# Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2025-2030



## October 2026 Review

Stevenage
BOROUGH COUNCIL

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# Foreword

**The Council is pleased to update Stevenage Borough Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2025-2030.**

Homelessness occurs for a variety of reasons and can affect any household. The journey is not always simple and can cause great upset to families and individuals, which is why Stevenage Borough Council is committed to eradicating homelessness and ensuring that everyone who finds themselves in this situation can secure and sustain a safe home that meets their needs and allows them to achieve their full potential.

This Strategy sets out our key aims for tackling Homelessness and Rough Sleeping across the borough with the four key priorities being:

- Prevention and Relief of Homelessness
- Provision of Temporary Accommodation
- Housing Development
- Support for Homeless Households

In October 2026, I proposed a Council motion that welcomed the Government's National Plan to End Homelessness and the additional national investment in homelessness prevention and rough sleeping services. It recognised the continuing high demand for homelessness advice and prevention in Stevenage, alongside the need to distinguish between rough sleeping and wider homelessness, while ensuring that both are addressed through coordinated, preventative and person-centred approaches. The motion also highlighted the risks and barriers faced by vulnerable groups, including women experiencing hidden homelessness, families with children, care-experienced people, Armed Forces veterans, older people and individuals leaving prison or other institutional settings

The motion received cross party support and the Council committed to review its Homelessness Prevention Action Plan considering the Government's national strategy, with a renewed focus on early identification, prevention and making best use of available national funding.

The road ahead is still challenging with ongoing emphasis being placed on Local Authorities by Central Government and other agencies to continue to eradicate Rough Sleeping by 2027, but where it does occur, making it brief and non-recurring and consideration still needs to be given to the continuing housing crisis across the UK.

Stevenage, as a Co-operative Council, will continue to improve the availability of housing, particularly social housing, with at least five hundred new Council homes being built over the next five years. In line with our co-operative principles, we aim to (with the co-operation of groups within our communities) protect the vulnerable in our communities, such as those that are faced with or have been homeless.

We recognise the causes of homelessness are complex and we are not able to solve this on our own; many households who contact the Council with a housing need often have with our continued joint working with partners and stakeholders across Stevenage and Hertfordshire, we are confident that we are well placed to meet our statutory duty, as well strategic aims over the lifetime of this strategy.

**Cllr Loraine** Rossati

**Portfolio Holder for Housing**



# Statistical Overview

**The latest government statistics show that, between January and March 2026, 92,200 households in England received an initial homelessness assessment. Of these, 83,850 households were assessed as being owed a duty to prevent or relieve homelessness. This represents a decrease of 2.1% compared with the same quarter in the previous year. However, 44,650 households were assessed as homeless and owed a relief duty, including 10,980 households with children.**

Despite this slight reduction in homelessness assessments, the number of households requiring temporary accommodation continues to rise. On 31 March 2026, there were 135,580 households living in temporary accommodation in England, an increase of 3.6% compared with the same period in 2025. This is a record high. Of these households, 86,460 included children, with an estimated 177,530 children living in temporary accommodation. These figures demonstrate the continuing scale of housing insecurity and the pressure on local authorities to secure suitable accommodation.

Homelessness and housing pressures remain a significant concern in Stevenage. During 2025/26, 1,480 people presented as homeless to Stevenage Borough Council, compared with 1,465 in 2024/25. This represents a further increase in demand for the Council's homelessness and housing advice services. The Council's 2025–2030 Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy recognises the importance of preventing homelessness, providing suitable temporary accommodation, increasing housing provision and supporting households experiencing homelessness.

Rough sleeping also remains a serious national concern. The Government's Autumn 2025 rough sleeping snapshot estimated that 4,793 people were sleeping rough on a single night in England. This represents an increase of 3% compared with 2024 and is the highest figure recorded since the snapshot began in 2010, exceeding the previous peak of 4,751 in 2017. The number has increased for four consecutive years. Around 43% of people estimated to be sleeping rough were in London and the South East.

Locally, Stevenage's annual rough sleeping count for 2025/26 identified 16 individuals sleeping rough. This highlights the continued need for targeted outreach, early intervention and partnership working to help people move away from rough sleeping and into settled accommodation.

