



HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY
Draft **2022- 2027**

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FORWARD

To be provided by Holly Whitbread

INTRODUCTION

Under section 1(3), (4) of the Homelessness Act 2002, local housing authorities have a duty to review and publish their Homelessness Strategy on at least a 5-yearly basis.

The purpose of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (the Strategy) is to set out the plans that Epping Forest District Council (the Council) has agreed with its partners to prevent and reduce homelessness in the district between 2022-2027.

The Strategy takes into account new legislation and guidance and is based on a review of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping in the district and the open consultation with residents and organisations with an interest in homelessness and rough sleeping; both of which have been published alongside this document.

The National Context

Major changes have been introduced in recent years to the duties that Local Housing Authorities have towards families and single people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 which came into effect in 2018, and the associated Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities 2018 (as amended) are considered to be the most significant changes to primary homelessness legislation and guidance since 1985 .

In August 2018, The Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (now Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC)) published its national Rough Sleeping Strategy.

There continues to be a range of homelessness related legislative and regulatory directives, initiatives and funding opportunities to prevent and reduce homelessness. Most recently; the Prime Ministers 2019 pledge to end rough sleeping by 2024, the Coronavirus Act 2020 as amended which placed temporary restrictions on the residential possession processes, the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 which strengthens the support for victims of abuse, and the Levelling Up White Paper 2022 to spread opportunity more equally across the UK.

The Local Context

The district of Epping Forest (the District) is one of 12 district, borough and city local housing authorities in the County of Essex. It is classified statistically as urban with significant rural populations, covering an area of approximately 339 square kilometres. In 2018 the resident population was estimated to be 131,137 people.

EFDC is the ninth (out of 12) most densely populated district in Essex, well below the County average. It is divided into 24 town and parish councils which are mainly rural and sparsely populated in the north and east, and more densely populated in the south where it borders the London boroughs of Enfield Waltham Forest Redbridge and Havering.

The majority of residents live across four suburban settlements; in Loughton, Waltham Abbey, Epping and Buckhurst Hill.

Index of Multiple Deprivation

The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) ranks areas in relation to six indices; Income, employment, health, education, crime, barriers to housing and services, and the environment. In 2019 EFDC was ranked 200 out of 317 lower tier authorities in England (1 being the most deprived) and its ranking has improved gradually to its highest level since 2007. However this belies the contrast of mainly affluent geographical areas with several pockets of significant deprivation.

EFDC is split into 78 neighbourhoods known as 'Lower Super Output Areas' Whilst 17 neighbourhoods were ranked in the top 20% of the least deprived areas nationally, 5 neighbourhoods were ranked in the bottom 30% of most deprived areas of the Country of which one was ranked in the bottom 20%.

Housing Supply and Demand

The demand for affordable housing in the district far outweighs the supply across all tenure types. In 2017 there were estimated to be approximately 55,630 homes in the district. Around 85% in the private sector, about 70% being owner occupied and 15% are private rented.

Social housing accounts for approximately 14% of accommodation in the district. The Council is the largest social landlord with 6,384 general needs properties which equates to 11% of all properties and Housing Associations own just over 3%.

The Strategic Market Housing Assessment (or local plan) forecasts that 12,573 properties are required to meet demand across the district over the 12-year period 2011- 2033.

Urgent Housing Need

As at 31 March 2021 there were 1,555 people on the housing register who qualified for social housing. Of these 697 had an urgent need for rehousing.

Between April 2020 and March 2021 a total of 567 households approached the Council for assistance due to homelessness or the threat of homelessness. The Council provided information and advice to 186 households, accepted a duty to prevent or delay 123 households from becoming homeless and provided relief to 258 households who had lost their home (typically offered temporary and supporting them to find somewhere else). A main duty was accepted to provide settled accommodation for 96 households.

The Council has a development plan to build circa 195 homes for affordable housing between 2021/22 and 2025/26 to be allocated to people on the housing register including homeless households.

The Effects of Covid 19

The effects of and the response to the pandemic has changed many of the patterns of homelessness and rough sleeping in EFDC, as with the rest of the country. These include risks to public health, financial and social hardship, relationship breakdown and the supply of suitable housing for those most in need.

