



Gateshead Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

2022-2027

Final

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Foreword

To be included at publication stage

1. Introduction

This strategy sets out Gateshead's vision for tackling homelessness and rough sleeping in the Borough. The strategy covers the following:

- Our vision
- Values
- Principles
- Strategic aims

The Homelessness Act 2002 requires local housing authorities to take strategic responsibility for tackling and preventing homelessness and to formulate a homelessness strategy at least every five years. This homelessness and rough sleeping strategy has been based on the findings of our recent homelessness review.

Developing a strategic approach to addressing homelessness and rough sleeping enables us to develop a wider partnership approach. Homelessness is not just about housing as life events can cause homelessness and a significant number of people have underlying issues such as substance misuse and mental health problems. This means that in addition to housing some people need support services or access to specialist services.

The strategy includes actions that will need to be delivered on a systems wide basis, involving the Council working closely with internal and external partners. This means working closely with Adult Social Care and Children's Services as well as health and housing providers.

The strategy covers the five period 2022-2027 and will be subject to a light touch review annually, particularly in the event of significant policy or funding changes.

2. Strategic Context

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 legally obliges local authorities to assess and provide more meaningful assistance to all people who are eligible and homeless, or threatened with homelessness, irrespective of their priority need status.

The focus of the Act is on prevention and places a duty on local authorities to intervene early and attempt to prevent homelessness. Where homelessness cannot be prevented a new duty requires local authorities to relieve homelessness. This means that the local authority must help an individual find suitable accommodation with at least a 6 months tenancy.

Gateshead's strategic approach is set out in '*Making Gateshead a place where everyone thrives*'. The strategy acknowledges that over 50% of people and families in Gateshead are either managing or just coping and over 30% are in need or in vulnerable situations. The role of the Council will increasingly become that of a facilitator, partner and co-producer, working to ensure that prevention and early intervention strategies reduce the level of demand and dependency on critical services, and the need for intensive, high-cost specialist interventions.

A Gateshead Homelessness Charter has also been produced. The purpose of the charter is for health and other public sector bodies, charities, faith groups, businesses and other organisation to adopt the charter's values and pledges and to implement it through improved working practices.

3. Vision, Values Principles

Vision

To prevent and end homelessness, in all forms, in Gateshead

Values

We believe in:

- **Delivering on the rights and needs of those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness**

Homelessness can happen to anyone at any time, generally associated with a period of crisis or trauma, including or linked to poverty, abuse, mental health, relationship breakdown and loss employment. Some people are more at risk of homelessness than others, for example those who are leaving care or released from prison.

Everyone has a right to a good home including:

- Living Essentials – Food, heating, water, furniture and white goods, clothes
- To be safe – No violence, theft, abuse or discrimination
- Equal treatment – Respect, fair access to services
- Good Support – Effective, the right fit, for the right amount of time

- **Listening to those with experience of homelessness**

We want to listen to people with experience of homelessness to help us shape our services. We also want homeless people involved in co-producing the services that they require, and this could also include their involvement in developing a commissioning strategy.

- **Enabling a personalised approach**

Everyone's experience of homelessness is different, and we want to adopt a personalised approach where individuals determine their own solutions. This will start with the assessment process and a personal plan, which will determine the most appropriate housing and support solutions for each individual. We will take an enabling approach in addressing any barriers faced by those who are homeless.

- **Providing high standards of communication, co-ordination and consistency in decisions**

We will work together with our partners to provide good communication, co-ordination and consistency across all services

- **Being fair and transparent**

We will treat people impartially and we will be clear, open and honest with people about their options, processes and decisions.

Principles

Seeing potential working with strengths

We want to adopt an approach that involves seeing the potential in individuals by valuing their skills and knowledge and building on their strengths. This approach does not ignore the challenges or the complexities of individual's needs.

Listening, learning and responding through co-production

We want to enable homeless people and those at risk of homelessness to decide their own solutions and not have something forced on them.

We want support workers to work in collaboration with people – helping people to do things for themselves. In this way, people can become co-producers of support, not passive consumers of support.

