Chelmsford City Council Cabinet

13th October 2026

Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Strategy

Report by:

Cabinet Member for a Fairer Chelmsford

Officer Contact:

Paul Gayler, Strategic Housing Services Manager, paul.gayler@chelmsford.gov.uk Tel: 01245 606375

Purpose

To present to Members, for approval, a revised version of the Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy which has been amended to reflect national requirements which have been introduced by central government after the publication of the Council's current version in autumn 2025.

Options

1. Approve the revised version being adopted as the Council's statutory strategy for homelessness and rough sleeping

2. Request further amendments in which case the pre-existing strategy will continue to be the Council's strategy in the meantime.

Preferred Option and Reason

Option 1 is the preferred option as the Council is required to have an up-to-date strategy including recent amendments as stipulated by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) by December 2026.

Recommendations

1. Approve the revised version of the Council's statutory strategy for homelessness and rough sleeping, as attached at Appendix 1.

Summary of Key Points

It is a legal requirement of the Housing Act that all Local Housing Authorities review the level and causes of homelessness, producing a strategy no less than once every five years which is monitored and kept under review.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) require all strategies to reflect the government's National Plan to End Homelessness published in

December 2025 including the completion of an action plan by autumn 2026 which has necessitated a need to review and revise the Council's strategy approved in 2025.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Housing Act requires all local housing authorities to produce a strategy for addressing homelessness and rough sleeping no less than once every five years. These should be informed by a review of housing need, developed in consultation with partners, especially social care (Essex County Council), and monitored regularly.

1.2 The Council carried out a review and published a new strategy last year, shortly afterwards, in December 2025, the government published its National Plan to End Homelessness. This plan introduced a new performance framework and themes which all homelessness strategies had to include within the following 12 months.

1.3 Initially it was thought that the Council would be able to update the existing strategy by carrying out a review including performance in delivering the action plan over the past year and create an addendum as a way of bringing it up to date with these new requirements. This was presented to the Council's Policy Board on 25th June 2026 and approved for consultation.

1.4 In response to consultation, MHCLG advised that this proposed revision should take into account the structure and guidance in the recently published toolkit for creating new homelessness strategies. This includes new criteria for assessing a local housing authority's performance against some national indicators and a requirement that action plans should be agreed and published by Autumn 2026.

2. Changes

2.1 The intervening guidance requires a clear emphasis on:

a) Prevention – understanding and addressing the main causes of homelessness and working with partners to identify those at risk of losing their homes at the earliest possible stage.

b) Accommodation – improving the supply of affordable homes provided through Planning policies, private landlords, those that provide support and meeting the need for temporary accommodation.

c) Support – identifying the need for support as well as housing to ensure those at risk have the most comprehensive range of services available to mitigate the impact of homelessness and improve the prospects for avoiding this in the future.

2.2 In many ways, these issues were already included in the proposed revision to the existing strategy but needed to be clearly explained. This has been done along with a clear reference to the national guidance.

2.3 The new guidance also makes clear that homelessness strategies are now expected to contribute to the Local Outcome Framework for monitoring progress in meeting national priorities that are delivered at a local level. This includes

specific indicators which need to have actions and targets included within a new strategy. These indicators have been clearly outlined along with our aims in our final version and will be critical to future funding from MHCLG. Once again, these were considered in our previous revision of the strategy, they have now been given greater prominence and will be important strategic issues. The indicators are as follows:

- The number of households with children in temporary accommodation: with a significant shortfall in the supply of affordable family homes this will be a very challenging objective to meet. Increasing a supply of supported housing for families could help us reverse the current trend of rising numbers.

- Number of families with children in B&B for more than 6 weeks: our focus on meeting the need for temporary accommodation has meant this risk has been well managed but we can not be complacent when looking at past trends, this is linked to our ability to reduce the need for temporary accommodation and improve supply as mentioned above.

- Percentage of cases where homelessness has been prevented or relieved: our ability to prevent and relieve homelessness requires a combination of experienced officers and other resources, some of which will rely on cooperation from partners providing a range of accommodation and support.

- Percentage of duties owed where homelessness was prevented or relieved for households experiencing multiple disadvantage: this has yet to be clearly defined but we have already begun to work with partners to improve our ability to help those leaving hospital, prison, or suffering from mental health or domestic abuse.

- Number of people sleeping rough on a single night: this is information collated on an annual basis, currently the figure for Chelmsford has been around the national average.

- Number of people sleeping rough each month who are known to be long-term rough sleepers: this has been rising gradually over the past few years to above the national average and is a combination of local people and others who come into then often move on from Chelmsford.

2.4 In response to guidance from MHCLG this latest version of the revision to the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy takes all of the above into account and sets targets which will show our progress in achieving these over the next four years.

3. Conclusion

3.1. This final version of our revision to the previous homelessness strategy is compliant with the latest guidance and response from MHCLG (as of beginning of September 2026).

3.2. The version approved by Policy Board was circulated to local statutory and voluntary organisations and to Essex County Council who provided a detailed and comprehensive response which has been addressed in this new version, together with the comments from MHCLG.

3.3. Once approved, this final version will be submitted to MHCLG showing that the Council has met their requirements in adopting the main elements of the National Plan to End Homelessness. This includes the compilation of an action plan which will be commenced by autumn 2026.

List of appendices:

Appendix 1 - Revised Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Strategy 2026 - 2030

Background papers:

A National Plan to End Homelessness https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-national-plan-to-end-homelessness/a-national-plan-to-end-homelessness

Corporate Implications

Corporate Implication	Response
Legal/Constitutional	This decision falls to Cabinet to determine. The Council has a statutory duty under the Homelessness Act 2002 to approve and adopt a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. The Council is permitted to modify the policy and in doing so should consult such public or local authorities, voluntary organisations or other persons as they consider appropriate. These requirements have been complied with in modifying the policy to reflect the latest government guidance.
Financial	Future allocation of Homelessness Prevention Grant will be influenced by the Council's compliance with MHCLG guidance and performance.
Potential impact on climate change and the environment	No significant environmental impacts identified
Contribution toward achieving a net zero carbon position by 2030	The proposal is neutral on carbon emissions
Personnel	No significant staffing implications
Risk Management	Prevention and reduction of homelessness reduces the resources needed to meet legal duties and thereby reduces the risk of failing to comply with statutory duties.
Equality and Diversity	An EQIA has been completed which indicates how the proposed strategy aims to reduce barriers to services for some with protected characteristics
Health and Safety	There are no health and safety implications.
Digital	There are no digital implications

Other	The proposal supports and enables greater levels of partnership working, support for local voluntary organisations, strengthening of local community and promoting the reputation of the Council in responding to homelessness.

Equality Impact Assessment

Assessment of impact

Using the information above, assess if the policy / function could potentially disproportionately impact on different protected groups.

Specify if the potential impact is positive, could adversely impact or if there is no impact. If an adverse impact, indicate how the impact will be mitigated.

Please note any data used in the impact assessment should be anonymised and with due regard given to data privacy in line with GDPR.

Characteristic	Positive impact	Could adversely impact	No impact	How different groups could be affected	Actions to reduce negative or increase positive impact
Age What will the impact be on different age groups such as younger or older people?	X			The strategy recognises the need to address homelessness for younger and older people	Improving the availability of supported accommodation for younger people and reviewing the prevalence and causes of homelessness for older people are included in the strategy
Disability Consider all disabilities such as hearing loss, dyslexia etc as well as access issues for wheelchair users where appropriate	X			Improved provision of emergency accommodation for disabled people at risk of homelessness	The strategy aims to improve the provision of temporary and supported housing for those who need wheelchair access, people suffering with mental health
Pregnancy and maternity Pregnant women and new and breastfeeding Mums	X				The Housing Act recognises pregnancy and families with children should be seen as being in priority need, the strategy

Characteristic	Positive impact	Could adversely impact	No impact	How different groups could be affected	Actions to reduce negative or increase positive impact
					therefore ensures the Council can meet its legal duties to this group
Marriage or Civil Partnership Could this policy discriminate on the grounds of marriage or civil partnership			X		
Sex Is the service used by people of both male and female biological characteristics or intersex and are the sexes given equal opportunity?	X			Some forms of homelessness have higher proportions of male / female representation	The strategy recognises that some existing services may have gender presumption and bias, such as rough sleepers and ex-offenders being predominately male, victims of domestic abuse being female. The strategy seeks to avoid the risk of exclusion and improve provision to achieve this.
Gender reassignment Is there an impact on people who are going through or who have completed Gender Reassignment?			X		Should not be an issue in determining and responding to legal duties under the homelessness legislation.