Links with other strategies and programmes

In order to achieve maximum impact, the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022-2027 is being aligned with:

- The Social Recovery Map for Epping Forest District
- The Allocations Policy 2022-2027
- The Tenancy Policy 2022-2027
- The Overarching Housing Strategy 2022-2027
- Levelling Up Essex – An Essex White Paper 2022
- The Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2018-2028 (which is due to be refreshed in 2022)
- The Essex County Council Housing Strategy 2021-2025
- The Local Plan
- The More than Bricks and Mortar Estate Improvement Programme 2020

THE STRATEGY AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022-2027 aims to achieve a whole systems partnership approach to preventing and relieving homelessness and to ending rough sleeping in Epping Forest District in line with the Council's corporate objectives and the levelling up agenda.

The Council's key corporate objectives are:

- People live longer, healthier and independent lives
- Adults and children are supported in times of need
- People and communities achieve their full potential
- Delivering effective core services that people want
- Improving the district housing offer

The purpose of this strategy is to:

- Make a significant contribution to social and economic recovery and social mobility within Epping Forest District to redress the impact of the pandemic.
- Support the Community and Wellbeing commitment to build strong, resilient, cohesive and healthy communities.
- Extend this commitment to our staff by providing the opportunities and environment to develop their skills, achieve their aspirations and thrive as a strong and motivated workforce.
- Help households that are homeless or at risk of homelessness in the District to access the appropriate support to enable them to live well and achieve their aspirations in suitable good quality affordable housing.
- Strengthen the partnerships and shared services that already exist within the District and create opportunities for new initiatives, partnerships and volunteers to jointly own the strategy and be responsible for its delivery.

THE FIVE STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Identifying the priorities

This strategy is made up of five evidence-based priorities with associated themes and clear measurable outcomes that we aim to achieve over the next five years.

Priority 1 Working Together

Theme: Make every contact count

Priority 2 Preventing Homelessness

Theme : Early intervention

Priority 3 Building Resilience

Theme: Positive mental health, positive activities, positive community

Priority 4 Access to Suitable Accommodation and Support

Theme: More than bricks and mortar

Priority 5 Ending Rough Sleeping

Theme: Proportionate prevention, intervention and recovery

We have identified these priorities, themes and intended outcomes through a review of homelessness and rough sleeping in the district and additional research and analysis in collaboration with members of our community who have an interest in preventing and relieving homelessness.

Open Consultation

We undertook a 2-stage open consultation exercise between May and December 2021.

On-line consultation was combined with targeted events to enable residents, professional partners, other statutory services, staff and Members of the Council to express their ideas and views on what priorities should be included in the strategy.

The events included bitesize briefing sessions, detailed workshops, webinars, surveys and smaller meetings, underpinned by a review of local and national statistical data and lived experiences of homeless households.

We then went back to the same audience with the Councils proposals for the strategy for consideration and comment.

The findings of the review, and the outcome of the consultation form the evidence base for this strategy and have been published in two standalone documents.

For the full list of partnerships and organisations consulted see Appendix 2

The Action Plan

Together with our key strategic partnerships we have agreed in principle a draft action plan that will include year 1 SMART targets relating to each priority and named signatories. (subject to approval at Stronger Communities Select Committee and obtaining signatories final sign off).

We will collectively record the progress, review the outcomes, and update the targets on an annual basis for the duration of the strategy.

For the draft action plan see section 8

PRIORITY 1: WORKING TOGETHER

Theme: Make every contact count

This Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy has been developed and jointly owned with local partnerships who are taking collective responsibility for its delivery.

As well as the 12 partner organisations that are based at the Epping Community Hub there is the potential to strengthen collaborative working with over 150 statutory services, community groups, charities and social enterprises and countless individual volunteers to share skills, expertise and resources, make every customer contact count and maximise opportunities to secure funding and develop integrated services and improvements by working together.

Together we will:

Make Every Contact Count

The majority of residents who approach the Council for help because they are homeless or at risk of homelessness report one or more support needs. The most common issues are a history of mental health problems, physical ill health or disability, domestic abuse and substance misuse.