Working together, inclusively

We want to work together as a partnership to address homelessness. This will include partnership working between housing, health, social care, children's services, probation, the police and other agencies. The Homelessness Charter will enable other organisations to commit to its values and support the implementation of this strategy.

It's all about people

We want to adopt a person centred approach where the person is placed at the centre of the service and treated as a person first. Support should focus on achieving the person's aspirations and be tailored to their needs and unique circumstances.

4. Strategic Aims

Gateshead's strategic aims for the Homelessness and Rough sleeping strategy are as follows:

Aim 1: Make homelessness a rare occurrence

Aim 2: Homelessness to be as brief as possible and result in positive outcomes

Aim 3: No-one sleeping rough or in unsuitable accommodation

Aim 4: Homelessness is a one-off occurrence

The key to achieving these aims is through partnership working. Gateshead is working towards a Connected Services Model to delivering housing and homelessness services. This is an innovative approach that connects the council and partner agencies, working collaboratively across housing, homelessness and linked support services to build positive outcomes for residents in Gateshead.

The table below provides a breakdown of the 2,007 households who were assessed as being owed a homelessness duty by Gateshead during 19/20.

Threatened with homelessness - Prevention duty owed	1,609
Homeless - Relief duty owed	468

Aim 1: Make homelessness a rare occurrence

Prevention

This strategic aim is about early intervention to prevent homelessness and make this event a rare occurrence.

To ensure that we can target our interventions we need to understand the causes of homelessness in Gateshead. As part of the process of developing this strategy we have collected and analysed data for the homelessness review.

The analysis of the data shows there are multiple causes of homelessness including domestic abuse, discharge from the armed forces, loss of employment, relationship breakdown, family disputes, mental health problems and substance misuse.

Domestic violence is a primary cause of homelessness, followed by friends or family no longer willing, or unable, to accommodate. 475 households were owed a homelessness duty during 19/20 due to experiencing domestic abuse and 345 households due to family and friends no longer willing, or unable, to accommodate. Ending private rented tenancies is another significant reason for homelessness affecting 282 households.

We also need to understand the barriers and causes of homelessness from the person's perspective including finding triggers to understand early intervention. Such indicators could include incidences of ASB, overcrowded households and criminal activity. Gateshead could

develop a number of indicators to enable early interventions. There is also scope to include the risk of homelessness as central part of safeguarding, for instance the checklist of issues.

Some individuals will only require access to accommodation while others will require support as well as accommodation. It is essential that those who require support receive appropriate services, including supported housing if required, to break the cycle of homelessness.

There were 1,283 households with one or more support needs owned a homelessness duty during 19/20. Mental health issues were the most significant support need related to homelessness with 676 households having a history of mental health problems.

Continued investment in floating support is required to enable tenancy sustainment and prevent homelessness. Floating support can be either provided at the point an individual moves into a tenancy to support their transition to independence, or to intervene where an existing tenancy is failing. As floating support is tenure neutral it can be provided to people who are risk of homelessness in all types of tenure.

There needs to be timely interventions at points of transition for those who are homeless e.g. leaving care, release from prison, discharge from hospital, discharge from the armed forces. Protocols are an important mechanism for providing clarity about the responsibilities of different agencies. Although there are existing protocols in place in relation to the Duty to Refer, further awareness raising may be needed so that partners use the Duty to Refer.

There needs to be prevention and early intervention in relation to domestic abuse to prevent homelessness. The option of remaining at home with extra security needs to be considered, as well as adopting a broader approach to preventing domestic abuse e.g. public education. Currently Gateshead funds security features although the funding available is only short term.

An electronic directory of services will enable the public and professionals to search for accommodation and support services. An electronic directory should include the full range of community services, as well as those provided or commissioned by the local authority¹.

Making the Council's front door as accessible as possible, for those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, will be essential. This may include publicising the Housing Options service and how to access it.

Many of the actions set out below are dependent on our partners. We will encourage our partners to sign up to Homelessness Charter which will help ensure that they make a commitment to the implementation of this strategy.

Actions

1.	➤ Providing flexible responsive services at an early stage including housing advice - the front door needs to be open to meet people's needs and to direct them quickly.
2.	➤ Mapping services to develop an electronic directory so that the public and professionals know what is available to enable early intervention.

