

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

2022 to 2025

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Forward

Executive Member for Housing Cllr F Birkett

The impacts of homelessness can be devastating for individuals and families. It can affect both physical and mental health, educational and employment opportunities and has long term consequences for those affected. For these reasons, preventing homelessness and rough sleeping is a priority for the Council.

This strategy aims to build on Fareham's positive track record of investing in front line housing services, and its positive approach to preventing and relieving homelessness effectively. It will support the aims of the Corporate Strategy 2017-2023 to "ensure that Fareham remains a prosperous, safe and attractive place to live and work" and has been developed with due regard to both the Council's Allocation of Social Housing Policy and Affordable Housing Strategy.

It is our intention that this Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy will provide:

- Better support to vulnerable families, individuals, and communities
- Improved help for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness
- Effective collaboration with partner agencies, public bodies, voluntary organisations, community groups and others

Preventing and relieving homelessness is a high priority for us. I am very pleased to endorse this strategy on behalf of Fareham Borough Council

Introduction

Homelessness can be defined as not having a legal right to occupy a home that you call your own, or your home is unsuitable to live in. People become homeless for lots of different reasons and can be at risk of homelessness at different stages in their lives.

Homelessness is about more than just rough sleeping, people can be homeless for a variety of reasons including if they are staying with friends or family, 'sofa-surfing', squatting, living in unsuitable conditions or at risk of losing their home due to the end of a private tenancy, domestic abuse, financial circumstances, or other challenges.

Homelessness is closely linked to poverty and has a negative impact on a range of outcomes including health and education.

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 placed new legal duties on councils to ensure that everyone who is homeless or at risk of homelessness has access to meaningful help, irrespective of their priority need status, as long as they are eligible for assistance.

If an applicant is threatened with homelessness, the council must take reasonable steps to help them avoid becoming homeless. This is known as the 'Prevention Duty'.

If an applicant is homeless, the council must take reasonable steps to help them secure accommodation for at least six months. This is known as the 'Relief Duty' and once triggered will also continue for 56 days

This is our first homelessness strategy to be informed by the new ways of working outlined in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and measured by the new method of collecting statutory homelessness statistics.

Our Vision

Our Corporate Strategy (2017 to 2023) sets out the Council's six priorities to ensure Fareham remains a prosperous, safe and attractive place to live and work.

This Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy will support Corporate Priority 1 "Providing Housing Choices"

Providing Housing Choices by working with our key partners to enable and support a diverse housing market so that residents have access to good quality housing that is affordable and offers a choice of tenures. We will take positive steps to prevent homelessness and assist individuals and families in finding good quality accommodation

Ensuring everyone has somewhere to live is a vital role for the Council but we know that for people who are homeless this ambition can feel like a long way off. Our Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy provides a road map to support people to achieve this.

Summary Findings from the Homelessness Review

We appointed an independent Housing Consultant (Neil Morland & Co) to undertake a comprehensive, impartial, and transparent review of homelessness in Fareham.

The full body of evidence can be downloaded from the Council's website at www.fareham.gov.uk.

The key headlines arising from the review include:



The number of people approaching the Council for housing advice and assistance increases each year



10 people were estimated to sleeping rough in 2019. The estimate for 2020 followed the "Everyone In" initiative and 3 people were still sleeping rough, having refused offers of accommodation



Parents, other relatives, or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate continues to be the main reason why a person loses their home



1000 applicants in housing need requiring social housing are currently on Fareham Borough Council's Housing Register



The number of homeless households with physical or mental health problems has doubled



Fareham's higher than average house price to earnings ratio means that many people struggle to pay their housing costs



Most people approaching the Council for housing advice and assistance are aged 25 to 44, however we are seeing an increase in those aged under 24



Households which include a dependent child are more likely to be owed a main housing duty

Strategic Priorities 2022-2025

The review of homelessness has found our approach and provision of homelessness services has delivered effective results in the face of growing demand.

We therefore plan to retain our core focus on early intervention and the prevention of homelessness, backed up by high quality joined up support to get people back on their feet when things do go wrong.

To bring about significant change within our communities, this Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy focuses on four key priorities. More detail on the actions against each priority is included in the accompanying Delivery Plan.



Our vision and key priorities are in keeping with the increased emphasis on early intervention and prevention in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and the Government's Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018.



Meeting demand

- ✓ Provision of high quality, consistent housing advice, tailored to the individual and delivered in a sensitive and supportive manner
- ✓ Improve the capacity and capability (of the Housing Options Team) to better inform what we do and place ourselves in a position whereby we can respond more quickly and more effectively to changing demands in the future
- ✓ Improve the range and quality of information to ensure they remain relevant to our changing customer base



Providing solutions

- ✓ Improve access to the private rented sector as this will continue to play an important part in tackling homelessness
- ✓ Update and improve the offer to private sector landlords as part of our FareLets scheme
- ✓ Continue to provide good quality and a diverse range of temporary accommodation to meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness
- ✓ Ensure bed and breakfast accommodation is used only as a last resort



Preventing homelessness & supporting tenancies

- ✓ Strengthen our mediation capability to reduce family/friend evictions and return young people to their family home where it is appropriate and safe to do so
- ✓ Continue to improve our working relationships with key agencies such as Social Services and Mental Health Teams, domestic violence agencies, probation, and substance misuse services
- ✓ Strengthen early planning for those people leaving care or institutions to ensure they don't become homeless
- ✓ Continue to provide people affected by welfare reforms with access to advice services
- ✓ Continue to provide high quality tenancy support to help vulnerable households sustain their tenancies



Ending rough sleeping

- ✓ Ensure there continues to be effective outreach services to deliver intensive support and encourage people who are sleeping rough into services and accommodation
- ✓ Explore new ways of creating additional emergency bed spaces
- ✓ Continue to expand the supported accommodation options for those sleeping rough or ready for move-on from the hostels
- ✓ Embed the 'Housing First' model to provide supported accommodation for rough sleepers with multiple and complex needs

Monitoring our performance

This strategy sets out our plans for the next three years. It has been developed following a comprehensive review of homelessness in the Borough so we are confident that the strategic aims will stand the test of time during the life of the strategy.

New priorities may however emerge over the next three years. The strategy will therefore remain under review to ensure it is kept up to date and the Delivery Plan will be updated annually to enable a flexible response to any emerging needs, trends, and policy or legislative changes.

The accompanying Delivery Plan sets out the main areas of work over the period of this strategy and progress against each action will be monitored through:

- Annual reports to the Council's Housing Scrutiny Panel
- Updated Delivery Plan published annually on the Council's website
- Key Partnership Forums
- Mandatory statistical returns to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)