to meet the housing needs of residents.

Local planning

The council's housing needs, housing enablement and planning teams work closely to ensure the need for affordable accommodation is served, to the extent that senior officers from Housing Needs Advice and Support sit on the Local Plan Board. This is an area of strong and improved partnership working for the council.

Use of the wider public estate

The city could better understand opportunities to utilise areas of the 'public estate' to meet the housing needs of residents.

An example of this type of use would be the ARAP (Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy) project where the council has leased Ministry of Defence service family accommodation to support the relocation of families from Afghanistan. This work is linked through our co-ordinator to the Asylum and Immigration work of the council.

Such opportunities could include working with the faith community. For example, a recent report by the Church of England[22] explained how it is changing the way it uses its resources to meet housing need, including how it plans to work with local authorities to help meet the housing needs of local residents by making use of the land available to it.

22 Coming Home, Tackling the Housing Crisis Together, The Commission of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York on Housing, Church and Community (2023)(https://www.churchofengland.org/about/archbishops-commissions/housing-church-and-community/about-coming-home#:~:text=%27Coming%20Home%27%20is%20a%20report,and%20homes%2C%20not%20just%20houses)

8. Provision of housing-related support

Whatever type of accommodation a person is in, they should have access to the support they need to be able to sustain that accommodation. The support provided needs to be the right support.

Current provision of housing support

Much of the existing provision of support available to help people sustain their accommodation is detailed in Chapter 5, Chapter 6 and Chapter 7, including the various supported housing options which provide support along with housing. An example of support being commissioned by the council and provided by other organisations in an attempt to provide the right support can be found in the approach taken with temporary accommodation.

Supported temporary accommodation

The necessity for temporary accommodation in some cases and the often long waiting lists for supported housing can result in vulnerable people who need supported housing waiting in unsupported temporary accommodation (such as hotels and B&Bs) whilst waiting for accommodation to become available. Unsurprisingly, these arrangements often prove difficult to sustain. The council has commissioned supported temporary accommodation services to provide a more supported temporary solution, including:

- Specific temporary accommodation blocks where Two Saints provide support to adults on site.
- The Temporary Accommodation Service where the Roberts Centre provide support to families in temporary accommodation.

Supported temporary accommodation works well in conjunction with the ISHA role (see below). Support can be delivered when it is needed and not after time spent in unsupported accommodation waiting for it to become available (and where accommodation arrangements are more likely to breakdown). The supported temporary accommodation model has reduced the number of evictions from temporary accommodation and, in some instances, enabled the applicant to move on in to social or private sector housing (as opposed to further supported housing). Wherever a person's temporary accommodation is, they should have the right support made available to them.

Independent Supported Housing Assessors (ISHAs)

HNAS employs a team of ISHAs, each linked to one of the supported housing pathways or to temporary accommodation. ISHAs play an important role in assessing a person's support needs and identifying the most appropriate housing and support for them, as well as supporting the commissioned providers of support in their day-to-day work with people who use their services.

The ISHA helps to ensure effective partnership working between the council and support providers and other partner agencies. This often requires contribution to wider multi-agency frameworks (for example, Multi Agency Risk Management meetings for adults and child protection planning meetings for children and families).

Ensuring people are provided with the right support when they need it

There are several areas where potential improvements could be explored.

- The support a household who is homeless or threatened with homelessness is provided with is often determined by the type of accommodation they are in. Different accommodation options in the city come with a set type and level of support. This means support options are not always tailored to the needs of the individual, but instead people are offered the best of the available options. Any review of supported housing provision in the city should include a review of the type and way support is provided, and whether the provision of support could or should be detached from the type of accommodation a person is in.
- Evictions from supported housing account for too much homelessness in Portsmouth. Evictions notices are most commonly served in response to rent arrears or other breaches of licence conditions such as engaging in anti-social behaviour. People find themselves in supported housing because they need extra help with managing such things. All support should be offered, and all reasonable alternatives considered before such action is considered.
- There is no specific support or accommodation option for people with housing-related support needs that are linked to their autism or neurodivergence. Universal support services are of course available to such people who find themselves homeless or threatened with homelessness, but there is a lack of understanding of whether there is a gap in specialist provision.
- HNAS specialises in assessing what accommodation a person needs and tries to help them to obtain such accommodation. HNAS also assesses the support a person needs in order to sustain or access accommodation (and thus cease to be homeless or threatened with homelessness) but is reliant on other partners to treat the assessment and provision of support for those at risk of homelessness as a high priority. An increasing number of people live complex lives with multiple support needs, often making traditional engagement with services more challenging.