Making every contact count is an approach that uses the day to day interactions between organisations and people to support them in making positive changes to their physical and mental health and wellbeing. We propose to extend this principle so that it becomes a whole systems approach to homelessness prevention that recognises the interdependencies between housing and the environment, income, vulnerability employment, education and crime in the wider determinants of health for our residents.

We will work with the Health and Wellbeing Board to develop a skilled workforce equipped with the knowledge and referral mechanisms to services to make every contact count in our interactions with residents so that we can offer the right support at the right time.

Review the Duty to Refer

Public authorities such as hospitals, job centres, children's services, the armed forces, prison services etc have a duty to refer service users who they think may be homeless or threatened with homelessness to a housing authority.

This is a vital tool in the prevention and early resolution of homelessness. Although there has been a year on year increase in referrals since the duty was introduced by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, more work can be done with agencies to facilitate appropriate timely referrals. We will review the duty to refer arrangements with statutory and non-statutory services with a view to increasing the number of appropriate early interventions.

Develop a support service with the NHS for people with substance misuse

The link between mental health, substance misuse and homelessness is indisputable both locally, nationally and globally. Not all people who become homeless struggle with their mental health or misuse drugs, alcohol or other substances, but substance misuse can be both a cause and result of homelessness.

To further complicate matters mental illness is often an underlying cause of substance misuse, and therefore homelessness as well. Around 10% of all households that approached EFDC for

help with homelessness reported having either drug or alcohol dependency needs. Public Health England statistics demonstrate that for people sleeping rough this is likely to increase to around 42% having alcohol misuse needs and 41% having drug misuse needs. Building on the success of the recently appointed Mental Health Navigator we will undertake a joint venture with NHS to fund and recruit a substance misuse navigator to work directly with affected homeless households help end the cycle of substance misuse, mental health and repeat homelessness.

Maximise opportunities for grant funding and shared resources

Our network of partners span an increasing range of statutory and non-statutory not-for-profit organisations, social enterprises, community interest groups and local businesses all of whom consistently demonstrate a passion and commitment to preventing and tackling homelessness and the causes of homelessness.

Much of the innovative partnership work that we do, for example converting two single dwelling homes into housing with support to end the cycle of rough sleeping, community development projects at our temporary accommodation scheme, and the co-location of specialist clinicians to address the health and support needs of homeless households is made possible by successful multi-agency bidding for government and charitable trust grant funding as it becomes available, often at short notice, and we are keen to maximise access to these funds.

The majority of joint bids are made in collaboration with the Essex sector wide Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Partnership, members of the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Community Safety Partnership.

Collectively we have a powerful voice and comprehensive portfolio of skills experience and resources, but also acknowledge that bid submissions can be labour intensive and require flexible co-operation when dealing with competing priorities. We will continue to build on our shared and individual strengths to secure grant funding and deliver initiatives that are conducive to all five priorities within this strategy.

Promote social and economic mobility

In 2020/21 32% of households who were eligible for help from the council due to homelessness or at risk of homelessness were registered unemployed, and one of the main causes of homelessness was loss of rented accommodation in the private rented sector which is largely unaffordable for many families. Despite being a relatively affluent district overall, there are several neighbourhoods that fall in the bottom 30% of the most deprived areas in the Country.

A local and national skills shortage is affecting all parts of the community including the construction industry to develop much needed affordable housing, and supply chain for essential consumables like food and materials.

Epping Forest District Council is one of a group of large not for profit organisations in Essex known as 'anchor organisations' that are working together to identify how our employment, procurement and workforce development practices can support local people.

A network of over 30 partners have began work on several employment initiatives including work coaches, and reverse job fairs. We are bidding for funding to help make these bespoke to address the needs of homeless households and those at risk of homelessness and rough sleeping.

PRIORITY 2 PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS

Theme: Early intervention

Where possible, we believe that the best way to tackle homelessness is to prevent it from happening in the first place. The purpose of early intervention is to prevent homelessness in the long term - not just the 56 days leading up to a household potentially losing their home. We want to minimise the risks of the problems that lead to homelessness and take action to prevent future homelessness that reach far beyond the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

Our early intervention will include:

Accessible community information and advice

The lived experiences of homelessness that Kiera, Ahmed and Somaiya and Tex shared in section 5 highlights that a whole systems approach to early intervention is wholly dependent on good communication and access to information.