¹ for example, www.thelivewelldirectory.com

3.	➤ Promote the Homelessness Charter to enable partners to become more engaged with the prevention of homelessness.
4.	➤ Work with partner RPs and other landlords to prevent evictions and tenancy breakdowns, including those in supported housing.
5.	➤ Develop the private sector homelessness prevention model including reviewing pathways, processes and outcomes.
6.	➤ Develop clearer pathways into accommodation and support which read across to the allocation process.
7.	➤ Timely interventions for people in transition from prison, hospital, leaving care and the armed forces to prevent homelessness.
8.	➤ Increase the awareness of partners to use existing protocols in relation to Duty to Refer to ensure that these agencies are working together with the Council.
9.	➤ Develop Protocols with health to assist with prioritising access to substance misuse and specialist mental health services for those who are homeless and in temporary accommodation/supported housing and for those who require wrap around support in mainstream housing.
10.	➤ Early intervention and prevention of homelessness in relation to domestic abuse – including providing mainstream funding to enable households to remain at home with extra security and outreach support.
11.	➤ Feed into the locality review to ensure that housing and support services are developed to best meet local needs in terms of homelessness prevention.
12.	➤ Work in partnership to ensure that assessments are not being duplicated and services are connected.
13.	➤ Develop a simple set of indicators to enable early intervention where there is a potential risk of homelessness
14.	➤ Use data to understand why people have given up their tenancy, to build up a better overall picture of early intervention
15.	➤ Proactive work to intervene early to prevent homelessness including work with schools

How will we measure success?

- No one is homeless when they leave a state institution, such as prison or the care system.
- Everyone who is immediately threatened with homelessness gets the help that prevents it from happening.
- Everyone known to be at greater risk of homelessness due to affordability or vulnerabilities is proactively targeted with advice & support to reduce the possibility that they become threatened with homelessness at an earlier opportunity than 56 days.

Aim 2: Homelessness to be as brief as possible and result in positive outcomes

Access to housing and support services

This strategic aim is about intervening quickly to provide appropriate accommodation and support for those who are homeless. To achieve positive outcomes the right accommodation and support will need to be provided at the right time.

Gateshead currently has a combination of commissioned, non-commissioned and internally provided housing and support services. The homelessness review has identified that there is a lack of appropriate housing and support options for people with multiple complex needs and with challenging behaviours and lifestyles. There are also considerable difficulties with placing MAPPA clients in supported accommodation.

Individuals with multiple complex needs and challenging behaviours can end up being inappropriately placed in mainstream social housing. Their behaviours spill into the community and cause anti-social behaviour. Breaking the cycle becomes difficult as individuals often re-present themselves to the Council as homeless.

Gateshead will use the data from the homelessness review to inform a recommissioning process for housing and support services, including appropriate provision to meet those with multiple complex needs. Internal provision will also need to be remodelled to provide a better fit.

The purpose of supported housing will be to prepare individuals to become 'tenancy ready' and Gateshead will produce guidance on this issue as part of the recommissioning process. Once individuals are 'tenancy ready' they will be able to move onto mainstream general needs housing.

Some individuals will be able to move directly into mainstream housing with the right level of support. Where individuals with support needs have moved into mainstream accommodation, or are already living in mainstream accommodation, we intend to provide floating support services that incorporate comprehensive tenancy training. For those with the most complex needs Gateshead will explore the Housing First model.

The private rented sector is an important option for moving out of homelessness. We will work with the private rented sector to remove barriers to those who are homeless or potentially homeless.

As part of the recommissioning process, we will develop a contract management framework that will include monitoring the number of referrals received, the number accommodated, the level of risk and other KPIs. The framework will also monitor outcomes including the number who become 'tenancy ready', the number who make planned moves and the number who engage with health services.

The homelessness review has set out proposals for a new Gateway to housing and support services. This Gateway will involve the assessment and placement of homeless households in commissioned housing and support services. This arrangement will also be extended to internal services and non-commissioned services, where possible.

Gateshead is working towards a Connected Services Model to delivering housing and homelessness services. This is an innovative approach that connects the Council and partner agencies, working collaboratively across housing, homelessness and linked support services to build positive outcomes for residents in Gateshead. This type of partnership can focus on challenges and design operational service delivery models that meets the challenges.