The demand for temporary and emergency accommodation remains a major operational challenge for the Council. Nationally, the record number of households in temporary accommodation reflects the difficulties faced by local authorities in securing affordable and suitable housing. The position is particularly challenging for households with additional support needs, including people with physical disabilities, health conditions and mobility requirements.

There has also been an increase in the need for emergency and temporary accommodation for people who have physical disabilities. This has placed additional pressures on the service and has helped inform our decision to include the provision of adapted properties in our newly developed temporary accommodation at Dunn Close, due to open in early 2027.

# Homeless Reduction Act

The Housing Act 1996 (as amended) defines the responsibilities required by a Local Authority under part 6 and part 7. The legislation that has been introduced further into the Housing Act has amended requirements added to them. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA17) was implemented in April 2018 and introduced additional powers and duties for local authorities for the prevention and relief of Homelessness.

| Prevention Duty 56 Days | Relief Duty 56 Days | Main Duty |
|---|---|---|
| *A duty to take 'reasonable steps' to help prevent any eligible person who is at risk of homelessness from becoming homeless (s.195)* | *A duty to take 'reasonable steps' to help the applicant to secure suitable accommodation (s.189B)* | *A duty towards homeless applicants who are homeless, eligible for assistance, in priority need and not intentionally homeless (s.193)* |

The HRA17 builds on the existing provisions of Part 7 of the 1996 Housing Act (as amended by Homelessness Act 2002) and extends the Council's duties to those who are homeless and focusses on prevention.

# Homeless Prevention

The legal definition of homelessness is broad and does not just apply to people without a roof over their heads or who are sleeping rough. There are several categories as detailed below:

| | |
|---|---|
| Statutory homeless | Households deemed to be homeless, eligible for support from their local Council and in priority need. |
| Single homeless | Those who are homeless but do not meet the priority-need criteria to be housed by their local authority under homelessness legislation. |
| Vulnerably housed | People without accommodation, people in temporary, insecure, or poor-quality accommodation including those that are overcrowded, or those threatened with homelessness. |
| Rough Sleeping | People sleeping, about to bed down (sitting on/in or standing next to their bedding) or actually bedded down in the open air. People in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, garages, car parks, cars, or stations). |
| Hidden homeless | People not recorded in official statistics, who tend to sleep on the floors or sofas of friends and families or sleep rough in concealed locations. |

The Housing Options team in the last 2 years referenced are those made under Section 184 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) which relate to whether the applicant falls under the following criteria:

| | 2022/23 | 2023/24 | 2024/25 | 2025/26 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Eligible but intentionally homeless | 13 | 23 | 19 | 6 |
| Eligible and in priority need | 102 | 96 | 176 | 142 |
| Not in priority need | 41 | 125 | 143 | 71 |
| Not homeless | 21 | 8 | 0 | 0 |
| Total representations | 177 | 252 | 338 | 219 |

The length of time taken to make a decision will vary on a case-by-case basis however cases that are found ‘intentionally” homeless will generally take a longer period of time based on the complexity of the investigations required to be evidenced in the decision letter.

It is identified by Homelesslink and evidenced in national data returns that the most commonly reported reason for losing accommodation is because friends or relatives are no longer able to provide support or because of relationship breakdown.

For Stevenage, the main reasons reported for homeless approaches are overwhelmingly: relationship breakdown, friends and family are no longer able to accommodate and the loss of Assured Shorthold Tenancies “AST” which are tenancies usually provided by the private rented sector. The Renters Right Act 2025 provides for the end of Assured Shorthold Tenancies to address the later point.

The Council recognises that the significant reforms introduced in the Renters Rights Act will fundamentally change the operation of the private rented sector. In particular, the abolition of Section 21 “No Fault” evictions, the move to assured periodic tenancies and strengthened tenant protections which are expected to reshape homelessness prevention actively.

This strategy is being delivered with the flexibility to respond to these changes as they are implemented and supports the National Plan to End Homelessness and Rough sleeping. This strategy and the Prevention Action Plan accompanying it sets out what we are doing to drive change which includes moving away from crisis intervention working towards longer-term preventative solutions.

Community Advice & Support have introduced duty officers and a one front door approach to support the customers’ journey. The ethos behind this is to get the right support for the customer at the right time, when and how they need it. Part of this work is embedding the work with partners and signposting customers for the support they need, considering their individuals’ circumstances and any vulnerabilities.