Kiera, Ahmed and Somaiya and Tex all had very different reasons for finding themselves homeless and all described how they benefited from multi-agency support.

We will establish what more we can do so that people finding themselves in these situations know who to approach for help before the situation reaches crisis point. For example Tex knowing he could turn to the council before turning to the street, the range of people that are available for Kiera to talk to and provide emotional support, and Ahmed and Somaiya being aware of alternatives to temporary accommodation such as key worker housing or affordable home ownership.

We will continue to learn from lived experiences and talk to other agencies, both those who are co-located to find out where there are gaps in information and agree practical solutions to plug these gaps.

Identifying and removing barriers to digital inclusion

Digital inclusion or rather reducing digital exclusion is about making sure that residents have the capability to access the internet to do the things that benefit them from day to day including access to information, advice and services.

Digital exclusion is inextricably linked to wider inequalities in society and is more likely to be faced by homeless households, those on low income, people over 65 and people with disabilities. When the pandemic hit in March 2020, nationally only 51% of households earning between £6,000 and £10,000 had internet access compared to 99% of households with an income over £40,000.

This strategy is being aligned with the Council's Digital Strategy 2022-2025 to reinforce wider practical measures to improve access to online services for vulnerable and disadvantaged residents. Central to this will be staff responsible for providing customer facing services in the Community hub and providing outreach support.

Community responders at Voluntary Action Epping Forest (VAEF) will offer home visits or telephone support to anyone who is struggling with digital access and can provide free SIM cards with 6 months unlimited calls and texts and 20GB of data to qualifying vulnerable residents via their partner organisation WECAN.

VAEF and the Housing and Wellbeing Service will be looking at other ways of offering digital support to access housing related services.

Landlord incentives to provide settled accommodation

Private rented accommodation accounts for about 15% of all properties in the District, and over recent years has become increasingly unaffordable for residents on low incomes. Prior to the pandemic loss of private rented tenancy was the main reason for being threatened with homelessness.

The Council still depends on private sector landlords who provide decent affordable accommodation both to prevent people from becoming unnecessarily homeless and to assist the Council to discharge its main housing duty to provide settled accommodation to those who have lost their home.

The Coronavirus Act 2020 provided protection to social and private tenants through a variety of restrictions between March 2020 and October 2021 to delay when landlords could evict tenants.

Now these restrictions have been lifted and the backlog of bailiff eviction warrants reduces the Council is anticipating an increase in homelessness, which is likely to be compounded by concerned landlords pre-empting the proposed abolition of s.21 no fault evictions.

The Housing Needs service employs a skilled negotiator to liaise with private sector landlords on a case by case basis to reconsider allowing tenants to stay who they'd asked to leave, or to charge an affordable rent and provide a tenancy for a minimum of 12 months to a household in need. This flexible bespoke approach is proving to be a very successful way of using limited homelessness prevention grant funding to provide help where its needed to maximum effect.

Maximise support and accommodation options for people leaving institutions

The Council has protocols in place so that people leaving institutions including hospital, care, prison, and the armed forces do so in a planned way and have the necessary support plans and housing options arrangements in place to enable them to adjust and thrive.

Our profiling information shows that too many people leaving institutions still find themselves homeless and vulnerable to exploitation, addiction poverty and mental and physical health problems either straight away, after a period of hidden homelessness such as sofa surfing, or struggling to sustain a tenancy.

Over the period of the strategy we will work with the Essex Housing Officers Group and the Essex Homeless Officers Housing Group and the relevant agencies to review the effectiveness of our protocols.

Raise awareness of homelessness

The donations and support that individual volunteers, local community groups and businesses give to our temporary accommodation scheme at Christmas and throughout the year is a reflection of the social capital that exists within the district.

Part of our strategy is to harness that social capital and raise awareness of homelessness, the causes, impact and lived experiences from a wide range of residents. We want to work with CHES to go into schools and colleges and talk with the students about homelessness from their perspective to really think about how it can be avoided.