Characteristic	Positive impact	Could adversely impact	No impact	How different groups could be affected	Actions to reduce negative or increase positive impact
Additionally, is there an impact on people with different gender identity?					
Religion or belief Includes not having religion or belief			X		As above but consideration will be given to ensure housing and support services do not restrict or limit access on these grounds
Sexual Orientation What is the impact on people of different sexual orientation such heterosexual, lesbian, gay or bisexual people?			X		
Race Includes ethnic or national origins			X		
Are there any other groups who could find it difficult to	X			A number of these groups are over-represented	Specific actions and issues are considered and addressed in the

Characteristic	Positive impact	Could adversely impact	No impact	How different groups could be affected	Actions to reduce negative or increase positive impact
access or make use of the policy / function? For example: low income / people living in rural areas / single parents / carers and the cared for / past offenders / long-term unemployed / housebound / history of domestic abuse / people who don't speak English as a first language / people without computer access etc.				within the homelessness population	strategy, such as the housing need of ex-offenders, victims of domestic abuse, families on low income, English as a second language.

Consultation on Equality Impact Assessment

N/A

Equality Impact Assessment Conclusion

Decision	Explanation
☐ **Continue the policy with no changes** *[For example: evidence suggests no potential for discrimination / all opportunities have been taken to advance equality.]*	The legislation and guidance regarding homelessness inevitably affects a higher-than-average proportion of those at risk of exclusion. Locally issues such as disabilities, victims of domestic abuse, mental health, young people

	leaving care, hospital or granted leave to remain require additional consideration to improve existing services for these groups.
☐ **Continue the policy with adjustments** *[For example: Low risk of negative impact / actions or adjustments would further improve positives or remove a potential negative impact.]*	
☐ **Adverse impact but continue** *[For example: Negative impact has been objectively justified.]*	
☐ **Suspend or withdraw the policy for further review / consideration of alternative proposals** *[For example: High risk of negative impact for any group / insufficient evidence / need to involve or consult with protected groups / negative impact which cannot be mitigated or justified / unlawful discrimination etc.]*	

Consultees:

Essex County Council Social Care, Probation Service, CHESS, HMP Chelmsford, Sanctus, Phoenix Futures, Sanctuary Housing Association, Delta Housing, Safer Places, Next Chapter, Housing Dilemmas, Mind, DWP, Maldon District Council, Brentwood Borough Council, Cool to Be Kind.

Relevant Policies and Strategies:

Housing Strategy

Housing Allocations Policy



Chelmsford City Council Review and Revision of Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Strategy 2025-2030

Chelmsford City Council

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Section 1: Introduction



All local housing authorities are required to develop, publish and monitor a strategy which sets out how they will meet their legal duties to those who are homeless in their area.

These strategies are required to be for no more than five years but in practice with so many changes to the law, policy, resources and the multitude of factors which have an influence on homelessness, these strategies have to be regularly reviewed and updated if they are to remain effective.

In December 2025 the government published a National Plan to End Homelessness, introducing a new framework for evaluating the performance of Local Housing Authorities in meeting the aims. Accompanying this is a Local Plan to End Homelessness, a toolkit for reviewing and renewing Homelessness Strategies. This addendum has been produced in accordance with this new guidance.

Section 2:
Review of our Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Strategy



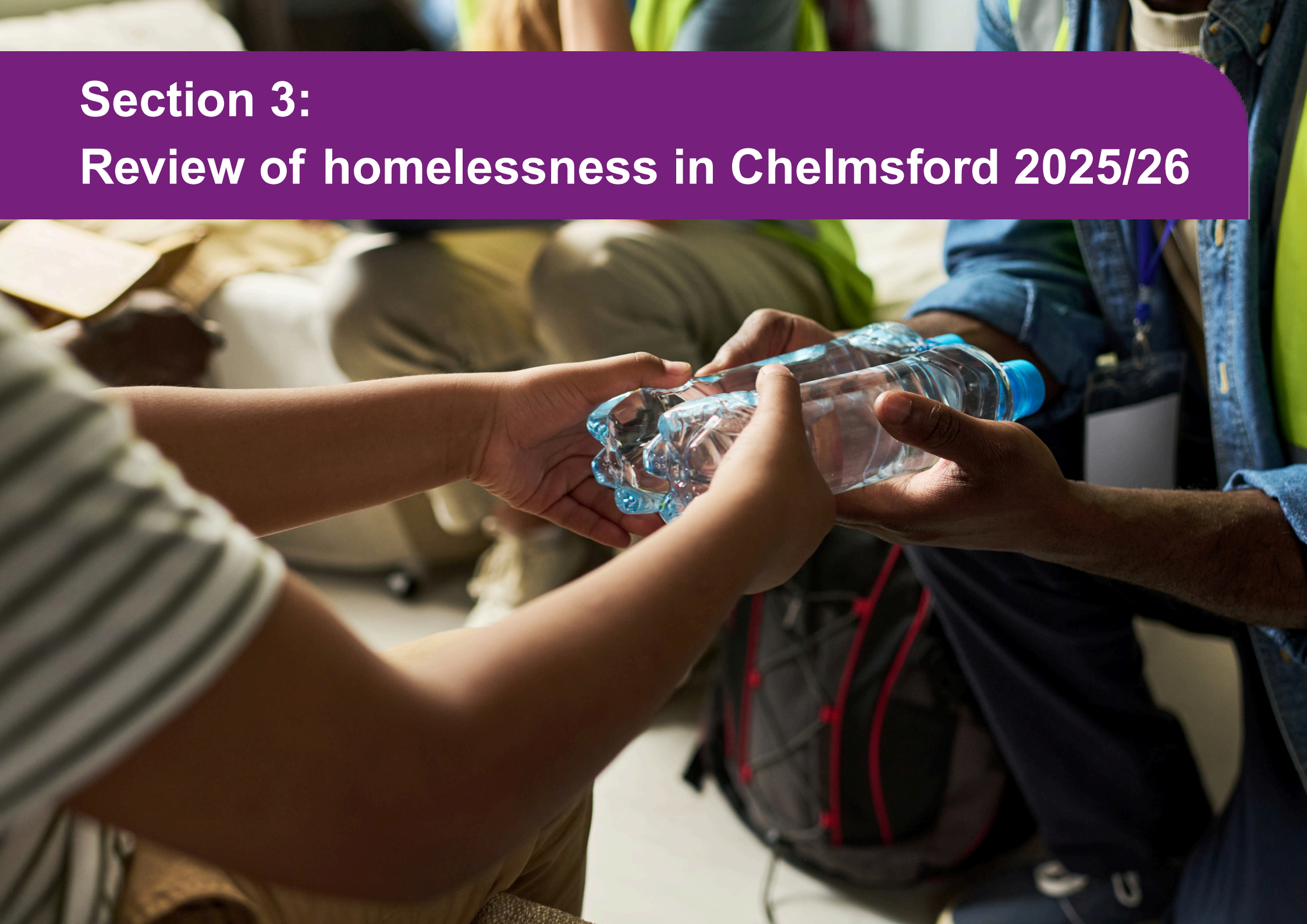
The review of the current strategy shows what in the action plan has been achieved in the first year, what remains outstanding and possibly what needs to be reconsidered.

Our achievements in the first 12 months of the strategy include:

- Relaunched our Housing First project with Delta providing intensive housing support for rough sleepers.
- Worked with CHESS to provide 24 new units of supported housing for those with a more entrenched history of rough sleeping.
- Established a local multi-agency Domestic Abuse Forum to tackle the high level of homelessness caused by domestic abuse.
- Created additional safe and supported accommodation with direct access for those who have become homeless due to domestic abuse.
- Worked with Safer Places to launch My Home My Choice, enabling victims of domestic abuse to make a more informed decision about their housing options.
- Launched a pilot scheme with SETDAB and Southend City Council to remove perpetrators of domestic abuse from the home so their partners do not become homeless.
- Enabled Sanctuary Housing to provide an additional 30 units of supported accommodation for people experiencing mental health problems as a better alternative to temporary accommodation.
- Pilot scheme with Delta Housing using chain-lettings to improve the use and supply of social housing for families.
- Secured AFEO funding, enabling us to review and continue the scheme with Housing Dilemmas and Probation Service providing supported housing for those who are homeless as a result of leaving prison.
- Worked with Probation and the Ministry of Justice to employ a Housing and Probation Navigator, improving communication and best use of resources between these agencies.
- Progressing plans with YMCA Essex for the development of Foyer scheme for young homeless people in Chelmsford.
- Progressed working with Ukrainian families and their sponsors under the Homes for Ukraine scheme to move as many as possible into settled accommodation and employment.
- Improve housing and support options for those who have become homeless from Home Office accommodation in Chelmsford as a result of being granted leave to remain.
- Reduced the increase in the need and cost of temporary accommodation.
- Reviewed and renewed our contracts for the commissioning of temporary accommodation with private landlords.
- Improved communication and understanding of local housing issues in Chelmsford by producing regular newsletter for local organisations.

There remains a number of actions which we want to either carry forward or review and amend. Some of these have been carried forward into our new action plan, others amended to reflect the change of format and requirements created by the new national strategy.

Section 3:
Review of homelessness in Chelmsford 2025/26



In the last year the number of cases assessed as homeless by the Council was 1,051, 40 more than the previous year.