Although access to a Care Act Assessment is a statutory right, the reality of waiting times combined with the difficulty of engaging with some people often makes obtaining one when needed difficult. A flexible approach to assessment of need and provision of support from Adult Social Care and Adult Mental Health Services is vital to ensure the needs of the most vulnerable homeless people are met. Good working relationships between senior managers in HNAS and ASC ensure focus is kept on the continual improvement of services within these highly pressured systems.

9. Communication and partnership working

Consultation with people who have experienced homelessness and with partner agencies, combined with learning from analysing the progress and outcomes of individual homeless applications has demonstrated the need for the following.

1. Improved communication between HNAS and people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.
2. Consolidation and further development of the strong partnership working that already goes on in the city, with an increased focus on the prevention of homelessness.

Communication with people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness

Advice

The advice people need when they are homeless or threatened with homelessness varies but can include:

- Advice regarding their rights to remain in their property or otherwise
- The steps they can take to retain their accommodation or find alternative accommodation
- Advice regarding the eviction process
- An understanding of what help they are entitled to
- Advice regarding the housing options available to them

People who had made an application to HNAS were typically not aware of their statutory rights nor of the Council's statutory obligations towards them. They were not usually aware of what they were entitled to, often leading them to have relatively low expectations of what help they could expect when homeless, but sometimes also have unrealistic expectations of the housing options available to them.

When asked about the help they had received from the council or from elsewhere, people very rarely mentioned any advice they were given. Even where analysis of cases showed that some specific advice had been given, it was often either not retained or fully appreciated when asked about it several weeks or months later, or not valued by them if it was unwelcome advice. People often approach the council for help with their homelessness at a time of crisis and are often facing homelessness for the first time. It is unsurprising that any of the (often abundant) information and advice they receive verbally during their initial interaction with HNAS is not retained with clarity at a later date.

Not feeling informed

People shared with us various examples of being frustrated with having to wait to receive the help or information they needed. Examples included:

- Waiting to be informed as to the status of their homeless application
- Waiting for the possession process to run its course
- Waiting until crisis point until certain accommodation becomes available
- Not having advance notice of where their temporary accommodation would be
- Not being told in advance about a change in caseworker

There are often long periods of time after a person's initial contact with HNAS where there is little or no proactive contact from HNAS, for example where we have agreed what steps each party needs to take and HNAS have already taken their steps (for example ensuring the person is on the appropriate waiting list for housing with the right level of priority). The quality and frequency of communication between HNAS and those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness needs to improve.

Frequent, proactive contact would allow HNAS to ensure they have an up to date understanding of the person's circumstances (and have therefore given up to date advice and assistance), would give the opportunity to keep the person updated with the current status and next steps of their application, and allow collaborative work to help prevent or relieve the person's homelessness. The level of demand the Advice and Assessment team deals with means this could only be achieved to a good standard by reducing the caseloads of individual officers.

Collaboration and personalisation of housing plans

The council should agree with every eligible homeless or threatened with homelessness household a personalised housing plan (PHP). The plan should be based on an assessment of the household's individual circumstances and conclude what reasonable steps they and the council should respectively take.

PHPs (Personalised Housing Plan) can be very tailored to a household's specific circumstances and do sometimes lead to the successful prevention of homelessness. Often, though, they are restricted by limited opportunities to prevent homelessness and by the limited housing options available to any given household – resulting in an absence of true collaboration and personalisation.