PRIORITY 3 BUILDING RESILIENCE

Theme: Positive mental health, positive activities, positive community

The guiding principles of Positive mental health, positive activities, positive community feature in all of the housing related services we provide, and our plans for economic and social recovery from the pandemic.

We embrace our duty under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to take appropriate steps for improving the health of the people in the District. Our review of homelessness informs, and is informed by, the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment; and our homelessness strategy is intended to achieve complete synergy with the current Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Levelling Up Essex White Paper.

We believe that building resilience within the community and amongst staff and partner organisations is central to diminishing the human cost of homelessness. We are keen to learn from peers in clinical and third sector services.

Our approach to building resilience will include:

Developing our workforce

The housing profession can be as physically and emotionally challenging as it is rewarding. We want to develop a resilient motivated and empowered workforce that is well equipped to meet the demands of the constantly changing environment, that recognises and understands vulnerability and the complexities of trauma that many of our customers have experienced, and has an awareness of neurodiversity including the associated strengths and weaknesses.

We will consult our Human Resources team and experienced partnership organisations to provide staff with suitable training to develop their skills and improve their communication with people who may be affected by trauma or neurodiversity.

Launch the 'Say Something' campaign

We have a moral and legal obligation to say something if we come across a potential safeguarding issue. This may be easier to do when something is obviously not right, for example if physical abuse is disclosed during an interview. However sometimes things just don't feel 'right', and sensitive curious questioning can help staff to establish whether there is cause for concern and the appropriate response.

The Domestic Abuse Act has highlighted the need for refresher training on data protection and when personal information can and should be shared without consent if a lawful basis can be identified for example if an individual's safety is at risk.

The 'Say Something' campaign is not just speaking up about other people. Staff will be encouraged to let their managers know what their career aspirations are during 1-2-1s and a safe space to say when they are struggling with their own mental health, workloads etc.

Promoting opportunities to engage in Health and wellbeing initiatives

Part of both the homelessness prevention duty and the homelessness relief duty includes agreeing a personal housing plan with the applicant which sets out what the Council will do and what the household will do to address their housing needs. With the agreement and support of members of the Health and Wellbeing Board housing staff will receive training on how to offer to connect applicants to community

groups and non-clinical statutory services for practical and emotional support with community health initiatives (e.g. weight management, stop smoking, diabetes reversal).

A whole systems approach to assisting residents with mental health needs

Funding has been secured to appoint a clinical practitioner from the NHS to work as a specialist Mental Health Navigator across Epping Forest Braintree and Uttlesford to help homeless households to link with mental health services to prevent rough sleeping. The shared learning from this service includes a greater awareness of the link between mental health and homelessness including staff training and delivering trauma informed services.

Meaningful participation and volunteering

Many homeless applicants in temporary accommodation mention feelings of loneliness and isolation, across all age groups and all personal circumstances. Kiera expressed this clearly when sharing her lived experience of temporary accommodation in section 5.

The Temporary Accommodation Team will research what befriending and buddying services already exist in the County and seek advice on the merits of signposting to one or more

PRIORITY 4 ACCESS TO SUITABLE HOUSING AND SUPPORT

Theme - More than bricks and mortar

The pandemic has brought into sharp focus the role of the home as a place of safety and the need to access to the right statutory services and community support when and where it's needed.

Suitable housing conditions and knowing who to talk to can save lives, prevent disease, increase quality of life, reduce poverty, protect the public purse and help alleviate climate change.

Our focus on access to suitable housing will include:

Making the best use of all available housing

We will continually review our practices and supply and demand across all tenure types to ensure we are making the most effective use of all available accommodation including temporary accommodation, private rented sector and home ownership in the context of both financial and human resources, and based on the needs of the applicant.

Although there is a wide range of temporary accommodation available we will always consider council owned stock in the first instance, and only ever place people in Bed and Breakfast as a last resort and as an emergency if there is nothing else suitable and immediately available. We will review average waiting times on an annual basis and incentivise downsizing to maximise the availability of stock that is in shortest supply.

The right support at the right time

The majority of homeless applicants reported having one or more support needs at the point of application or in the past. This may range from clinical intervention for illness or disability, social support from children or vulnerable adults to financial support from DWP. In many cases the individual's level of need and ability to cope fluctuates or varies as their circumstances change.