There is a crisis in the provision of housing on a national level, together with the concerns around the cost of living meaning there is not enough social housing stock to meet the demand. To help eradicate homelessness and meet housing demand, sufficient additional accommodation is needed. The options for home seekers are to buy properties, which could include shared equity, or to rent whether it is in the social/ affordable or private sector.

Challenges such as the cost of living, and further concerns regarding transitioning to Universal Credit, which is paid in arrears and causes a delay in the receipt of payments, can impact on finances and on paying household costs. This, together with Local Housing Allowance rates that do not match the rents charged in the private rented sector, means there is often a substantial gap that would need to be met by the applicant which can cause the private rented sector to be unaffordable for many households. For home seekers to be eligible to buy they would need to have the income to support this, again meaning this can be unachievable for some groups.

There is not, however, enough social/ affordable housing to meet the demand alone and therefore to reduce homelessness it is imperative that the Council utilises PRS accommodation and encourages landlords to accept applicants who are open to the Council's services and to charge reasonable rents.

Reforms to rent setting and increases, including limits on frequency and enhanced rights for tenants to challenge above-market rents, may provide additional safeguards for tenants. The Council will monitor the impact of these changes on affordability and homelessness risk.

Stevenage has always provided housing advice for single non-priority homeless customers; the Council assists with areas such as:

- Applications to the Housing Register where they meet the local connection criteria.
- Referrals to other accommodation providers such as Stevenage Haven/ OneYMCA.
- Referrals to support providers such as the Community Mental Health Team, No More Service, and social services.
- Helping customers into Private Rented Sector housing.



# Homelessness funding

Homelessness Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse Grant

| Financial year | Core grant allocation | Additional Renters' Rights new burdens funding | Total funding shown |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2026–27 | £1,170,000 | £66,758 | £1,236,758 |
| 2027–28 | £1,180,000 | £0 | £1,180,000 |
| 2028–29 | £1,190,000 | £0 | £1,190,000 |
| Three-year total | £3,540,000 | £66,758 | £3,606,758 |

*Core allocations were supplied rounded to £0.01 million; totals reflect those rounded figures. Additional Renters' Rights new burdens funding is confirmed as £0 for 2027–28 and 2028–29.*

**The Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG)** is a ring-fenced or targeted financial resource provided by the government (the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government) to local authorities.

Since 2025 we have enhanced our services by providing additional support and services these include:

| | |
|---|---|
| Introduction of a Triage team with Housing Options | Opened the Homeless Hub in the town |
| Employed a dedicated support worker for Housing First customers | Introduced SWEP and cool spaces for the summer |
| Introduced housing customer events in the town centre | Launched a Temporary accommodation project to help new tenants when they move into their own home |
| Employed a Team Leader to support the Next Step Lets Teams with accessing private rented housing | Continued with the AFEO (Accommodation for Ex-Offenders Scheme) |
| Received funding for the Adult Offender Protocol scheme through Probation | Expanded our training offer for Housing teams and other teams within SBC |
| Embedded the Temporary Accommodation Notification Duty (TAND) Legislation | Embedded Docusign into Housing Options, Temporary accommodation and Allocations teams |

# Key Achievements

**Since the introduction of the previous Strategy, the Council has worked to prevent and reduce homelessness within the borough by working with partners and stakeholders. This Strategy continues the work of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019-2024 and goes further to achieve the aims of eradicating homelessness.**

Much has been achieved since the 2019-2024 priorities were set, this includes the provision of more temporary accommodation and a new development of temporary provision that includes adapted units. We have also introduced 11 Homeless “pods” for rough sleepers which has allowed the Council to provide crucial support and a sustainable pathway to more secure accommodation. The introduction of Triage Officers within the Housing Options Team provides more overall support by bringing together all the Councils support services under Community Advice and Support Team.