Applications withdrawn or ended because contact has been lost

A quarter of homeless applications received in 2022 were either withdrawn before an outcome was reached or were ended because contact was lost with the applicant. This was a specifically prominent phenomenon amongst single people and applicants without children (29% of all applications compared to just 12% of applications containing children).

This means many applications are ended without an awareness of the person's current housing circumstances. Some cases ended for this reason are done so because the applicant explicitly withdraws their application (for example, because they have resolved their own housing situation), but many more are ended because HNAS have been unsuccessful in attempts to contact the person. Practice varies as to how many methods of contact have been attempted on how many occasions before an application is ended. Greater consistency of practice would help to ensure every reasonable attempt has been made to contact someone before ending the application.

This issue is very closely connected to the findings under 'Not feeling informed', above. Reduced caseloads would allow for more frequent and proactive contact, making loss of contact less likely. Further, applications are ended for this reason more often amongst applications from single people without children. Broadly speaking, these people are less likely to be in priority need than families, are therefore less likely to be in temporary accommodation, possibly living more transiently and making maintaining contact more difficult. This only makes regular contact and established procedures more important to mitigate the risk of losing contact with people.

Partnership working

Housing is a priority within the council's Health and Wellbeing Strategy, including a focus on homelessness. At a recent development session of the Health and Wellbeing Board, members were invited to attend the Partnership Group and agreed to do so.

The council cannot tackle homelessness in the city alone though, neither for individual cases of homelessness nor in a strategic sense. A partnership approach is needed, with commitment from other statutory and non-statutory bodies to work together to achieve the aims of the future strategy.

Strategic partnership

The merging of the existing (statutory) homelessness and (non-statutory) rough sleeping strategies into a single document provides an opportunity to build on the open and effective collaboration between partners (internal, external, elected members) that has been so successful in delivering on the rough sleeping initiative. The Portsmouth City Rough Sleeping and Homelessness Partnership Group has agreed its focus should expand to include the prevention of all types of homelessness.

The Partnership Group is independently chaired and will provide scrutiny, support and guidance for the implementation of the forthcoming strategy, with partners committed to providing resources to support its aims. The Partnership Group has contributed to every stage of this review, with membership including senior representation from the following:

- Elected members of Portsmouth City Council
- Housing Needs Advice and Support (the council)
- Children Services and Education (the council)
- Adult Social Care (the council)
- Public Health (the council)
- Community Safety (the council)
- Safeguarding, Mental Health and Learning Disabilities (the council)
- Society of St James
- Two Saints
- Salvation Army
- Hampshire and Isle of Wight Integrated Care Board
- Hampshire Constabulary
- Probation services
- University of Portsmouth

It is important the Partnership Group and other partners are kept informed as to the progress of implementation by sharing with them data and measures that relate to and measure progress against the strategic aims. Further, it is important that membership of the Partnership Group expands to include organisations who have a role in preventing homelessness.

Operational commitment from partners

Homelessness is very often about much more than accommodation. The barrier to a person accessing or sustaining their accommodation is often related to a need for help with another part of their life, and the need is often urgent, for example:

- Support with their mental health – for example to help them better manage in their accommodation or sometimes to help alleviate risks to themselves or others if living in an unsupported environment whilst unwell
- An assessment of their care needs – for example to ensure any accommodation offered meets their needs and that any required support can be provided at the point it is needed
- Support with their finances – for example, to make budgeting decisions to make their rent affordable
- Support with substance misuse – for example to help them meet their tenancy or licence obligations and thus sustain their tenancies

The Partnership Group shares a commitment to working collaboratively and flexibly where needed in order to achieve the aims of the strategy, for example by providing support at short notice and sometimes outside usual processes to ensure the immediate need so safeguard the wellbeing of a person who is homeless or threatened with homelessness.