The main causes of homelessness remained the same as before:

Eviction by family and friends	Domestic abuse
349	**152**
an **increase** of 6%	an **reduction** of 19%

Leaving an institution (hospital or prison)	Notice from private landlords (Section 21)
134	**225**
an **increase** of 15%	an **increase** of 8%

The most noticeable changes are the reduction in homelessness caused by domestic abuse which now makes Chelmsford more comparable with the regional and national averages. The greatest increase was those made homeless following discharge from an institution, in looking into the background of these cases this is particularly discharge from hospital.

Looking at the early trends for 2026/27 we anticipate the following:



Eviction by family and friends will remain the most common cause of homelessness at around similar levels to those in the last two to three years;



Notice from private landlords will reduce by around 30% as a result of the recent changes introduced by the Renters' Rights Act;



Domestic abuse will continue to be one of the main causes at a similar level to the previous year but much lower than it was before then; and



Discharge from hospital and prison may continue to increase but there will be a reduction in the number of refugees presenting as homeless in Chelmsford.



The **Homelessness Reduction Act** requires housing authorities to attempt to prevent homelessness wherever possible before considering if there is a duty to provide settled housing. In the **last year we prevented or relieved 353 cases of possible homelessness**, which is 25% of all approaches.

This is often only possible by helping people retain or move into privately rented homes; **62 households** were helped using our **Rent Deposit and Tenancy Access schemes** in 2025/26 at a cost of **£243,949**. This was a lower number than in the previous year when 68 households were helped at a cost of £210,417, highlighting the rising cost of private rent and possibly the reducing supply.

Over the same period, the supply of homes available to allocate through the **Housing Register fell to 195**, the first time this has been below 200 and far lower than the **annual need of 623 homes** assessed as being needed in the Council's Strategic Housing Assessment in 2023.

Section 4:
Review of accommodation

Critical to our ability to relief and resolve homelessness is the supply of accommodation. In the past this has been dealt with as part of a wider Housing Strategy but following recent guidance we have provided an up- to-date outline below following the headings in the government's toolkit for developing a homelessness strategy.



Social and affordable housing

The most recent assessment of the need for affordable housing in Chelmsford is the Strategic Housing Needs Assessment 2024 which calculated a net annual need of 602 homes.

Actual supply has never achieved this, over the last five years the average number of new affordable homes has been 116 a year. The average overall number of lettings has been 290 a year over the same period but has been declining for more than a decade, in 2024/25 there were only 250 homes in total including new-build to allocate and in 2025/26 this supply fell to its lowest ever level of 195, less than a third of the supply needed to meet the assessed need.

The existing pipeline of new affordable homes does not suggest a significant improvement so we are looking at ways to improve the supply from the existing housing stock.

- **Chain lettings** – we have worked with Delta Housing to allocate new homes to families in urgent need whose existing homes could be freed up and then allocated to others, effectively doubling the actual supply.
- **Tackling under-occupation** – many people are in affordable homes that are no longer suited to their needs and lifestyles, finding opportunities to develop new homes that they want as well as need will create a sustainable way to meet their needs and to also increase the turnover or supply of existing homes.

Both these initiatives will mitigate but not solve the chronic problem of lack of supply to meet local housing needs.

Following the review of our current strategy and new guidance, **actions in this strategy include:**

- Exploring opportunities and best practice with local Registered Providers to create additional supply from existing stock.
- Development of new affordable homes which creates a sustainable improvement to the supply (turnover) of affordable homes in Chelmsford.
- Review of the Council's Housing Allocations policy to maximise the use of affordable homes and ensure this is also supporting our statutory duties to those who are at risk of homelessness.
- Joint working with Registered Providers to improve support for tenants to help them sustain their tenancies and reduce the risk of homelessness.

New targets

- A continuous **reduction in the number of households evicted** from social housing in Chelmsford compared to the previous 5-year average of 91 per year 2020/2025.
- A **reduction in the increase of families in temporary housing** needing the largest homes – currently rising by more than 10% per year.
- An **increase in the annual supply** of general needs affordable homes available to allocate each year.

Supported housing supply

In response to the national programme to accommodate all rough sleepers during the pandemic, we worked with local housing charities using funding made available from programmes such as Rough Sleepers' Accommodation Programme (RSAP) and Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP) to create an additional supply of supported accommodation for single homeless.

Since then, we have continued to use other sources of funding such as Accommodation for Ex Offenders (AFEO), Single Homeless Accommodation Programme (SHAP) and our Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG) to expand still further the supply of supported accommodation in Chelmsford. In just over five years we now have an additional 132 bedspaces with support, including for victims of domestic abuse and people suffering with mental health.

This is the equivalent of nearly two years supply of one-bedroom homes, it is essential that we work with these landlords to secure a supply of move-on accommodation in order to meet our future housing need from this sector.



Included in the action plan for this revised strategy, we also aim to create more supported housing for young people, people being discharged from hospital and victims of domestic abuse.

A more detailed assessment and plans for the future supply of supported housing will follow later this year when we complete our Supported Housing Strategy.

Our action plan has been updated to include:

- Enabling the provision of more supported housing, in particular to meet the most common needs for support, i.e. domestic abuse and mental health.
- The development of a Supported Housing Strategy that complements the aims of this strategy.
- Working with Probation amending the use of AFEO funding to create more flexibility, choice and value for money

New target

This will support our aim of creating an additional 60 units of supported housing within the next 4 years of this strategy.

Private sector housing

Each year our Housing Service helps 60 to 70 households find and secure accommodation with private landlords.

The higher-than-average cost of buying or renting a home in Chelmsford means that it is now extremely difficult to find an opportunity to rent in the city if on a low income or benefits.
In 2025/26 the shortfall between the average rent for a 1-bedroom property and Local Housing Allowance was around £200 a month, for a family needing a 3-bedroom home the shortfall is approaching £700 a month.

The Renters' Rights Act has in some ways created a more level playing field between private and social rent in terms of the length of tenancies, protection from eviction and levels of regulation so we will now be considering ways of using this sector to supplement some of the shortfall in the need and supply of affordable homes.

We have therefore updated our action plan to include:

- Working with our Housing Standards Team to support the new Private Landlords' Forum
- Working with private landlords to reduce barriers homeless families in particular face when trying to find rented homes to prevent or relieve homelessness
- Reviewing and amending our policies for providing financial assistance to help families access private tenancies

Set a **target** of increasing by 20% the number of households helped through our rent deposit and tenancy assistance schemes compared to the current annual average.

Low-cost or shared ownership

The government's guidance suggests considering how other forms of affordable housing such as shared-ownership, sub-market rent or discounted sale may be used to prevent or relieve homelessness.

The cost, lack of nomination rights and availability mean that in practice privately renting is almost always more affordable and accessible but we shall make sure that officers are aware of these options for cases of homelessness where there is sufficient income and / or capital for this to be feasible.



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Temporary accommodation



The continuous reduction in the supply (lettings) of social housing accounts for the growing number of households in temporary accommodation, rising from 523 to 587 over the last 12 months. Of these, 178 need a 1-bedroom home and will mainly be single people or adult couples, the remaining 409 households will be families with children.

The table below shows the changes in the number of households in temporary accommodation by size and the supply of affordable housing available in 2025/26.

Bedroom needed	April 2024	April 2025	Homes available 2025/26
1-bed	178	172	**75***
2-bed	190	162	**84**
3-bed	138	124	**34**
4-bed+	81	65	**2**
Total	**587**	**523**	**195**

*In 2025/26 we enable the provision of more than 40 units of supported accommodation for single people

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The smaller increase in 1-bedroom cases in temporary accommodation reflects the increase in the supply of supported housing as an alternative over the last twelve months.

Currently single and smaller households face a wait of **two to three years in temporary accommodation** before being likely to be moving on through the Housing Register. For larger **families needing a 3-bedroom home this is likely to be four to five years** and for those needing the largest homes their wait will be far longer.

B&B is only used for families with children in cases where no other option exists and if used this has been for very short periods, avoiding the risk of exceeding the 6-week time limit.

Chelmsford City Council now **owns or leases over 140 properties** used to provide temporary accommodation in Chelmsford, **70 more homes are owned by other Registered Providers** which means that around a third of all temporary accommodation used by our Council provides protection from eviction as required for those who have a legal entitlement to settled housing but are waiting for a suitable offer.

By the end of March 2026, 367 households were in temporary accommodation provided by private landlords as **'nightly lets'**. These are more costly and less secure but have become essential, ensuring some accommodation is available at short notice. Our aim is to restrict the use of nightly let accommodation to those being assessed under s188 of the Housing Act, once a duty to settled accommodation is agreed under s193 of the same Act, all households should be moved to a form of temporary accommodation that provides some protection from eviction in accordance with the Act.

Too many households are having to be placed into properties that are outside of the Chelmsford area. **As of August 2026 there were 365 households currently being accommodated out of area**. Of these out of area households there are 251 households that have children aged under 18 and 94 are single households. We need to increase the supply of more suitable options, this includes supported housing for single people who have support needs and more temporary accommodation as well as general needs affordable housing for families in Chelmsford.



Image 1 (top):
Existing modular housing in Chelmsford





Image 2 (bottom):
Planned modular housing in Meteor Way

In the short term, we want to explore the possibility of helping families in temporary accommodation outside of Chelmsford secure permanent housing in that area, minimising disruption to the family and avoiding the risk of children not being able to access schools.