The Connected Service Model includes five core elements. Each of these elements will help Gateshead move from a reactive to proactive provider, focused on prevention and collaborative working with other services, partner agencies, the third sector and other housing providers in Gateshead. The 5 core elements of the Connected Services Model are as follows

1. **Multidisciplinary working in localities** - Embedding strong joint working between housing workers, colleagues from Health and Adult Social Care Services and wider partners we are aiming to reduce handoffs and create a more collaborative approach when providing support on individual cases.
2. **Multi-agency strategy group** - Establishing a forum for leaders across services and partner organisations that meets regularly, so we can address collective challenges using data and insights and discuss strategic priorities that will help people in need and inform the long-term strategy.
3. **Holistic Advice, Homelessness and allocations Service** – Ensuring that frontline teams work as an integrated delivery team, to assess people’s situations in a holistic way, providing advice and bringing them into contact with the right support services, including the development of joint support plans. We are aiming to pull on services and support, not refer.
4. **Insights, Innovation & Partnership** - Collecting qualitative and quantitative data about people’s needs in Gateshead so we can work at all levels from predicting tenancy sustainment to modelling future housing and support needs in Gateshead.
5. **A Single Gateway that oversees access to emergency and short term temporary accommodation as well as commissioned supported housing in Gateshead** – with the Housing Options service overseeing access, eligibility and move on activity linking with the range of housing and support providers operating in Gateshead in order to deliver sustainable housing and support solutions.



Actions

1.	➤ Carry out a needs analysis using the data generated from the homelessness review, as well as other data, to identify the types of supported accommodation and support services required, particularly for people with multiple complex needs and those subject to domestic abuse.
2.	➤ Review and remodel existing floating support services (both internal and commissioned) to match the levels of needs identified.
3.	➤ Review and remodel existing accommodation based services to match the needs identified.
4.	➤ Consider introducing a Housing First model for those who have been the most difficult to engage, with wrap around support in independent housing.
5.	➤ Develop service specifications for those services that are to be commissioned including Psychologically Information Environment (PIE) principles for those with complex needs to provide a trauma informed approach to support.
6.	➤ Carry out a commissioning exercise to source the types of supported accommodation and support services required as a result of the needs analysis, in particular services for people with multiple complex needs including MAPPA clients.
7.	➤ Introduce a contract monitoring/performance management framework to provide KPIs and to monitor the outcomes of supported accommodation and support services, both commissioned and internal, to ensure a pathway to independence.
8.	➤ As a result of the needs analysis identify any gaps and to work with strategic partners and housing providers to develop new provision and to access future funding opportunities.
9.	➤ Continue to develop a Connected Service Model to ensure collaborative working with partner agencies.
10.	➤ Develop a pathway into commissioned accommodation and support services through a new Gateway to ensure that those most in need are targeted at appropriate services.
11.	➤ Developed a person centred approach to ensure that individuals are placed in the right accommodation at the right time.
12.	➤ Develop a 'tenancy ready' framework for commissioned services to ensure that individuals remain in supported accommodation for right length of time with the right support to become tenancy ready.
13.	➤ Enable individuals to access permanent accommodation directly, with appropriate support, where a supported housing environment is not considered the right solution.
14.	➤ Ensure consistent support along the pathway including support where an individual does not go through a supported housing pathway.
15.	➤ Provide access to personal budgets so that individuals can source furniture and white goods when they move into permanent accommodation.
16.	➤ As part of the review of the allocations policy ensure that appropriate permanent housing is allocated to those who are owed a homelessness duty.
17.	➤ Work with Registered Providers to provide access to housing for homeless

people in mainstream general needs housing.

How will we measure success?

- A greater proportion homeless people with multiple complex needs are placed in supported housing or are in receipt of support services.
- An increase in the number of planned moves from supported housing to independent housing as a result of preparing individuals to become 'tenancy ready'.
- The introduction of a new homelessness pathway that matches needs with accommodation and support and results in positive outcomes.