The duty to refer

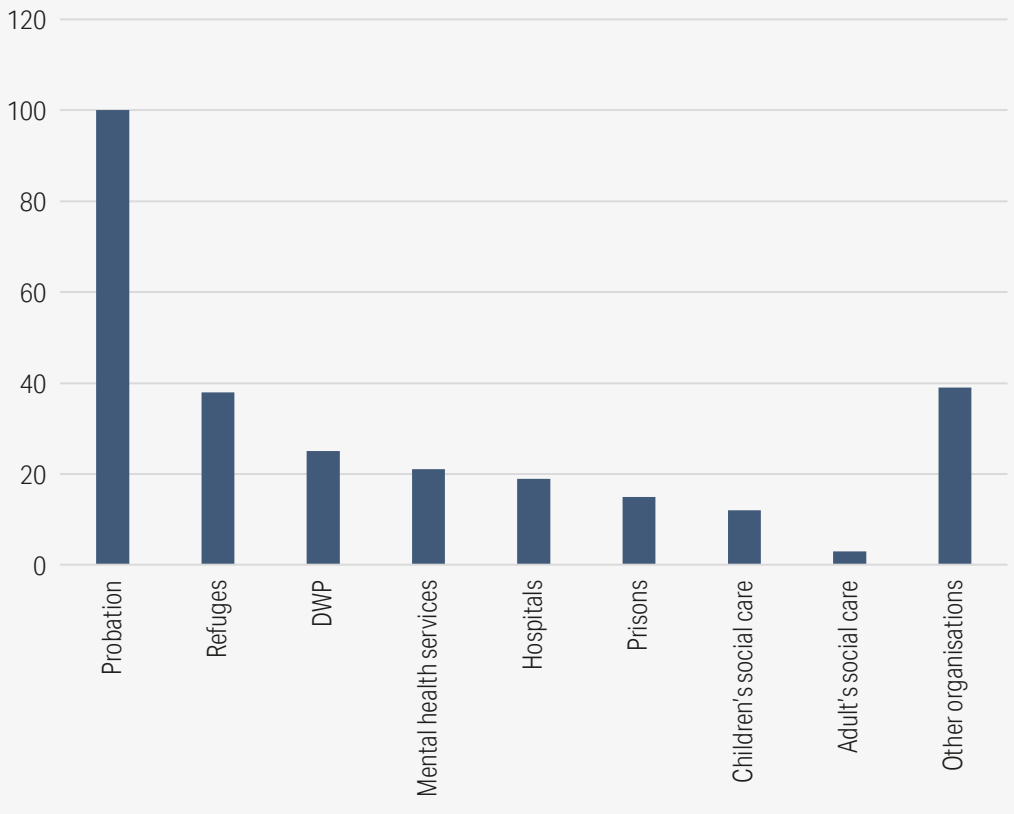
Some public bodies have a statutory duty[23] to notify a housing authority of anyone they consider may be homeless or threatened with homelessness. The bodies subject to the duty are as follows:

- Prisons, youth offender institutions and secure colleges and training centres
- Probation Services and youth offending teams
- Jobcentre Plus (DWP)
- Social service authorities
- Emergency departments
- Urgent treatment centres
- Hospitals

The duty to refer is closely connected to the importance of knowing about a threat of homelessness at the earliest opportunity to increase the opportunity of successful prevention.

The duty to refer notifications made to the council that led to a homeless application in 2022 came from the following bodies.

Figure 12: Duty to refer notifications



23 Housing Act 1996, s.213B

Referred by	Number of referrals
Probation	100
Refuges	38
DWP	25
Mental Health Services	21
Hospitals	19
Prisons	15
Children's Social care	12
Adult's Social Care	3
Other Organisations	39

The 37% of the 272 notifications coming from Probation services suggests a serious commitment to alerting the council to anyone they believe to be homeless or threatened with homelessness. The existing homeless navigator co-located between the council and probation who focused on individuals released from prison or on probation who face homelessness acts as an important link between the two agencies.

With only three notifications made by Adult's Social Care and 12 by Children's Social Care, suggests a need to look to understand the referral processes between those departments and HNAS.