We will also review and reconsider the need for a **new Temporary Accommodation Strategy**, recognising that the need for this type of accommodation is no longer a temporary issue for the majority.

Some immediate actions to be included in this strategy will be:

- Securing an agreement with a local landlord to provide an additional 60 units of temporary accommodation in the centre of Chelmsford – this will reduce the need to use temporary accommodation in other areas and we hope will also provide wheel-chair accessible units reducing the need for hotel accommodation.
- Progressing the development of modular homes on Council-owned land – this will also be in the centre of Chelmsford, reducing the disruption to families and be designed to high levels of insulation and energy efficiency making them less expensive for families to maintain.
- Renew our fixed-term contacts with local providers of temporary accommodation – through procurement we aim to secure the majority of nightly let provision with local agencies giving us assurance about the future supply and greater certainty over the cost.
- Review the outcomes from the pilot scheme providing additional support to the most vulnerable families in temporary accommodation
- Develop targets for the length of stay in temporary accommodation, especially for those groups for whom the prospect of being accommodated through the Housing Register is very limited.
- Creating more supported housing for the most vulnerable families as a better alternative to general needs temporary accommodation.
- Conduct a review into the future need and supply of temporary accommodation to inform our future strategic plans.

Rough sleeping



Homelessness Strategies must include a specific section about rough sleeping in their area.

In 2025/26 the annual snapshot of people sleeping rough in Chelmsford was 19. Although this is a robust and verified assessment, we know that Chelmsford often has higher numbers sleeping rough. The average number of people sleeping rough at anytime over a month in the past year was 27 but it inevitably will vary from one night to the next.

Nationally 8.2 of 100,000 of the population is sleeping rough, this has almost doubled over the last five years and is a 171% increase from 2010. In Chelmsford our rough sleeper population has increased but not at such a rapid rate, 66% over the last five years and around 100% since 2010.

In the last few years a significant proportion of those sleeping rough have come to Chelmsford after becoming homeless elsewhere so we need to be able to distinguish between this group and those who originate from Chelmsford in order to accurately benchmark our performance in the future.

Over the last 10 years Chelmsford City Council has worked with partners to improve the range and quality of services to help those who are street homeless, this has led to a higher number of people coming into the city from surrounding areas which is understandable but also a reduction for many of these in the length of time they then spend sleeping rough.

We have learnt from our work with rough sleeping over the last decade in Chelmsford that this is a diverse community, some with no previous experience of homelessness spending no more than one or two nights before accessing help to move into accommodation, through to a small number who have been sleeping rough for much longer, often with complex and multiple needs for support and care. Our approach needs to reflect all aspects of this diverse range.

As our engagement and support with people sleeping rough in Chelmsford over the past few years has developed, we realise that a significant number are not people from Chelmsford. This does not limit the offers of help we provide in the first instance but it can be harder helping these people to engage and access support, especially from statutory services such as health, social care and probation.

We therefore want to continue to develop our approach to reducing rough sleeping by having a range of services which can create a more bespoke solution to each individual case, especially those who have become entrenched.

Some additional actions from this review reflect the National Plan to End Homelessness, an assessment of the most common needs of support for those sleeping rough and ways we can work with partners to prevent as well as relieve rough sleeping.

These actions are:

- Implement the government's **Rough Sleeping Programme 2026/27** to ensure that anyone from Chelmsford at risk of sleeping rough can be provided accommodation with a plan to move on.
- Progress plans for a scheme to relieve homelessness for those being **discharged from hospital**.
- Increase the supply of temporary accommodation that can accommodate people with **disabilities / wheelchair accessible** in the centre of our city.
- Reinstate and expand support for those with **mental health support needs** who are at risk of being excluded or overlooked by existing services.
- **Commission outreach services** for the mid Essex area with our neighbouring authorities providing early intervention.
- Work with Probation and HMP Chelmsford to recommission services funded by the **Accommodation for Ex Offenders (AFEO)** funding to create wider choice and availability of accommodation for those **homeless from prison**.

Domestic abuse

This has been the third most common cause of homelessness in Chelmsford for decades and in recent years cases presenting to Chelmsford have been far higher than the regional and national averages. For this reason, we see a need to include this in our review of homelessness in addition to the categories from MHCLG.

Actions in the current strategy included a pilot scheme to relocate perpetrators with Cranstoun Housing and My Home My Choice initiative by Safer Places helping people make better- informed decisions about their housing options. In 2025/26 these actions helped reduce this cause of homelessness by 20% in Chelmsford.

Having identified ways to prevent homelessness, we must also balance this with ways to ensure we can also relieve homelessness as well, accepting that these new solutions will not provide a suitable option for all cases.

- We remain committed to enabling more **safe accommodation with support** including some dispersed properties for those who will need longer periods needing support or waiting for a suitable offer of settled accommodation.
- Explore the need and opportunity to include those who have involvement with the criminal justice system, as victims or perpetrators and may otherwise be excluded from existing services.
- Work with our **Domestic Abuse Board and the Police Fire and Crime Commissioner** to secure funding to maintain and expand the project relocating perpetrators.



Section 5:
Revising our Strategy



In December 2025 the government published A National Plan to End Homelessness
www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-national-plan-to-end-homelessness

This has five pillars or themes which local homelessness strategies now need to incorporate:

1. Universal prevention of homelessness	2. Targeted prevention of homelessness	3. Preventing crisis	4. Improving emergency responses	5. Recovery
Improving the supply and making best use of affordable, supported and privately rented housing to **reduce the gap** between need and supply.	Identifying and targeting resources for those who we know will be **at greatest risk** of becoming homeless.	Helping people **retain their homes**, or if they are already homeless improving the response to provide housing and support to relieve their homelessness.	There will remain a need for temporary and emergency accommodation so we must ensure it is as suitable as it can possibly be and adequate support is provided to help manage the often complex issues that are associated with homelessness.	Preventing repeat homelessness. Around 20% of those who present as homeless to Chelmsford City Council have had previous experience of homelessness and this is particularly common amongst single homeless and those with a history of rough sleeping.

1 Universal prevention of homelessness

Our Housing Strategy 2022 – 2027 is due to be reviewed and renewed, this will set out our plans for improving the supply of homes to meet our local housing needs, especially for affordable and supported housing.

By spring 2027 we will also need to have in place a Supported Housing Strategy as a requirement of the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act which will complement both our Housing and Homelessness Strategies.

In the meantime, we will supplement the action plan for this strategy by developing the following actions:

- **Promote the role of our Tenancy Sustainment Officer** to both social and private landlords in Chelmsford and review this in 2027 to see if there are ways it can be improved or need additional resources.
- **Introduce additional resources into the Strategic Housing Service** to improve our partners' abilities to understand our need for affordable homes and improve the supply of both new-build and the existing stock.
- **Continue to work with Registered Providers** to provide support to their tenants at risk of domestic abuse to find ways to avoid the risk of homelessness.
- **Re-launch our Think Before You Serve scheme** providing help and support to private landlords.
- **Continue to develop supported housing** especially in response to the most common causes of homelessness and the need for support.
- **Re-launch our Homeless Families' Forum** to improve awareness of the risks of homelessness and improve the range of support available.

2 Targeted prevention of homelessness

We see **two ways** of improving the way we target the prevention of homelessness.

1. **By addressing the most common causes of homelessness** – eviction by family and friends, eviction from privately rented accommodation, domestic abuse and having to leave institutions such as hospitals and prisons.
2. **By addressing particular groups** who though small in number may be especially vulnerable and at a much higher risk of homelessness than the majority of the population, such as those with a history of rough sleeping, ex-offenders, mental health and refugees.

Effective targeting requires us to provide a range of different options specific to particular causes or groups, so we shall review, develop and explore the following:

- **Homelessness at Home Scheme** – supporting family and friends to understand the range of housing options available, being honest and managing expectations, helping wherever possible people to make a planned move and avoid the risk of homelessness.
- **Review and promote our Think Before You Serve scheme** for private landlords. The introduction of the Renters' Rights Act gives more rights to tenants but does not eliminate the risk of eviction. The need to obtain court orders can create delay and costs for landlords which may be possible to be reduced or avoided.
- **Work with the local domestic abuse forum** to embed the projects which we have set up over the last year and explore the opportunity to extend these, further reducing this as a cause of homelessness in Chelmsford.
- **Review and develop the AFEO scheme** and our work with Probation and HMP Chelmsford, reducing the risk of homelessness for those involved with the criminal justice system.
- **Work with Chelmsford's Single Homelessness Forum** to support and expand support for those who have experienced rough sleeping, maintaining their pathway to independent living and reducing the risk of homelessness in the future.
- **Delivering a programme of accommodation and support with Beam** for refugees who have become homeless, improving their ability to access accommodation, training and employment.
- **Review and develop with supported housing providers** such as Sanctuary and Mind schemes which address the gaps locally for those suffering with mental health and homelessness.
- **Review and commission Housing First scheme with Delta** for entrenched rough sleepers.
- **Progress plans to provide accommodation with support** for those discharged from hospital at short notice

3 Preventing crisis

Some of the actions above will help reduce the risk of people falling into homelessness and crisis. We have to be realistic as to the extent that we are able to go beyond our role as a housing authority to take on additional responsibilities that are beyond our knowledge and expertise.