The Council has also strengthened and formalised critical partnerships, multi-agency initiatives, and more effective ways of working together that have been very successful in securing appropriate accommodation and support for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and reducing the reliance on bed and breakfast accommodation.

| Initiative | Outcome |
|---|---|
| **Increased Housing Provisions in Stevenage** | 590 new homes have been built within Stevenage since 2019, 11 Rough Sleeper pods have been introduced, and the Council has built a new temporary accommodation provision, due to be opened in early 2026. |
| **Increased training for Staff** | Regular and varied training on homelessness, case law and support provided for staff members. |
| **Private Rented Sector** | Increased use of properties in the private rented sector (PRS) to prevent homelessness. |
| **Operation Urban** | This initiative was introduced to address rough sleeping and begging issues within the town. The findings from this operation have been that not all individuals that have been reported as rough sleeping are “homeless” but choose to identify as a rough sleeper in the process of begging.<br><br>Hotspot areas have been identified by the Police, which has highlighted that to address the issues of rough sleeping and homelessness within Stevenage it is important for the Council and Police to work jointly to identify and target support for those genuinely in need and appropriately deal with those committing nuisance begging.<br><br>There have been a number of successful outcomes for cases dealt with through Operation Urban. In one case a resident with a history of drug use, offending and anti-social behaviour who was regularly found to be rough sleeping was referred to the Council’s No More Service (NMS) who provided intensive support and found him accommodation in the local night shelter Stevenage Haven. The resident has complex needs and is being provided with ongoing support. |

| Initiative | Outcome |
|---|---|
| **Community Advice and Support** | Since December 2023, the domestic abuse service (SADA) has been part of Community Advice & Support together with other support services, some of the areas include Housing Options, Rough Sleeper Team, Safeguarding and the No More Service giving customers 'one front door' access to support and advice. |
| **Best use of Stock** | To meet the demands across the services the Council has allocated some of its own housing stock for use as emergency and temporary housing. This is further supported through the link with the Open Market Acquisition (OMA) program, allowing for additional emergency/ temporary accommodation units to be provided and less reliance on bed and breakfast accommodation. |
| **Rough Sleeper Services** | Funding secured from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) through the Rough Sleeper Initiative and Rough Sleeper Accommodation Program has provided further resources to allow SBC to develop a Housing Futures Accommodation Scheme and to expand and improve the Rough Sleeper Service which now has four outreach workers who engage with rough sleepers in Stevenage to prevent homelessness. |
| **Cold Weather Provision** | The Council provides short-term cold weather provision for rough sleepers regardless of priority need during the time of year where the temperature drops below freezing. The local night shelter, OneYMCA, also provides four bed spaces for this provision, operating from November to March. |
| **Housing Futures** | The Council has developed and implemented a hybrid Housing First model called Housing Futures since the end of 2023, in line with the development of the Community Advice and Support business unit. The accommodation provides independent, stable housing for non-priority homeless individuals who are rough sleepers, or at imminent risk of rough sleeping. The accommodation also provides wrap-around support provided jointly by the Council's Rough Sleeper team, the No More Service and external agencies such as Change Grow Live and MIND to help residents with issues surrounding substance misuse and mental health. This is used as a platform to enable individuals with multiple and complex needs to begin recovery and move away from homelessness and ultimately into permanent, secure, and safe housing. |

# What success looks like

It is important to the Council that it provides a service that delivers real outcomes for people and that we do so in a friendly and non-judgmental way to support people through what is invariably some of the most difficult circumstances that they will ever have to encounter. The case study below highlights some of the incredible work achieved by the team for one service user and the difference it has made to their life.

*Service User X had been known to the Rough Sleeper Team for several years, initially seeking support after becoming homeless. They had experienced longstanding challenges with alcohol dependency, which had affected their ability to maintain accommodation.*

*Following an unsuccessful placement in supported accommodation, Service User X was supported to access specialist rehabilitation. After completing treatment, they returned to the area but experienced rough sleeping again.*

*The Rough Sleeper Team and Housing Options continued to provide support, and Service User X was subsequently offered another placement through Housing Futures. During this placement, they made significant progress, maintained their accommodation and engaged positively with staff and other residents.*

*They continued to access recovery support and became a positive influence on other residents experiencing similar challenges. Recognising their progress and readiness for independent living, they were nominated for social housing and successfully secured a one-bedroom property.*

*The Rough Sleeper Team also supported Service User X to access assistance with essential furniture and white goods to help them establish their new home.*

*Looking ahead, Service User X has expressed an interest in becoming a mentor for a drug and alcohol support organisation. They have taken steps towards this ambition by attending relevant conferences and are optimistic about their future.*