In order to have maximum impact for the maximum number of applicants in need and promote independence services must be responsive enough to provide the right support at the right time. The principles of the right support at the right time will be imbedded into the review of the protocols and move on arrangements for supported housing.

Support for victims and survivors of domestic abuse

The number of applicants who lost their last settled home because of domestic abuse has increased year on year from 12 in 2018/19 to 51 in 2020/21, a trend that is being reflected nationally. The Domestic Abuse Act 2022 brought with it an allocation of New Burdens Funding the Council will use to employ a Domestic Abuse Safeguarding Officer who will join the Community Safety Unit to provide a service to victims of domestic abuse across the District.

We will pursue Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation, the UK benchmark for how housing providers should respond to domestic abuse in the UK, and build in processes that help guide staff to adequately address the needs of survivors and hold abusers to account.

Synergy with the National Disability Strategy

18% of applicants seeking help with homelessness or the threat of homelessness informed the council of physical ill health or disability.

We will incorporate the housing related elements of the national disability strategy into this strategy. We will review our policies on the use of Disabled Facilities Grants, provide the appropriate supported housing for people with specific needs and ensure that measures are in place to ensure disabled people can be fully involved in consultation and share their stories as part of the lived experience activities.

Our Aging Population

Epping Forest has an aging population and it is estimated that by 2033 there will be an increase of circa 22% in the 65+ household population and circa 24% in the 75+ household population.

Very few people over the age of 65 present as homeless or at risk of homeless and there is an oversupply of sheltered housing for rent although conversely there is an undersupply of 'retirement homes' in the private sector.

Our staff will continue to receive training on what it means to create dementia friendly communities and we are considering the feasibility of including sheltered housing schemes in our regeneration plans. We are also proposing to offer better incentives and more options for older people to downsize to accommodation that meets their assessed needs and their personal preferences where it is reasonable to do so.

The needs of Gypsies and Travellers

Between 2018/19 and 2020/21 two households who identified themselves as Gypsies or Travellers approached the Housing Needs service for assistance due to homelessness or the threat of homelessness and one person approached to flee domestic abuse.

The Essex Countywide Traveller Unit (ECTU) supports Gypsies and Travellers to access services and accommodation related issues including 12 local authority sites across the County.

We shall continue to develop a co-ordinated approach with the ECTU for the services we provide for gypsies and travellers with particular focus on support for women who experience domestic abuse, and the Covid-19 vaccination programme.

PRIORITY 5 ENDING ROUGH SLEEPING

Theme: Proportionate prevention, intervention and recovery

Historically relatively few people have been known to be sleeping rough in the district on any given night. However; one person sleeping rough is one too many. Our approach to ending rough sleeping will be proportionate and focus on prevention intervention and recovery.

Prevention – Stopping people from sleeping rough for the first time

Intervention – Support to those currently sleeping rough to move off the streets

Recovery – Support to those who have slept rough to ensure they don't return to the streets

We know that rough sleepers are largely transient travelling from district to district across the County. We are part of **the Essex Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Group** and are able to pool resources, share expertise and pursue joint funding bids.

Our commitment to achieving the Government's target of ending rough sleeping will be underpinned by a holistic approach to improving the life chances of individuals with a history of sleeping rough or who are at risk of sleeping rough.

Our plans to end rough sleeping will include:

Collaborative working with our neighbours

We are keen to continue to build on the success of membership of the sector wide Essex Homelessness Officers Group and the Greater Essex Rough Sleeper Strategy Group to secure RSI funding and taking a co-ordinated approach to working with potential rough sleepers who are often transient.

By pooling resources and expertise we are able to see the proportionate benefits of joint initiatives like the Horizons scheme where intensive support is provided to a small cohort of individuals impacted by significant multiple disadvantage (homelessness, offending and substance misuse).

Learning from lived experiences

We will expand the learning from lived experiences to understand the stories of those rough sleepers who have returned to the streets on more than one occasion with those who avoided doing so and will look at whether people who are happy to share their stories may also be interested in participating in future reverse job fairs that may be developed across the County.