The government recognises in the national strategy that: “Achieving this vision requires a culture change across homelessness services and the wider public sector.”

In 2026 we shall be expanding our Homelessness Team to improve their capacity to respond to enquiries and approaches about homelessness, with the intention of also reducing their caseloads below the current excessively high level towards of target of below 50.



We shall also work in collaboration with public, private and voluntary organisations in Chelmsford to improve their ability to recognise the risks of homelessness and direct support towards more timely ways to prevent this. This will include:

- Monitoring the use of and raising awareness of their **legal Duty to Refer clients** at risk of homelessness.
- Balancing this with **regular information about the local housing situation in Chelmsford** to manage expectations, emphasising the consequences of becoming homeless and thereby the importance of prevention.
- Explore the benefits of creating a **multi-disciplinary safeguarding group**, informed by local Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews (DARDR) and other reports to encourage earlier intervention and prevention of risks linked to homelessness.
- **Review and update existing agreements** for the use of some supported accommodation so that it can include those who are at risk of homelessness, thereby creating a way of preventing homelessness.
- Continue to work to **re-establish a mental health navigator** to assist with the diagnosis and treatment for those who are not only homeless but also at risk of becoming homeless.

Under this heading, we are also now seeing a small but **growing number of older people in their 60s and 70s who are becoming homeless**. This is not a group we have previously seen and is one that is rarely if ever considered amongst those usually associated with homelessness. We therefore need to gain a better understanding of this.

- **Monitor and analyse cases** of older people becoming homeless and work with other associated organisations to find ways to identify and prevent this from increasing in Chelmsford.
- If necessary, **explore options for providing suitable accommodation** to help relieve homelessness amongst older people including any essential support that may be required.

4 Improving emergency response

The national strategy sets an expectation that the use of temporary accommodation will be reduced. Preventing homelessness can help achieve this but this has to be complemented by an adequate supply of suitable and affordable housing, if only for those cases of homelessness that can not be avoided.

Chelmsford continues to experience a critical challenge in meeting the need for affordable homes as outline above and consequently has far more households in temporary accommodation than we would like.

Housing authorities, in complying with the national strategy, must now set out in our action plan how we shall ensure that we procure sufficient properties to meet this need and allocate them fairly.

In addition **"These plans must reflect their duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, and the action they will take to mitigate disruption of support and essential services."**

Our Housing Service has developed and expanded a team dedicated to managing the need for temporary accommodation which currently provides for nearly 600 households, three times the number of homes we have available to allocate each year through the Housing Register. To ensure we are complying with the requirements of the national strategy and more importantly meeting our legal duties to those who need temporary accommodation we shall as part of our revised action plan carry out a full review of this aspect of the Service. This will involve:

- **Review of the process** used to calculate the future requirements for temporary accommodation.
- The renewed procurement of **nightly let providers** of temporary accommodation.
- **A review of the framework agreement** used for using additional temporary accommodation with other providers when necessary.
- **Review and revise agreement with Delta** for management of temporary accommodation owned or leased by Delta or the Council.
- Continue to **increase the supply of temporary and supported accommodation** that has been or can be adapted to meet the needs of those with physical disabilities.
- **Review the existing policies for providing financial assistance** to help families placed out of area to access suitable accommodation in those areas, minimising further disruption and taking into account the lack of capacity in schools in Chelmsford.
- Continue to progress plans to **increase the number of temporary accommodation places** in Chelmsford to reduce the need to place families out of the area, including the largest of families and those with additional support needs.
- Review and seek to re-commission if necessary our scheme for providing **additional support to families with children** in temporary accommodation.

5 Recovery

We know that for many who experience homelessness accommodation alone is not an effective solution. In many cases the causes of homelessness begin with other issues such as domestic abuse and mental health which are particularly prevalent in the support needs identified in the Personal Housing Plans of all applicants to the Council's Homelessness Team.

The most common support needs identified from applicants are provided below.

Support requirement	%
1. History of mental health problems	38%
2. Poor health & disability	23%
3. Risk or experience of domestic abuse	**17%**
4. Learning difficulties	12%
5. History of repeat homelessness	**11%**
6. History of rough sleeping	**11%**



Note that some people will have more than one need hence total is more than 100%. **Those in bold are proportionately higher than other districts in Essex.**

Chelmsford City Council

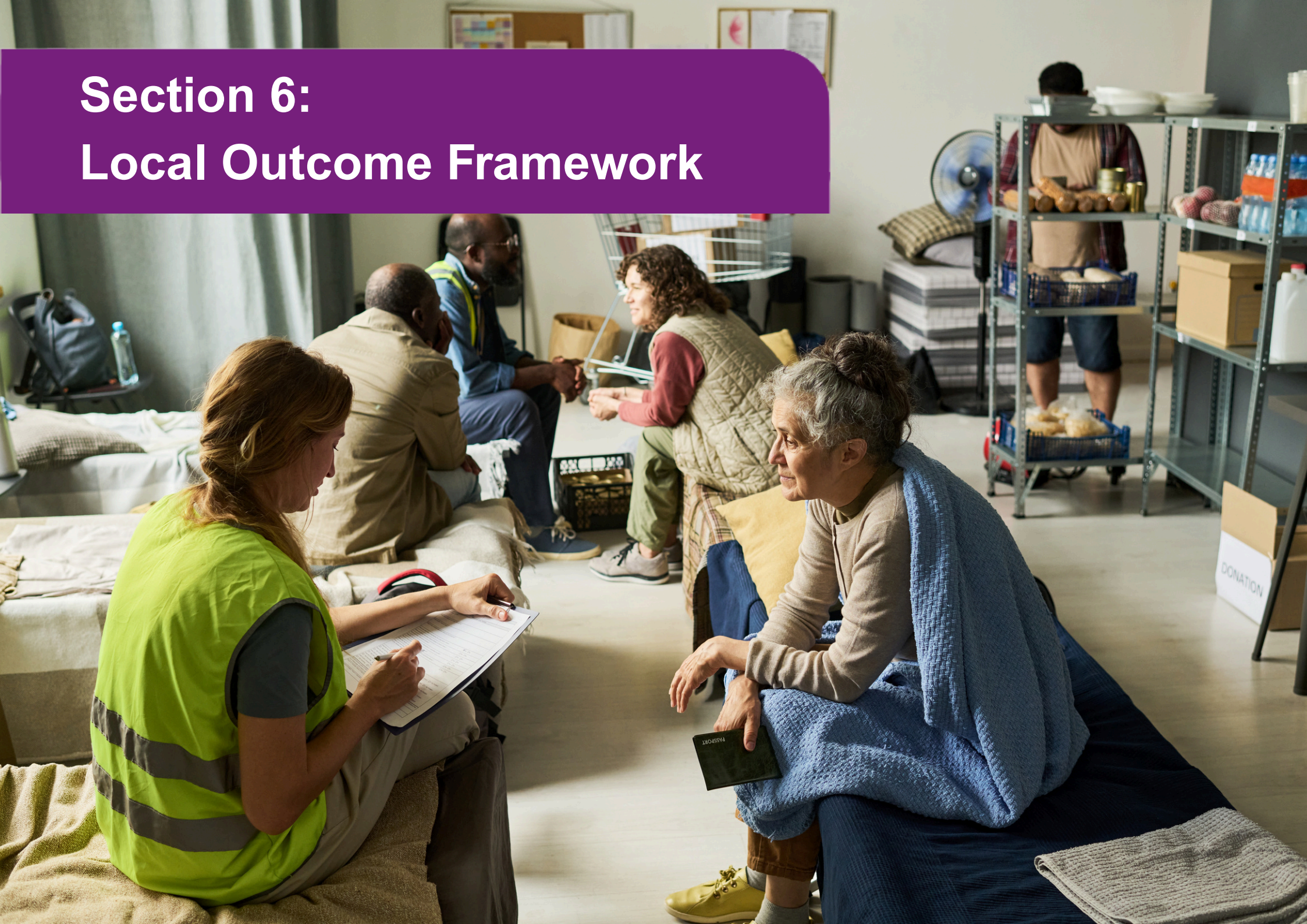
Our current and previous Homelessness Strategies have strengthened our work with a number of partners who are important in helping people manage the experience of homelessness and just as important, the pathway through being housed to managing well enough so that they remain free from the risk of homelessness in the future.