# Future Ambitions

**What we aim to achieve:**

- A supported, streamlined, and effective customer journey.
- Continuous improvement of our homelessness, prevention, and relief work.
- Continued co-operative working with our partners at both strategic and operational levels.
- Review the Housing Futures model within Stevenage and collect key performance indicators and other data including satisfaction surveys and case studies to continually drive service delivery.
- An aspiration to eradicate rough sleeping within Stevenage on a long-term basis.
- An increase in the number of private rented sector properties by engaging with private landlords.
- A reduction in the number of days applicants are waiting in temporary accommodation by utilising the option to discharge into private sector accommodation where suitable, assisting with signposting for support where needed.
- Continuous provision of advice and support to single non-priority homeless applicants and provision of the Homelessness Hub and town centre pop ups.
- Provision of advice on housing affordability to ensure sustainable outcomes for all customers and referrals for welfare, debt and advice when needed.
- More effective liaison with Housing Associations and an increase in nominations rights to prevent and relieve homelessness.
- Communication with the public on the subject of homelessness and rough sleeping including figures and myth busting using a variety of media.



# Service Delivery and Future Plans

| Priority area | Services implemented and ongoing activity | Delivery and outcomes to date | Future goals and actions |
|---|---|---|---|
| Accommodation for single homeless residents | Housing Futures accommodation provides options for single homeless people who do not have a priority need. | Provision established. 68 individuals housed between 2023–2026, with 52 moving into permanent accommodation. | Maintain and strengthen existing provision. Develop dedicated units/bed spaces for people moving directly off the streets, including No Second Night Out and those with higher support needs. Improve the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) offer. |
| Accessible engagement and support | Homelessness Community Hub launched in March 2026, providing drop-in access to a safe space, warm drinks, food, advice and support without requiring a homelessness case to be opened. | Hub established, including access for people not ready or willing to open a homelessness case. | Introduce monitoring of attendance, engagement and support outcomes. Provide a warm space for rough sleepers for the first time during winter 2026 – 27. |
| Coordinated complex needs support | Support delivered through the Rough Sleeper Team and No More Service, alongside Change Grow Live for drug and alcohol support and Mind for mental health support. | Partner support arrangements established, with referrals regularly completed for clients requiring additional support. | Review the new Single Homeless Pathway and provide feedback to Hertfordshire County Council. Increase engagement with mental health and Public Health services to improve holistic support. |

| Priority area | Services implemented and ongoing activity | Delivery and outcomes to date | Future goals and actions |
|---|---|---|---|
| Continuity of care and housing sustainment | Work underway to strengthen partnerships with Public Health and improve continuity between medical care, housing and tenancy sustainment. | Partnership development ongoing, with discussions held with mental health and hospital discharge teams. | Strengthen Public Health partnerships. Establish standardised communication and processes to ensure timely notification of vulnerable clients' support needs and housing requirements. |
| Service quality and client feedback | Case studies used to highlight good practice and identify service gaps. Client satisfaction surveys inform service reviews and improvements. | Review and feedback activity ongoing. | Continue using case studies and satisfaction surveys to evaluate and improve services and processes. |
| Alignment with national guidance | Close working relationship with MHCLG supports alignment with Government guidance and access to current advice and practice. | MHCLG engagement ongoing, including meetings with HAST advisers to support best practice and access strategic advice. | Maintain engagement with MHCLG and HAST advisers, responding to relevant guidance and developments in practice. |
| Food and essential support | Food parcels and vouchers provided to homeless residents where needed. | Practical support arrangements in place. | Continue providing food parcels and vouchers according to individual need. |



# Our Priorities

Our future ambitions will be governed by our set priorities within this strategy to prevent homelessness and eradicate rough sleeping. The Strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis and will include feedback from our customers as well as other stakeholders, which will continue to inform our action plan.

This Strategy is based on a review of the current and likely future levels of homelessness in Stevenage and the activities and resources available to prevent homelessness and support homeless people. The Strategy acknowledges that homelessness is on the rise, whilst noting that predicting and analysing future levels is problematic, particularly when trying to forecast the levels of rough sleep. It has also been reviewed in light of the Governments National Plan to End Homelessness, published in December 2025 and the Council motion that was ratified at Cabinet in October 2026.

As part of the review, we have considered the changes brought in by the **Renters' Rights Act** which include new rules governing how and when landlords can increase rent. Rules around evictions stating they can't take place without a valid reason. New rights for tenants to request consent from landlords to keep pets.