Aim 3: No-one sleeping rough or in unsuitable accommodation

End rough sleeping and the risk of rough sleeping

This strategic aim is about ending rough sleeping in Gateshead so that no-one is bedded down on the streets. It is also about intervening to prevent those who are at risk of rough sleeping ending up on the streets due to living in unsuitable accommodation.

The number of people rough sleeping in Gateshead is very low. The street counts for the past two years have found zero rough sleepers and a review of the homelessness data for 19/20 found that 20 rough sleepers were owned a relief duty. Gateshead has commissioned outreach services linked to rough sleeping, which has adopted a proactive approach over the past two years to moving people off the streets.

There is, however, a significant cohort who are at risk of rough sleeping and are part of the street population. This cohort has multiple complex needs including mental health and substance misuse problems and most are sofa surfing or living in other unsuitable accommodation. As today's sofa surfers may become tomorrow's rough sleepers, all partners need to be involved with this cohort.

The main agencies in Gateshead involved with rough sleepers, or those at risk of rough sleeping, have found that the most effective approach to addressing these needs is to case manage on an individual basis. This involves adopting a personalised approach to understanding the history of individuals, with organisations coming together to case manage the next steps.

There are significant issues with accessing mental health support for those who have drug and alcohol problems. The mental health services are not set up for rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping, as these individuals do not keep appointments and often need out of hours support.

Strong partnerships are needed to address the needs of those who are rough sleeping. A prototype Connected Services partnership approach has been developed in relation to the hub for people at risk of homelessness or are rough sleeping. This involves a partnership that includes:

- Oasis Community Housing (drop in centre)
- Housing and Homelessness Services – 2 homelessness officers
- Northumbria Police
- Nurse Practitioner
- Mental health link worker (part funded by Housing)
- Link to DWP

We have identified a need to provide crisis accommodation for those who are rough sleeping or are risk of rough sleeping. This crisis accommodation needs to be provided as self-contained units due to risks around Covid.

Actions

1.	➤ Work in partnership with health to better address the health needs of rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping including access to primary care
2.	➤ Further develop the prototype Connected Services model for providing a co-ordinated response to rough sleeping and those at risk of rough sleeping in partnership with other agencies.
3.	➤ Continue to develop a personalised case management approach to rough sleepers and those at risk of sleeping rough so that bespoke solutions can be developed.
4.	➤ Develop a Regional Reconnections protocol with other local authorities in the region, where rough sleepers are reconnected to the authorities with which they have a connection.
5.	➤ Ensure sufficient provision of appropriate 24/7 crisis accommodation for a diversity of needs to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping and to reduce reliance on B & B.
6.	➤ Develop a protocol with social care colleagues for those rough sleepers that are likely to be eligible under the Care Act and for those with no recourse to public funds (NRPF).
7.	➤ Provide outreach support to people in very insecure accommodation who are at risk of rough sleeping

How will we measure success?

- No one sleeping rough on the streets
- No one forced to live in transient or dangerous accommodation, such as tents, squats & non-residential buildings
- No one living in emergency accommodation, such as shelters & hostels, without a plan for rapid rehousing into supported accommodation or affordable, suitable & sustainable homes

Aim 4: Homelessness is a one-off occurrence

End repeat homelessness

This strategic aim is about preventing repeat homelessness and breaking the homelessness cycle.

The recommissioned homelessness pathway will need to identify the most appropriate housing and support options for those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Placing people in inappropriate accommodation can lead to repeat homelessness. For example, living in shared supported housing may exacerbate the support needs of some individuals.

Rehousing homeless people quickly into mainstream housing does not necessarily lead to tenancy sustainment, as a quick offer may not be in an area of choice. Also placing people into mainstream housing who have multiple complex needs without appropriate support may result in tenancy breakdown.

There is an opportunity, with the development of a tenancy strategy, to look at what Gateshead is doing in terms of escalating those new tenancies for someone with a history of mental health problems, substance misuse or offending. This process can ensure that tenancy sustainment is being monitored and support put in place if required.

Sustainable accommodation can be provided to individuals in different ways. For some it may only require regular phone calls to provide reassurance, for example due to mental health issues. For others it may require regular visiting support that can be provided flexibly depending on needs.