Examples of our existing partnerships include:

- **Rough Sleeper Navigators and Coordinator** – working with local voluntary and statutory organisations.
- **Housing and Probation Navigator** – working to support those who are homeless and under supervision of the Probation Service.
- **Tenancy Sustainment Officer** – working with private and social landlords to help tenants sustain their tenancies.
- **Resettlement Officer** – supporting refugees such as those arriving in Chelmsford under the Homes for Ukraine scheme to access employment and acquire their own homes.
- **Social Care / DWP / Housing officer** – providing support to vulnerable families and single people who have involvement with all three of these organisations in Chelmsford.
- **South Essex and Central Essex Mind** – providing support to families in temporary accommodation and others who need low to medium level support.
- **Disability Working Group** – Social Care, local housing associations and our Housing Allocations team involved with finding and adapting homes to meet the needs of housing applicants with disabilities.
- **Essex County Council Drug and Alcohol Service** – supporting those with issues involving substance abuse.
- **Peabody Floating Support** – commissioned by Essex County Council to help those at risk of homelessness throughout Essex.



Section 6:
Local Outcome Framework



Linked to these key themes, there is now a new framework for evaluating the progress housing authorities are making to achieve the aims of the national strategy. This is part of the government's The Local Outcomes Framework which provides outcomes-based performance measurement against key national priorities delivered at the local level and driven by councils as local leaders of their communities.

Many of actions from previous strategies along with our revised action plan for this revision to our current strategy will serve to meet the government's aims and objectives. From the end of 2026 we will be required to regularly review and update our local action plan by reporting on the following:

a. The number of households with children in temporary accommodation

This will be assessed as a comparison with other housing authorities by recording the number of households per 1,000 of the local area's population. Improving the supply of affordable homes for families will be critical in achieving a reasonable level of performance.

Our aims are:

- **To increase the proportion of temporary accommodation in Chelmsford**, reducing the need to place people in areas outside of our area away from support, employment and education.
- **Reduce the number of families in temporary accommodation** by working with landlords to create a supply of move-on and supported accommodation.
- **Maintain our record of reducing the increase in the need for temporary accommodation** for single people by making better use of supported housing.



b. The number of families in B&B over 6 weeks

Despite the high number of families needing emergency and temporary accommodation, Chelmsford City Council rarely exceeds this but it is essential that we can maintain a supply of suitable alternative temporary accommodation alongside our plans to prevent homelessness and improve the housing supply.

Our aim is to maintain or performance in avoiding the need to place families into B&B accepting emergency cases and then for the shortest possible time.



c. Percentage of duties owed where homelessness was prevented or relieved

This will be measured against the number of cases where a duty to prevent or relieve was owed each quarter. Our success in preventing homelessness has in the past been much better than our ability to relieve homelessness, a reflection of the very limited range of affordable housing options in our city, so we shall have to find new and effective ways of helping people find suitable alternative housing avoiding the need for temporary or homelessness.

Our aim following the implementation of these actions in this strategy will be to increase the number of prevention cases that are positively resolved from 41% in 2025/26 to more than 50% from 2027/28



d. Percentage of duties owed where homelessness was prevented or relieved for homeholds experiencing multiple disadvantage

This will be a sub-group of the previous category but we await more information as to how ‘multiple disadvantage’ will be defined and identified.

e. Number of people sleeping rough on a single night

This will be what is currently recorded and reported as the annual ‘snapshot’ verified by Homelesslink.

f. Number of people sleeping rough each month who are known to be long-term rough sleepers

Long-term in this case means those known to be sleeping rough each month for three or more months each year.

As a result of the actions above our aim will be to maintain a level of rough sleeping below the national average and increases below the national rate.



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Other aspects of the Local Outcomes Framework

The Local Outcomes Framework covers a much broader area than housing and homelessness and some of the other aspects will also have a link to this strategy including:

Housing supply: building the homes the country needs so that everyone has access to a home they can afford – linked to the Council's role as the Local Planning Authority.

Housing quality and safety: making sure everyone has access to a decent, safe, and secure home – linked to the Council's role in the regulation of private landlords and overseeing housing standards.

Multiple disadvantage: improving the lives of adults experiencing multiple disadvantages – linked to our partnership working with Essex County Council social care, Integrated Care Board, Criminal Justice and local voluntary organisations.

Keeping children safe (children's social care): keeping children safe in secure and loving homes and help more families to thrive together – linked to the services supporting families experiencing homelessness.

Health and wellbeing: people live healthier lives for longer and health inequalities are reduced – linked to the provision of Disabled Facilities Grants, supported and specialist housing.

Adult social care – neighbourhood health / integration: people who draw on care and support experience joined up health and social care services at a neighbourhood level – linked to the most vulnerable people who become homeless.

Neighbourhoods: people feel safe and included in their local community and are satisfied with their local area as a place to live – linked to the Council's Community Safety Team, those at risk of domestic abuse and those under the supervision of the Probation Service, as well as the management of rented homes, social and private rent.

Child poverty: reduce and alleviate child poverty to improve children's lives and life chances – including those in homeless families.

Many of these are issues which coincide or contribute to homelessness and have therefore always been part of the scope of previous strategies but this is a helpful framework to make sure our Housing Service and our partners continue to collaborate with a 'whole systems' approach.

The Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act

Throughout 2026 we will be working with a wide range of other organisations including neighbouring housing authorities and Essex County Council to identify the need for housing related support in our area and compare that with the services that currently exist.

This information will help us identify any gaps in Chelmsford and inform an action plan aimed at addressing any shortfall.





Action Plan 2026-2030

Chelmsford City Council

(1) Rough Sleeping					
	Issue	**Action**	**Resources**	**Outcome**	**Timescale**
1.1	Entrenched rough sleepers	Review and consider expansion of Housing First project	Rough Sleeper Programme funding Delta	Housing and support for growing number of more entrenched cases with complex needs	March 2027
1.2	Complex needs	Support the launch of a local multi-disciplinary group too improve awareness and response to those with complex needs	Rough Sleeper Programme funding Contributions from other partners	Reduction in number of complex cases that are excluded from mainstream services	Ongoing
1.3	Reinstate Mental Health Navigator	Explore opportunities with partners to relaunch this role in mid Essex	Post hosted by health/ICB Contributions to funding from Rough Sleeper Programme	Increase and improvement in number of rough sleepers engaging with health and social care to receive help and support with mental health issues	2027/28
1.4	Outreach services	Re-commission existing outreach services in mid Essex	Rough Sleeper Initiative / Homelessness Prevention Grant	Improved coordination of outreach services at a local level	March 2027

(1) Rough Sleeping					
	Issue	**Action**	**Resources**	**Outcome**	**Timescale**
1.5	Prevention of rough sleeping	Development of scheme to reduce the risk of homelessness following discharge from hospital	Units already secured; Revenue funding agreed; Subject to planning	Reduction in most vulnerable becoming street homeless	In use by March 2028
1.6		Review and recommission AFEO scheme	AFEO /Homelessness Prevention Grant funding	Reduction in homelessness following release from prison	From April 2027
1.7		Record cause and location of homelessness for local rough sleepers	Existing (Navigators)	Better under	

(2) Homeless families					
	Issue	**Action**	**Resources**	**Outcome**	**Timescale**
2.1	Improve temporary accommodation	Increase the provision of temporary accommodation in Chelmsford	Redeployment of existing funding	Reduction in number of families placed out of area.	March 2027
2.2		Increase use of modular homes	Capital programme	Reduction in number of families placed out of area	March 2028
2.3		Increase supply of supported accommodation for families in Chelmsford	In partnership with Delta, within existing resources	Better support for families including tenancy sustainment	2027/28
2.4		Review and if necessary, extend existing scheme providing support including help with mental health for vulnerable families in temporary accommodation	In partnership with Mind, MHCLG funding	Reduce risk of tenancy failure and improve access to support	From April 2027
2.5		Renew commissioning of nightly let providers	Existing resources	Secures supply to meet future need	From January 2027

(2) Homeless families					
	Issue	**Action**	**Resources**	**Outcome**	**Timescale**
2.6	Improve the supply of family homes	Progress development of Council-owned sites	Capital programme and Homes England	Improved supply to that expected from planning gain	Ongoing
2.7		Explore opportunities to enable older tenants in social housing to move into more suitable housing	Existing resources of Council and Delta	Improved supply from existing stock	Ongoing
2.8		Increase engagement with private landlords	Existing resources	Supplement existing supply to help families move on from temporary accommodation, remain in their current areas	From April 2027
2.9		Introduce Housing Initiatives Officer as new role	Existing resources	Additional capacity to work with partners on improving supply of affordable and supported housing	From January 2027
2.10	Review Rent Deposit Scheme	Identify most cost-effective way to help families access privately rented accommodation	Existing resources	Increase options and reduce need / length of stay for families in temporary accommodation	April 2027

(2) Homeless families					
	Issue	**Action**	**Resources**	**Outcome**	**Timescale**
2.11	Prevention of homelessness	Review the role of Tenancy Sustainment Officer	Existing resources	Identify ways to increase the number of families prevented from becoming homeless	April – Sept 2027
2.12		Explore feasibility and need of re-establishing Homeless Families' Forum	Existing resources	Improves local network of services able to help families avoid homelessness	April – Sept 2027
(3) Domestic abuse					
	Issue	**Action**	**Resources**	**Outcome**	**Timescale**
3.1	Improve supply of safe accommodation	Continue to work on opportunities to increase supported accommodation	Capital programme, Homes England, partner contributions	Better support and safer accommodation	Ongoing
3.2		Identify and plan to meet the needs of those at risk of exclusion from existing services	Existing resources	Reduction in homelessness and risk of harm	Ongoing