As part of this review we want to focus on some main themes around Homelessness this includes;

1. Recognising that homelessness and rough sleeping as distinct but connected issue with an emphasis on prevention, "hidden" homelessness early identification and a person-centered approach.
2. To have a focus on those who "sofa Surf" or vulnerabilities that mean they ae more "likely" thank others to become homeless or rough sleep.
3. Continue to participate in the women's rough sleeper census and consideration of safe gender- informed provisions.
4. Strengthen our focus around Armed Forces veterans and care-experienced people, including recognising care experience as a lifelong issue rather than something that necessarily ends at 25.
5. We have committed to reviewing the Homeless Prevention Action Plan and recognise the importance of the whole system approach, with housing, health, social care, probation and other services working together to identify and support those people at risk before they reach crisis alongside specific work with the NHS and Hertfordshire County Council/Public Health around healthcare, substance misuse and hospital discharges.

# Priority One:

## Prevention and Relief of Homelessness

**We Will:**

- Continue to improve homelessness prevention and relief work by keeping up to date with best practice across the country to ensure that the Council is providing the best possible service in relation to Homelessness and Rough Sleeper prevention.
- The Council recognises the significant reforms introduced through the Renters' Rights Act, including the abolition of Section 21 evictions and strengthened tenant protections, which are expected to reshape homelessness prevention.
- Monitoring the progress of our Housing Futures model and research future requirements post funding which currently ends in March 2025.
- A reduction in the numbers of those rough sleeping with the ambition to eradicate sleeping rough

within Stevenage.

- Provision of advice on housing affordability to ensure sustainable outcomes for all customers.
- Reduce the number of days applicants are waiting in Emergency and Temporary Accommodation by utilising the option to discharge cases owed a duty by the Council into the private rented sector where suitable.
- Reviewing our Cold Weather Provision interventions to ensure that they are fit for purpose and avoid the use of bed and breakfast where possible.

# Priority Two:

## Provision of Good Quality Temporary Accommodation

**We Will:**

- Increase portfolio of temporary accommodation properties of various sizes and types, helping to minimize the use of Bed and Breakfast provisions.
- Deliver value for money and transparency of service charges.
- Work with partners internally and externally who can offer specialist support.

# Priority Three:

## Delivery of new Affordable and Social Rented Homes

**We Will:**

- Provide five hundred new affordable homes over 10 years.
- Continue the development of high-quality general needs and independent living accommodation that will create necessary capacity within existing housing stock to allow for move on accommodation.
- Provide accommodation which offers security of tenure, sustainability, and reduced running costs.
- Utilise private sale schemes within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) to cross subsidise further development of affordable accommodation.

# Priority Four:

## Support of Homeless Households

**We Will:**

- Effective tenancy sustainment to reduce incidences of homelessness, including support for families and vulnerable adults to maximise their income and mitigate the effects of welfare reform.
- A supported, streamlined, and effective customer journey for all customers whilst they are given appropriate housing and homelessness advice, including the provision of advice and support to single non-priority homeless applicants.
- Better cross-tenure support between interim and permanent accommodation.
- Continue collaborative working with partners at strategic and operational levels.to better support customers and prevent homelessness.

# Consultation

**Local authorities are required to work in line with the Housing Act 1996 (as amended). This Strategy has been published in line with Section 3 of Homelessness Act 2002 which requires local authorities to develop and publish a Homelessness Strategy.**

The Council is required to provide Housing Advice and Homelessness service alongside a number of other statutory functions such as the provision of an Allocation Policy.

As per section 2(1) of the 2002 Act, a local authority is required to complete a homelessness review which means a review by a housing authority of:

a) the levels, and likely future levels, of homelessness in their district.

b) the activities which are carried out for any the following purposes (or which contribute to achieving any of them):

I. preventing homelessness in the housing authority's district.

II. securing that accommodation is, or will be, available for people in the district who are, or may become, homeless; and

III. providing support for people in the district who are homeless or who may become at risk of homelessness; or who have been homeless and need support to prevent them becoming homeless again; and,

c) the resources available to the housing authority, the social services authority for the district, other public authorities, voluntary organisations, and other persons for the activities outlined in (b) above.

The above considerations have been taken into account when setting our priorities and is based on consultation undertaken with members of the public and customer Surveys.

# Consultation with Members of the Public

We have consulted with members of the public including professional partners and service users past and present.