Across the board, partners should be encouraged to notify HNAS of households who are threatened with homelessness as well as those who are already homeless. Only 48 of the 272 went on to be assessed as being threatened with homelessness, with 207 being assessed as already being homeless. Stronger partnership working between HNAS and those partners most likely to be aware of early threats of homelessness is required.

10. Consultation on review and draft strategy

The draft review strategy document was shaped by many conversations with people who have experienced homelessness, as well those agencies who work with people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness (see Chapter 3). The final stage of consultation was to share the document publicly and invite people's views.

Objectives and methodology

The objectives of the final stage of consultation were to:

- Assess levels of agreement with the five draft strategic aims.
- Assess levels of agreement with the recommended areas of focus beneath each aim.
- Understand disagreement with any of the aims or areas of focus.
- Explore any elements considered missing from the draft strategy.

People were offered the options of completing an online survey or providing feedback directly to named officers. The survey received 76 responses online, and a further five responses were provided directly to named officers.

Summary of findings

Analysis of the data collected from the consultation survey included the following conclusions:

- 16% of respondents have either experienced or been threatened with homelessness, 37% had never experienced homelessness, whilst 47% were responding on behalf of a partner organisation.
- The vast majority of respondents agreed with the five proposed strategic aims (95%) and each of the suggested areas of focus laid out beneath each one (all over 90%). Aim 3 ('provide the right housing to relieve homelessness') is the only overall aim any respondents disagreed with.
- Respondents highlighted two areas not covered in the strategic aims: overcrowding for council tenants and issues relating to ways of working within the current tendering system. How overcrowded tenants should be treated for the purpose of accessing social housing would be addressed as part of the forthcoming review of the allocations policy, and concerns around tendering for contracts will be shared with commissioners.

- Just one respondent disagrees with the areas of focus for Aim 1 (prevent homelessness). The concern within this response was centred on a view that only by reducing private rent levels and eliminating unfair evictions could homelessness be prevented. Other comments regarding Aim 1 suggest working with partner agencies, focusing on specific groups, reviewing accommodation provision, and looking at the need for more resources or staff to deliver this aim. The proposed prevention hub should offer the opportunity to work closely with other agencies, the strategy already includes a proposal to target certain causes of homelessness and certain groups of applicants, and the strategy also already identifies the need for more accommodation and a review of resources required to respond to demand.
- No respondents disagree with the areas of focus for Aim 2 (end rough sleeping). Further comments include ensuring that accommodation is needs-specific, encouraging the council to be more proactive in this area, and reviewing accommodation provision. This should all be included as part of the review of the suitability of the current pathway: both the accommodation settings and the support offered.
- Just 2% of respondents disagree with the areas of focus for Aim 3 (provide the right housing to relieve homelessness), feeling that increasing the supply of good quality, affordable accommodation will negatively impact surrounding areas, but further comments on this aim also note that housing must be assessed and offered on a case-by-case basis and be needs-specific, which should be achieved by the strategy's aim to provide people with meaningful assessments and tailored housing plans. Other comments suggested the council should be more involved in private sector renting – which the strategy aims to achieve and thus increase the number of households successfully assisted into privately rented accommodation.
- 6% of respondents disagree with the areas of focus for Aim 4 (provide the right support), largely due to concerns about the council's ability to effectively reduce the number of evictions whilst reviewing safeguarding policies, feeling that the two areas of focus may be contradictory. One respondent also suggests that the council should be working with landlords to achieve this aim. Other comments largely centre around ensuring there is a holistic approach to provide suitable housing, concerns about resources to provide specialist assessments, and ensuring frontline staff are sufficiently trained in the intersectional impacts of mental health and homelessness. These concerns should all be considered when devising and/or reviewing the proposed pre-eviction pledge for providers of supported housing to ensure all alternatives have been reviewed before eviction is considered a reasonable outcome.
- No respondents disagree with the areas of focus for Aim 5 (strengthen collaborative working). Other comments suggest partnership relationships with the council should be integrated and collaborative, with open forums and dialogues to approach complex situations and enable joint learning.