Expanding the outreach service to include supporting former rough sleepers

We are keen to follow up on the success of the everyone in programme which accommodated 23 people and granted settled tenancies to 12 people who had been previously sleeping rough. We are arranging to collaborate with Peabody Outreach Team to develop an enhanced outreach service for former rough sleepers to provide longer term support if and when its needed that compliments the work of the mental health navigator and the planned substance misuse navigator.

Understanding the impact of hidden homelessness e.g sofa surfing and sleeping in cars

We recognise from the increase in numbers of people who became street homeless during the pandemic that hidden homelessness is still an issue - and we are working with the Community Safety Unit to ensure that anyone who is found to be sleeping in a car is referred to the Housing Needs service in the first instance - so that all residents without a settled home can access the appropriate information and advice on the options that are available to them. We will also develop a publicity programme about sofa surfing and the early intervention measures for single homeless people to avoid having to rely on friends and associates to put them up for a few nights here and there.

CASE STUDIES – LEARNING FROM LIVED EXPERIENCES

Lived Experiences of Homelessness

During the consultation a variety of residents said they were happy to give in depth accounts of their experiences of becoming homeless in Epping Forest to help us to gain insight into the causes and help that's available from their perspective.

We asked the following questions and considered the feedback when formulating the strategy;

- What were the main reasons you became homeless?
- What have you found to be most challenging and have you overcome these challenges?
- How do you think your homelessness could have been prevented or avoided?
- What organisations or services have been particularly helpful?
- What do you think could help you to keep somewhere settled to live?

We are very grateful to the residents who shared their stories so openly and honestly. With their permission we have published the accounts of three different households whose names we have changed to protect their privacy.

Lived Experience 1

Keira

Keira became homeless as a young adult. She was living with her mum and younger siblings until Children's Social Care intervened. Keira was too old to go into foster care and was suffering mental ill health so she was referred to the Council's Housing services who provided temporary accommodation.

Keira said that her homelessness was caused by complex family issues so she doesn't think it could have been avoided. She said the help she received from the winter clothes fund, food from the foodbank and donations to the temporary accommodation have kept her going and she has managed to stay in full time education.

Keira still struggles with her mental health and is currently dealing with this on her own. She said she is worried about how she will manage when she moves out of temporary accommodation and into a settled home. Keira said she finds being homeless with no family support very lonely and she is anxious that this will increase if she moves to an area she doesn't know.

Keira would like to find an organisation that could help her to find someone to talk to. She suggested more activities for single people in temporary accommodation to connect and make friendships and perhaps motivational monthly challenges like cooking or exercises.

Lived experience 2

Ahmed and Somaiya

Ahmed and Somaiya have two children and have always lived in private rented accommodation. Their landlord decided to sell the house and gave them notice to leave. Despite both being in employment Ahmed and Somaiya could not find somewhere affordable to rent that was within travelling distance of work and school.

Ahmed and Somaiya said the biggest challenge was trying to find somewhere else to live with such short notice, because rents had increased so much and they didn't have enough time to find higher paid jobs

and get the money together in time. They went to the Citizens Advice Bureau who they found were very helpful and are now in Council owned temporary accommodation.

Ahmed and Somaiya would still like to live in private rented accommodation that was affordable but worry that most landlords only offer 1-year tenancies so they could find themselves in the same position within 12 months which is no good for their children.

Lived experience 3

Tex

Tex is an older male who had been living in accommodation tied to his low paid job, until the company went into liquidation without warning. Tex found himself homeless and with no money and began sleeping rough. He said his health quickly deteriorated and his overwhelming memories were of being cold and fearing that he wouldn't survive.

Tex had been sleeping in a variety of parks and open spaces for about three weeks when a minister from the Church approached him and offered practical and emotional support to get back on his feet.

The minister made a referral to the Council's outreach team who provided Tex with temporary accommodation and arranged for Peabody Housing Association to give housing related support - including access to benefits and help to move into the temporary accommodation.

Tex has now left the temporary accommodation and has moved into a settled home with support. He said that the temporary accommodation made him feel secure and everyone had been really nice and supportive.