The consultation asked:

- What do you believe are the three main challenges surrounding tackling homelessness?
- What do you think contributes most to rough sleeping within Stevenage?

Responses from consultation with Members of the Public included:

**Challenges surrounding tackling homelessness**

- Alcohol Use
- Lack of Affordable Housing
- Trauma
- Adverse Childhood Experiences
- Mental Health Support
- Drug Use

**Contributions to Rough Sleeping in Stevenage**

- Lack of Accommodation Options
- Poverty
- Cost of Living Crisis
- Relationship Breakdowns
- Unemployment
- Leaving Prison

# Customer Surveys

At the beginning of the financial year April 1st 2024-25 the Housing Options, Rough Sleeping and Temporary Accommodation services commenced regular customer satisfaction surveys with our service users to continually review and inform improvements for our homelessness provision.

The aim of the surveys is to continuously seek customer feedback on their experience with the Council's Homelessness services, as well as any feedback on areas for improvement. These surveys help us to identify why people may become homeless or be at risk of homelessness as well as inform and shape our services and action plan on an ongoing basis.

Prior to the adoption of this Strategy, we will also consult for no less than eight weeks with members of the public across Stevenage, to ensure that we have captured a holistic view of the priorities for Stevenage's homelessness and rough sleeping service

# Health and Wellbeing

**Stevenage takes the health of its residents seriously and has had a Health and Wellbeing partnership as a thematic group of the local strategic partnership for several years. The health and wellbeing of our homeless or rough sleepers can be seen as a continued focus throughout this Strategy.**

The Healthy Stevenage Partnership is a multi-agency forum which includes representatives from the following organisations; Stevenage Borough Council, Hertfordshire County Council, Public Health, East and North Herts Clinical Commissioning Group, East and North Herts NHS Trust, Mind in Mid Herts, Health- watch, Stevenage Football Club Foundation, Citizens Advice Stevenage, Children Centres, Stevenage Leisure Limited, Stevenage Sporting Futures among many others.

The purpose of the partnership is to:

- Achieve better alignment of partners and their efforts to address shared priorities for health and wellbeing.
- Work together to maximise resources, skills, knowledge, and evidence.
- Deliver or commission local projects based on evidence and needs of the local population.
- Increase opportunities to improve health and wellbeing for local residents.
- Championing health and wellbeing and promote positive health-related behaviours.
- Secure additional resources and investment for health and wellbeing projects in Stevenage

Stevenage contributes £5k per financial year to the Herts Young Homeless “Home truths” program which educates school children across Hertfordshire on a variety of health and wellbeing aspects, including homelessness and housing options. This is to ensure the young people of Stevenage can make well informed choices for the future and aims to reduce the risk of homelessness.

Herts Insight have published projected population growth for Stevenage and other Hertfordshire Districts over the next 25 years. The projection is that there will be a population increase of 13.8%. We should therefore expect that for Stevenage, the number of presentations of homelessness and housing register applicants will increase.

Due to the importance of the health and well-being of applicants who have experienced domestic abuse, the Survivors Against Domestic Abuse service (SADA) works with victims and survivors of domestic abuse and their families. The service offers crisis intervention alongside customer support and signposting to other agencies that suit the individual’s needs. The SADA Domestic Abuse Forum is run by survivors who want to make a difference, a drop-in service which runs weekly in person and virtually in Stevenage and North Herts offers support to victims, survivors, and their families.

Community Advice & Support manages various Actions Plans that feed into this Strategy including the Homelessness & Rough Sleeper Strategy 2026/27, the Ending Rough Sleeping Action Plan 2026/27, the Modern Slavery Action Plan, Violence Against Women and Girls Action Plan, Domestic Abuse Strategy and Tenants Policy, Adult and Children Safeguarding, Adults with Complex Needs Procedure, Allocations Policy and other policies and procedures that can be found on our website. www.stevenage.gov.uk

# Limitations

**Whilst this Strategy plans an important role in deepening local understanding of the health and support needs of homeless people in Stevenage, we are aware of certain pressures within the borough.**

This includes the reliability on grant funding to support essential but non-statutory services, the provision around support for Asylum seekers and refugees and their support needs and the cost-of-living crisis, with more families than ever relying on referrals to food banks.

The Council will continue to work co-operatively with partners and the Community and work towards eradicating homelessness in the town.



Stevenage
BOROUGH COUNCIL