Resulting amendments

Responses to the consultation have helped to shape the final strategy. Changes made as a result of feedback received include the following:

- The addition of an action to use cross-organisational knowledge and data to better understand the underlying causes of the causes of homelessness, i.e. 'primary prevention'.
- The addition of an action to ensure officers dealing with homelessness applications have received training in some specific areas, including trauma-informed practice.
- Clarification added that any offer of accommodation made to a person sleeping rough should be a suitable one and based on their individual needs.
- Clarification added that collaborative working protocols may include joint-working between homeless services and health services, including hospitals and mental health services.
- Some factual errors were corrected, including the correction of average rent levels in Portsmouth and the correcting of service names where an older iteration was previously used.

11. Findings and strategy recommendations

The review has reached many conclusions as to what could be done to improve the outcomes for those who become homeless or threatened with homelessness in Portsmouth. Below is a summary of the key findings, grouped by strategic aims, with recommended areas of focus as to how best to achieve those strategic aims. The following recommendations constitute Portsmouth's Homelessness Strategy for the period 2024 to 2029.

1. Prevent homelessness

Prevent incidences of homelessness wherever possible. Relieve more homelessness where prevention is not an option.

- Increase the proportion of homeless applications made at 'prevention' stage.
- Increase rates of successful prevention for the most common causes of homelessness.
- Reduce the proportion of applications that are ended for lost contact.
- Form a multi-disciplinary prevention hub dedicated to homeless prevention.
- Reduce the caseloads of officers dealing with homelessness applications, allowing for more proactive casework.
- Ensure people receive meaningful assessments and tailored housing plans.
- Create specific workstreams for specific groups to reduce the likelihood and impact of a negative decision.

2. End rough-sleeping

Ensure rough sleeping is rare, brief, and not recurring.

- Ensure anyone who sleeps rough has an offer of suitable accommodation available to them.
- Commit to adopting a collaborative and flexible approach to supporting people with complex needs.
- Reduce the number of new people sleeping rough.
- Reduce the typical number of people sleeping rough at any one time.
- Review the suitability of the current pathway: the accommodation settings and the support offered.
- Explore accommodation options for individuals without accommodation and without recourse to public funds.
- Explore options for sustaining currently grant funded services.

3. Provide the right housing to relieve homelessness

Ensure people are provided with accommodation that meets their needs and lets them feel safe and secure.

- Increase the supply of good quality, affordable accommodation.
- Ensure temporary accommodation has suitable cooking and washing facilities.
- Undertake a review of the allocations policy for social housing, including its relationship with homelessness.
- Increase the number of households successfully assisted into privately rented accommodation.
- Undertake a citywide review of supported housing to ensure accommodation is suitable and is the right setting.
- Consider what possible gaps exist in supported housing provision and commissioning options to fill those gaps.

4. Provide the right support

Whatever accommodation a person has, ensure they can access the right support at the right time to help them sustain it.

- Reduce the number of evictions from supported housing.
- Increase the proportion of households that successfully move on from supported accommodation into an independently managed tenancy.
- Undertake a citywide review of supported housing to consider the type of support provided and whether it should be attached to an offer of accommodation.
- Improve the mental health awareness of officers dealing with homelessness applications.
- Review processes and policies relating to safeguarding and risk-management.
- Improve the support offer for people wishing to access employment whilst in supported housing, and the range of options available to them when they are ready to move on.

5. Strengthen collaborative working

Improve communication with people at risk of homelessness. Strengthen local partnerships to prevent homelessness more often.

- Ensure homelessness and its underlying causes are a system-wide responsibility for all partners.
- Widen the focus of partnerships that have focussed on rough sleeping to include a strong focus on other types of homelessness, and specifically prevention.
- Understand the relationship between homelessness and various asylum schemes.
- Give people good advice about their rights and options.
- Ensure advice is given in a format that can be referred to at a later date.