(3) Domestic abuse					
	Issue	**Action**	**Resources**	**Outcome**	**Timescale**
3.3	Prevention	Work with partners to expand scheme for re-location of perpetrators	Existing resources working in partnership with SETDAB and PFCC	Prevention of homelessness and harm	March 2027
3.4		Review and explore ways to expand My Home My Choice scheme	Existing resources	Prevention of homelessness and harm	2027/28
3.5		Re-establish local domestic abuse forum	Existing resources	Improved local network to identify risk and prevent harm and homelessness	January 2027

(4) Mental health					
	Issue	**Action**	**Resources**	**Outcome**	**Timescale**
4.1	Relief of homelessness	Extend commissioning of supported housing for single homeless affected by mental health	Existing resources	Reduce use of temporary accommodation and improve support as well as accommodation	April 2027
4.2		Progress plans to provide additional support and accommodation for those leaving hospital	Existing resources	Reduction in homelessness as result of hospital discharge	March 2028
4.3	Prevention	Improve links with Cultural and Leisure Services in developing ways to enhance support	TBC	Wider range of options to complement existing provision in supported housing	2027/28

(5) Young people					
	Issue	**Action**	**Resources**	**Outcome**	**Timescale**
5.1	Relief and prevention of homelessness	Continue to support the development of a Foyer scheme	Capital programme Homes England YMCA	Better provision for young people at risk of homelessness	2027 – 2029
5.2		Explore reasons for care leavers becoming homeless	Existing resources / Essex County Council	Young people better able to make informed choices to prevent homelessness	2027/28
(6) Refugees					
	Issue	**Action**	**Resources**	**Outcome**	**Timescale**
6.1	Relief of homelessness	Review partnership with Beam	Existing resources	Assess and develop additional supply of accommodation and support to reduce he need for temporary accommodation, improve choice and access to employment	March 2027

(6) Refugees					
	Issue	**Action**	**Resources**	**Outcome**	**Timescale**
6.2	Relief of homelessness (continued)	Review operation of Homes for Ukraine scheme	H4U Funding	Further development of housing and support options to meet continuing need	January – March 2027
6.3		Review existing partnerships for assisting single people granted leave to remain	Existing resources	Further development of services to meet need of those at risk of homelessness to inform decisions on future commissioning	January – March 2027
6.4	Prevention of homelessness	Review situation of those still with sponsors / in temporary accommodation	Existing resources	Setting reasonable timescales for resolving longer term housing need	April 2027

Thank you to everyone who has assisted with the development of this strategy and the supporting action plan

- MHCLG Advisors
- Probation Service
- HMP Chelmsford
- Essex Drug and Alcohol Service
- CHP
- CHESS
- Chelmsford CVS
- CRH
- Nadiya
- Homeless Link
- Sanctuary Housing Assoc
- Essex Integration
- EPUT
- Public responses
- Reed Partnerships
- Home Group
- Sanctus
- Safer Places
- Next Chapter
- Essex University Law Clinic
- Essex Police
- Homes England
- Prisoners Building Homes
- Essex PFCC
- EELGA
- Mind
- Red Cross
- Springfield Furniture Project
- Chelmsford Food Bank
- Safe Steps
- Essex Re-Offending Board
- Nacro
- Maldon District Council
- Braintree District Council
- Essex County Council
- CAB
- DWP
- Housing Dilemmas
- Cool to be Kind
- SETDAB
- DCN
- Essex YMCA
- Ideas Hub
- Peabody
- Mid Essex NHS
- Local churches
- Phoenix Futures

Civic Centre, Duke Street, Chelmsford, CM1 1JE

01245 606400

www.chelmsford.gov.uk/housing

https://forms.chelmsford.gov.uk/contactus-housing/



Chelmsford City Council

Appendix 2

Essex County Council Response to Chelmsford City Council's Review and Revision of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025-2030

Wed 12/08/2026 18:26

Dear Paul,

Thank you for sharing Chelmsford City Council's draft strategy review and addendum. We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the consultation process and to continue our strong partnership working to prevent and ultimately end homelessness across Chelmsford and Essex.

Firstly, we would like to recognise the strength and clarity of Chelmsford's original Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, and the significant progress demonstrated through this review. The achievements delivered during the first year are particularly notable given the increasingly challenging national housing and homelessness context.

We commend in particular:

- The expansion of supported housing provision, including specialist accommodation for people with mental health needs and entrenched rough sleepers.
- Continued commitment to Housing First and Rough Sleeper Navigator approaches.
- The strong focus on rough sleeping prevention and recovery.
- Innovative partnership approaches to domestic abuse, including perpetrator housing schemes.
- Joint work with criminal justice partners to reduce homelessness amongst prison leavers.
- Development of accommodation and support pathways for refugees and people granted leave to remain.
- Continued emphasis on tenancy sustainment and homelessness prevention.

These achievements demonstrate the value of locally driven solutions underpinned by strong partnership working.

We are also pleased to see the strategy revised in response to the Government's National Plan to End Homelessness and structured around the five national prevention pillars. We believe the addendum aligns strongly with the Government's vision that homelessness should be rare, brief and non-recurring.

In the spirit of constructive partnership, we have outlined a number of observations and suggestions below.

1. Strategic Alignment and Shared Ambition

The revised framework aligns well with national priorities, particularly the focus on:

- Prevention and early intervention.
- Reducing reliance on temporary accommodation.
- Improving recovery and reducing repeat homelessness.
- Tackling rough sleeping through personalised, housing-led responses.
- Strengthening accountability and outcomes measurement.

As local government moves towards greater integration and eventual Local Government Reorganisation, there is a significant opportunity to emphasise the collective ambition across Essex that homelessness is not solely a housing issue, but a wider system issue requiring coordinated responses across housing, health, social care, criminal justice, education, public health and the voluntary sector.

Suggested Enhancement

Chelmsford may wish to make more explicit reference to how local action will contribute to emerging national and local outcomes, particularly around:

- Prevention and relief success rates.
- Temporary accommodation use.
- Long-term rough sleeping.
- Outcomes for those experiencing multiple disadvantage.

Response

The draft strategy has been revised to include specific targets for these issues which will be reported on a regular basis in the future to MHCLG.

2. Prevention and Early Intervention

Prevention remains one of the strongest aspects of Chelmsford's approach.

The focus on family and friends' exclusions, private rented sector prevention, domestic abuse, hospital and prison discharge pathways, and refugee homelessness reflects both local need and national priorities.

Health and Hospital Discharge

The review identifies a significant increase in homelessness associated with hospital discharge. This reflects a growing national concern and aligns with the Government's ambition that no one eligible for assistance should be discharged from hospital into homelessness.

ECC would welcome stronger reference to:

- Joint Hospital Discharge Protocol that is about to be approved by Chelmsford City Council and wider Essex partners including Essex ICB

- Housing representation within discharge planning.
- Intermediate accommodation and step-down provision
- Greater analysis of the demographics and support needs of those becoming homeless following hospital discharge, helping shape future prevention activity

Response

We share these concerns and will continue to work on the review and further development of this protocol. There is a need to continue to understand and improve the joint working between health and housing especially when both services are so stretched and currently lack resources to meet some local needs. The strategy includes as an action the development of supported accommodation specifically in response to our concern about the rising numbers becoming homeless on discharge from hospital.

Young People and Care Leavers

The strategy could place greater emphasis on young people at risk of homelessness, particularly 16 and 17-year-olds and care leavers. The National Plan places significant emphasis on preventing youth homelessness and ensuring homelessness is never used as a pathway from care.

Across Chelmsford and Essex, strong partnership arrangements already exist to support these cohorts. Essex County Council commissions a range of supported accommodation and support services for vulnerable young people, including the NACRO Employment Support and Transition (NEST) service, which provides both accommodation-based support and floating support to eligible young people living independently, in temporary accommodation or moving towards independent living.

The scale of this partnership work is significant, and continued alignment between housing services, Children's Services, supported accommodation providers and commissioned support services will be critical to ensuring vulnerable young people receive the support they need before housing situations reach crisis point.

Data and Predictive Analytics

The national strategy places considerable emphasis on predictive analytics and data-led prevention.

Chelmsford may wish to reference opportunities to:

- Develop shared intelligence approaches across Essex
- Use predictive tools to identify households at risk earlier
- Support countywide work on data sharing and early intervention

ECC would welcome continuing collaboration in these areas.

Response

Social Care has the prime responsibility for young people with limited housing options for those who are not an adult but we agree on the importance of gaining a better understanding of the reasons why those leaving care are often at higher risk of being homeless, whether when leaving care or in the early stages of adulthood. If Essex County Council are able to provide data to help us develop better knowledge to anticipate and reduce the risk of homelessness this would help with reviews of this strategy and the development of our Supported Housing Strategy in 2027. The Homelessness Strategy includes as an action the development of a Foyer for young people which we would welcome collaboration with ECC.