The provision of floating support services is essential for those who have moved into a tenancy and have support needs, or those who are already a tenant and are at risk of homelessness. Floating support can intervene to prevent homelessness and can step up or step down depending on support needs.

Although Gateshead has a family mediation service for young people aged 16-17, there is an issue with other young people becoming homeless due to disputes with parents. A mediation service could be joined up with homelessness services for young people over the age of 18. Also, young people can move back to the family home due to financial hardship and this may result in a challenging situation, where mediation could intervene.

Repeat homelessness can be prevented through partnership working between agencies e.g. housing, adult social care, children's services and probation. Sharing of information will be important to this process including the use of information sharing protocols. The Duty to Refer process is also an important part of the process of preventing repeat homelessness.

We want to support homeless people into employment and other meaningful activities. Gateshead is already strategically involved with employment development opportunities in the Borough. This includes the front door of Working Gateshead, as well as opportunities related to projects such as gardening. Access to learning new skills is available, including numeracy and literacy. Due to the recovery from Covid there have been increased employment vacancies and the key issue is to enable homeless people to engage with the opportunities that are available.

We can learn from those with experience of homelessness to understand what works and how we could do better. This experience can be used to co-produce services to make homelessness a once off occurrence and to prevent homelessness occurring in the first place.

Actions

1.	➤ Ensure the availability of floating support for those who are at risk of losing their tenancy as well as those who move on from supported housing to independent accommodation.
2.	➤ Develop a private sector accommodation and support model for ex-offenders including the options of living in their own flat as well as shared housing if required (to reduce isolation)
3.	➤ Implement Changing Futures homelessness model and further develop a homelessness prototype for those with complex needs.
4.	➤ Work with partners to prevent homelessness due to domestic abuse and ensure rapid rehousing for people who are made homeless due to domestic abuse.
5.	➤ Develop best practice for supported housing and floating support to enable people to learn the life skills to sustain their tenancies.
6.	➤ Enable previously homeless people, and those at risk of homelessness, to access employment and learning opportunities, including supporting engagement with the Work in Gateshead front door and any initiatives through the community renewal fund.
7.	➤ Explore whether the Council's mediation service can be extended to young people over the age of 18.
8.	➤ Review the pathways for homeless people with multiple or complex needs including mental health and dual diagnosis to improve customer journey
9.	➤ Listen to and acknowledge the views of those with lived experience of homelessness and use these to co-produce services

How will we measure success?

- A reduction in the number of tenancy breakdowns of those who have been subject to a homelessness duty.
- A reduction in the number of people owed a duty as a result of repeat homelessness.
- The number of tenancies sustained/disputes resolved where individuals have previously been homeless.

5. Implementation

We will produce a delivery plan with our partners, which will be made up of plans for each of the 4 strategic aims outlined in this strategy. We have a shared commitment across our key partners and stakeholders to support the delivery of this strategy, as the achievement of our vision depends on their contribution.

As part of the delivery process, we will agree a commissioning strategy, which will include a new pathway model and systems change.

The Strategic Housing Board and the Health and Wellbeing Board will have oversight of the implementation of the strategy and will monitor and review progress.

Gateshead Council and the Housing Providers Partnership will jointly own the strategy. The intention is to establish a Homelessness Forum under the auspices of the Housing Providers Partnership to be responsible for delivery and it will include other partners. A project team will be established to drive the changes and lead partners will be identified for the delivery of specific actions.

GATESHEAD'S HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY 2022-2027

OUR VISION

To prevent and end homelessness, in all forms, in Gateshead

VALUES

- Delivering on the rights and needs of those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness
- Listening to those with experience of homelessness
- Enabling a personalised approach
- Providing high standards of communication, co-ordination and consistency in decisions
- Being fair and transparent

PRINCIPLES

- Seeing potential working with strengths
- Listening, learning and responding through co-production
- Working together, inclusively
- It's all about people

STRATEGIC AIMS

2. Make homelessness a rare occurrence

1. Homelessness to be as brief as possible and result in positive outcomes

3. No-one sleeping rough or in unsuitable accommodation

4. Homelessness is a one-off occurrence