Action plan

Table of immediate priorities for 2024

No.	Action	Strategic objective	Lead agency	Target completion date
1	Create action plans to increase the rates of prevention for the five most common causes of homelessness.	SO1, SO2	HNAS	End 2024
2	Devise a protocol to ensure a consistent approach is taken when ending a homeless application for lost contact, ensuring all alternatives are considered.	SO1, SO2	HNAS	End 2024
3	Form a multi-disciplinary prevention hub to provide advice and early intervention.	SO1, SO2, SO5	Partnership group	End 2024
4	Review the number of officers who deal with homeless applications to reduce caseloads, increase the quality of service, improve prevention rates, and reduce temporary accommodation demand.	SO1, SO2, SO5	HNAS	End 2024
5	Ensure housing assessments are meaningful and personalised housing plans are collaborative and tailored to the individual.	SO1, SO2, SO5	HNAS	End 2024
6	Undertake a review of how social housing is allocated: i) a review of the allocations policy for social housing, including its relationship with homelessness and ii) a review of how internal transfers and exchanges are utilised to make the best use of available stock.	SO3	HNAS	End 2024
7	Review learning related to the rough sleeper pathway and understand whether the accommodation settings and the support offered remain appropriate. Portsmouth City Rough Sleeping and Homelessness Partnership Group to work in collaboration with other agencies to agree future commissioning arrangements.	SO2, SO3, SO4	TBD by the partnership group	End 2024

No.	Action	Strategic objective	Lead agency	Target completion date
8	Provide officers dealing with homelessness applications with dedicated training to equip them to achieve the best results for vulnerable applicants, including: • mental health awareness training • trauma-informed practice training • domestic abuse training • suicide awareness and prevention training	SO4	HNAS	End 2024
9	Adopt a new safeguarding policy for HNAS.	SO4	HNAS	End 2024
10	Monitor the level of homelessness experienced by those who experience domestic abuse and the rates at which homelessness is successfully prevented or relieved.	SO1, SO3, SO4	HNAS	End 2024
11	Monitor the level of homelessness experienced by those who have served in the armed forces and the rates at which homelessness is successfully prevented or relieved.	SO1, SO3, SO4	HNAS	End 2024
12	Campaign for changes to the current Local Housing Allowance model.	SO1, SO3	TBD by the partnership group	End 2024
13	Adopt a pre-eviction pledge for providers of supported housing to ensure all alternatives have been considered before eviction is considered a reasonable outcome.	SO1, SO2, SO4	TBD by the partnership group	End 2024

Table of other actions to, priorities to be determined by the Portsmouth Rough Sleeping and Homelessness Partnership Group

No.	Action	Strategic objective	Lead agency	Target completion date
14	Increase the supply of accommodation that is affordable for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness	SO3	TBD by the partnership group	TBD by the partnership group
15	Undertake a citywide review of supported housing to include (i) the appropriateness of accommodation and whether it is the right setting for providing support and (ii) the type of support provided and whether it should be attached to an offer of accommodation.	SO2, SO3, SO4	TBD by the partnership group	TBD by the partnership group
16	Review the evidenced housing and support needs (and commissioning options) for specific groups, e.g. • people who pose a very high risk to staff or members of the public • young people with high support needs but who pose a high a risk to other vulnerable young people in a supported housing setting • pregnant women assessed as having high support needs or as posing a high risk to others • people with high support needs who have experienced domestic abuse • people assessed as requiring a controlled drinking requirement • adult couples without children • people with neurodiversity-related housing support needs	SO3, SO4	TBD by the partnership group	TBD by the partnership group
17	Produce a temporary accommodation plan with the aim of continuing to reduce the use of nightly paid and unsuitable temporary accommodation.	SO3	TBD by the partnership group	TBD by the partnership group
18	Introduce more cost-effective incentive systems to help more people into suitable and affordable privately rented accommodation without contributing to rent inflation locally.	SO3	TBD by the partnership group	TBD by the partnership group