3. Strengthening the Duty to Collaborate

One of the most significant developments within the National Plan is the proposed Duty to Collaborate across public services.

Chelmsford's strategy already demonstrates strong partnership working. However, explicit reference to how housing, adult social care, children's services, health partners, probation, DWP, education providers and the voluntary sector will collectively fulfil this expectation would strengthen the strategy and help future-proof local arrangements.

ECC strongly supports this approach and recognises that effective prevention increasingly depends upon coordinated intervention across public services. We would be keener to work with you over the coming months on this area of work.

Response

We shall continue to build on our excellent relationship between our two Councils and expect this will be strengthened by the planning that is now underway for LGR.

4. Temporary Accommodation and Families

The review provides a clear and honest assessment of the pressures facing temporary accommodation services.

Particularly welcome are:

- Expansion of council-owned accommodation
- Ongoing acquisition and leasing programmes
- Limited use of B&B accommodation for families
- Strong operational oversight of temporary accommodation provision

The National Plan places particular emphasis on children's experiences of temporary accommodation and reducing disruption to education, health services and support networks.

Suggested Enhancements

Additional emphasis could be given to:

- Children's educational outcomes
- Minimising repeat moves for families.
- Ensuring safeguarding considerations remain central to placement decisions

These themes align strongly with wider county priorities around children, families and safeguarding.

Response

The Housing Authority has very limited ability to influence children's educational outcomes but we understand the link with homelessness and will continue to work closely with the Education Authority to address the problem of lack of capacity in local schools which has restricted our abilities to meet our legal obligations to some homeless families. Revisions to this strategy seek to reduce the number of families in temporary accommodation, their time in temporary accommodation and placements outside of Chelmsford. The latter will require assurances that school places will be available in Chelmsford.

Opportunities for Collaboration

ECC would also welcome continued exploration of:

- Cross-district collaboration
- Joint procurement opportunities
- Strategic responses to increasing demand pressures across Essex

Response

We share ECC's enthusiasm for collaboration and expect this to be accelerated as we progress with plans for LGR, recognising that there will remain a need for new unitary authorities to work together in the future in the same way we do as district councils.

5. Rough Sleeping, Multiple Disadvantage and Recovery

We welcome the sophisticated understanding of rough sleeping reflected throughout the strategy and the recognition that rough sleeping is not a single cohort but a spectrum of needs requiring tailored responses.

Particularly welcome are:

- Housing First
- Rough Sleeper Navigator provision

- Mental health supported housing
- Criminal justice pathways
- Focus on repeat homelessness and recovery

Multiple Disadvantage

The National Plan places significant emphasis on supporting people experiencing multiple disadvantage, often involving overlapping experiences of homelessness, poor mental health, domestic abuse, substance misuse and criminal justice involvement.

The strategy could be further strengthened through greater reference to:

- Trauma-informed practice
- Multiple disadvantage approaches
- Integrated support models
- Coordinated pathways spanning housing, health, social care, substance use services and criminal justice partners

This would align strongly with both emerging national policy and countywide partnership activity.

Response

Our priority must be to increase the supply and range of housing, including supported accommodation, most of which will be delivered through partnership working. We would welcome adding to this closer working with others, as indicated by our plans to develop greater collaboration with mental health, criminal justice and other voluntary and statutory services. At this stage we feel it is too early to be more specific about the detail of support that some may require, recognising the demands on Chelmsford City Council as a housing authority but we are confident that through our current plans and progression to LGR we and our partners will continue to adjust and refine our services to complement other organisations for the benefit of our community.

6. Supported Housing and Strategic Commissioning

We welcome the recognition of the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act and the need to develop a local Supported Housing Strategy.

This represents a significant opportunity for collaboration across Essex.

Suggested Areas of Focus

We would encourage strengthening references to collaborative work with Essex County Council and neighbouring authorities to:

- Identify gaps in provision
- Support better move-on pathways

This should include particular consideration of:

- Mental health
- Learning disability and autism
- Older people
- People with complex needs
- Young people, including 16/17-year-olds and care leavers transitioning to independence
- The role of supported accommodation and floating support services in preventing homelessness and supporting successful move-on.

ECC is keen to ensure strong alignment between local supported housing strategies and the emerging countywide supported housing framework and commissioning.

Response

We acknowledge that this is about our forthcoming Supported Housing Strategy, officers in our Housing Service have already been working closely with colleagues at ECC creating an Advisory Board to assist with the cooperation needed for this work and we will continue with this, including the actions suggested, as we progress the development of this strategy in 2026/27

7. Lived Experience

One area which could be strengthened further is the role of lived experience.

The National Plan places considerable importance on ensuring services are shaped by people who have experienced homelessness and rough sleeping.

Suggested Enhancement

Consider including a commitment to:

- Involving people with lived experience in service design
- Using lived experience forums and consultation mechanisms
- Embedding co-production principles within future service development

This would complement Chelmsford's strong partnership approach and reflect national best practice.

Response

We agree and recognise our current limitations, partly due to the need to cooperate with our partners as well as those who have used their services. Rough sleeping and domestic abuse are two recent examples of where we have engaged with services users and this has informed the development of new projects and schemes but we may not always have made this clear. We

will aim to adopt this approach to a wider range of future projects in the future such as young people, mental health and homeless families.

8. Public Health, Social Care and Wider Determinants

We strongly support the recognition that accommodation alone is not sufficient to end homelessness.

The strategy already acknowledges the importance of mental health, domestic abuse and wider support needs. This could be further enhanced through explicit reference to:

- Public health
- Adult social care
- Safeguarding
- Employment and skills
- Financial inclusion and debt advice
- Substance use treatment and recovery

We would also encourage stronger recognition of the role of Children's Services and transitional support for young people moving towards independent living.

Effective prevention for young people requires housing, support, education, employment and safeguarding services to work together, recognising that homelessness can often be prevented through earlier intervention and coordinated support.

Response

Our strategy can not direct Services in other authorities but we will follow up on an offer of future collaboration, especially for young people leaving care (mentioned above) and the wider needs of families especially where this would help improve the possibility of preventing homelessness.

9. Language and Terminology

We note the use of the term "institution" in relation to homelessness arising from discharge from services.

Whilst this terminology is recognised within homelessness policy, consideration could be given to using language that more explicitly references hospital discharge, prison release and other relevant pathways. This may better reflect the lived experience of those affected and align more closely with the language used within the National Plan to End Homelessness.

Response

We have tried to be specific where possible in the strategy, e.g. release from prison or discharge from hospital but as accepted, currently many of these cases are recorded and reported to MHCLG as 'leaving institutions' and at that stage it is not possible to then disaggregate into more detail when looking at the broad causes of homelessness.

10. Local Government Reorganisation

We welcome the pragmatic approach taken towards Local Government Reorganisation.

As Essex transitions towards new unitary arrangements, there will be opportunities to build upon the strong partnership working already established across the county.

It may be helpful to further articulate:

- How existing homelessness partnerships will be maintained
- How effective practice developed in Chelmsford can inform future arrangements
- How strategic collaboration with ECC and neighbouring authorities will continue throughout the transition period

Response

The timing of this Strategy is slightly too premature to deal with these issues without predetermining what will in most cases be decisions to be agreed with others. We have however suggested that Partnerships and Agreements should be a specific workstream as we plan for the implementation of LGR. This includes services which are commissioned by ECC and have an impact on our duties under the homelessness legislation.

Conclusion

Overall, Essex County Council considers this to be a strong, evidence-based and forward-looking review which:

- Builds effectively upon Chelmsford's existing strategy
- Reflects local needs and challenges
- Demonstrates a commitment to prevention and partnership
- Aligns closely with the Government's National Plan to End Homelessness
- Provides a clear framework for future delivery.

Most importantly, the review recognises that ending homelessness cannot be achieved by any single organisation acting alone. Success will require sustained collaboration between housing authorities, health services, social care, children's services, criminal justice agencies, supported housing providers, voluntary sector organisations, and people with lived experience themselves.

We particularly recognise the importance of partnership working to prevent homelessness amongst young people, care leavers and vulnerable adults. Across Essex, significant progress has already been achieved through joint working between district councils, Essex County Council, housing providers and commissioned support services. Building on these partnerships will be central to achieving our shared ambition that homelessness becomes rare, brief and non-recurring.

Essex County Council shares Chelmsford City Council's ambition that homelessness should be prevented wherever possible, that any experience of homelessness should be brief, and that together we can work towards ensuring it is non-recurring.

We look forward to continuing our partnership with Chelmsford and colleagues across Essex to deliver improved outcomes for residents and to realise our shared ambition of ending homelessness.

With thanks again for the opportunity to contribute.

Regards,

Rod

Rod Cullen

Housing Growth Lead (Homelessness & Rough Sleeping)

Housing Growth Team

County Hall, Market Road, Chelmsford, Essex, CM1 1QH.

Tel: 0333 032 2029

Rod.Cullen@Essex.Gov.UK