No.	Action	Strategic objective	Lead agency	Target completion date
19	Ensure HNAS's PRS team works closely alongside the officers who deal with homeless applications to allow for more joined up working.	SO1, SO3	TBD by the partnership group	TBD by the partnership group
20	Work with public bodies to raise awareness of the statutory duty to refer, of best practice to allow for more homeless prevention, and to reach joint working protocols where necessary, for example between homeless services and health services such as hospitals and mental health services.	SO1, SO5	TBD by the partnership group	TBD by the partnership group
21	Use cross-organisational knowledge and data to better understand (and act upon) the causes of the causes of homelessness, i.e. 'primary prevention'.	SO1	TBD by the partnership group	TBD by the partnership group
22	Understand the links between homelessness and criminal and/or sexual exploitation in the city.	SO4	TBD by the partnership group	TBD by the partnership group
23	Work with partners to adopt a collaborative and flexible approach to supporting people with complex needs.	SO1, SO2, SO5	TBD by the partnership group	TBD by the partnership group
24	Target specific groups to reduce the likelihood and impact of a negative decisions (such as no priority need or intentional homelessness), e.g. families with children, young people leaving care, those leaving Home Office accommodation.	SO1, SO2	TBD by the partnership group	TBD by the partnership group
25	Constitute a task and finish group to explore accommodation options for individuals without accommodation and without recourse to public funds.	SO2	TBD by the partnership group	TBD by the partnership group
26	Review the relationship between homelessness and the various asylum schemes in the city.	SO5	TBD by the partnership group	TBD by the partnership group
27	Consider the costs and benefits of alternative methods for providing advice that can be referred to at a later date (e.g. bespoke confirmation of advice letters, general advice sheets, online portals).	SO5	TBD by the partnership group	TBD by the partnership group

Measures of success

The action plan includes target dates for achieving some specific milestones and outcomes. Other outcomes are more reliably measured over a period of time. The following is a suite of measures, against which the adherence to the strategic aims will be assessed.

Aim: prevent homelessness	Measure
Increase the proportion of homeless applications made at 'prevention' stage.	Percentage of applications made at 'prevention' stage.
Increase rates of successful prevention for the most common causes of homelessness.	Number of interventions that successfully prevented homelessness.
Reduce the proportion of applications that are ended for lost contact.	Percentage of applications ended for recorded reason of 'lost contact' or 'application withdrawn'.
Reduce the caseloads of officers dealing with homelessness applications, allowing for more proactive casework.	Are caseloads at a manageable level of around 35 cases per officer or below?
Ensure people receive meaningful assessments and tailored, collaborative housing plans.	A quality audit framework reviews assessments and personalised housing plans to be meaningful and tailored to the individual.
Create specific workstreams for specific groups to reduce the likelihood and impact of a negative decision.	Number of non-priority and intentional homeless decisions made in respect of care-leavers, people leaving NASS accommodation, families with children.

Aim: end rough-sleeping	Measure
Reduce the number of new rough sleepers (better prevention).	Number of new rough sleepers over time.
Reduce the typical number of rough sleepers (better relief).	Snapshot of number of rough sleepers.
Ensure anyone sleeping rough has an offer of accommodation.	How many current rough sleepers do not have an offer of accommodation? What are the reasons?

Aim: provide the right housing to relieve homelessness	Measure
Reduce the proportion of temporary accommodation that lacks adequate cooking and washing facilities.	Proportion of temporary accommodation being used that is B&B/hotel/otherwise unsuitable.
Increase the number of households at risk of homelessness who are assisted into privately rented accommodation.	Number of households assisted into PRS accommodation.

Aim: provide the right support	Measure
Reduce the number of evictions from supported housing.	Number of evictions from supported housing.
Increase the proportion of households that successfully move on from supported accommodation into an independently managed tenancy.	Proportion of supported housing placements that end due to a move-on into independently managed tenancy.

Aim: strengthen collaborative working	Measure
Increase the proportion of duty to refer notifications that are received at the 'prevention' stage.	Proportion of duty to refer notifications made at prevention stage.

Portsmouth
CITY COUNCIL

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