We will continue to listen to and learn from the lived experiences of our residents as part of our strategy to work together to prevent and tackle homelessness.

ACHIEVING THE INTENDED OUTCOMES

Monitoring arrangements and accountability:

- The plan will be updated every quarter.
- Lead organisations and officers will be identified for each task on the delivery plan.
- The lead organisation for each action will be responsible for informing partners of any issues or risks between quarterly progress update with a view to resolving.

PARTNERS SIGNED UP TO THE STRATEGY

The following key strategic partnerships have signed up to this strategy (in principle subject to reviewing the final draft and detailed delivery plan)

- *CHESS Homelessness
- *EFDC Community Safety Partnership
- *EFD Cultural Forum
- *EFD Health and Wellbeing Board
- *EFD Tenant and Leaseholders Panel
- Epping Community Hub (individual members to be listed pending confirmation)
- *Epping Team Ministry
- *Essex County Council Adult Social Care
- *Essex County Council Children's Services
- *Essex County Council Disability and Autism Team
- *Essex County Council Housing Growth Lead
- *Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust
- *Peabody Outreach Support

APPENDIX 1 - DELIVERY PLAN – 2022/23

PRIORITY 1 – WORKING TOGETHER – Make every contact count

REF	TASK	START	END	LEAD PARTNER & OTHER PARTNERS	SMART TARGET	PROGRES (RAG) & COMMENT
	Launch Make Every Contact Count campaign			<u>Lead</u>		
	Review the Duty to Refer (DTR) working arrangements and incorporate the principles of the proposed Duty to Collaborate if introduced			<u>Lead</u>		
	Joint venture between Housing Needs and Health Services to fund and recruit a Substance Misuse Navigator			<u>Lead</u>		
	Maximise opportunities for grant funding			<u>Lead</u>		
	Promote social and economic mobility by bridging the gap between skills shortage and employment and training			<u>Lead</u>		

PRIORITY 2 – PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS- Early intervention

REF	TASK	START	END	LEAD PARTNER & OTHER PARTNERS	SMART TARGET	PROGRES (RAG) & COMMENT
	Information and Advice: Review the levelling up, wellbeing and homelessness prevention and housing advice that is available at all touchpoints			<u>Lead</u>		
	Ensure the needs of people most at risk of homelessness are fully catered for as part of the Corporate Digital Strategy			<u>Lead</u>		
	Landlord incentives to maximise access to affordable private sector rented accommodation			<u>Lead</u>		
	Maximise accommodation options for those leaving institutions to reduce hidden homelessness and the need to sleep rough			<u>Lead</u>		
	Raise awareness of Homelessness: Schools and Colleges and Museum programme			<u>Lead</u>		

PRIORITY 3 – BUILDING RESILIENCE

REF	TASK	START	END	LEAD PARTNER & OTHER PARTNERS	SMART TARGET	PROGRES (RAG) & COMMENT
	Develop a resilient motivated and empowered workforce skilled in curious questioning and respectful of neurodiversity and vulnerability			<u>Lead</u>		
	Launch the Say Something campaign			<u>Lead</u>		
	Promote opportunities to engage in health and wellbeing initiatives			<u>Lead</u>		
	Develop a whole systems approach to assisting clients with mental health needs			<u>Lead</u>		
	Reduce the stigma of homelessness and rough sleeping through initiatives that are informed by people with lived experiences			<u>Lead</u>		

PRIORITY 4 – ACCESS TO SUITABLE HOUSING AND SUPPORT

REF	TASK	START	END	LEAD PARTNER & OTHER PARTNERS	SMART TARGET	PROGRES (RAG) & COMMENT
	Make the most effective use of temporary accommodation in the context of both financial and human resource			<u>Lead</u>		
	Secure Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation			<u>Lead</u>		
	Incorporate the Housing related aspects of the National Disability inclusion programme in to the service			<u>Lead</u>		
	Ensure the right support is provided at the right time and in the right place			<u>Lead</u>		
	Develop pathway to homelessness prevention, domestic abuse and health services for Gypsies and Travellers			<u>Lead</u>		

PRIORITY 5 – END ROUGH SLEEPING

REF	TASK	START	END	LEAD PARTNER & OTHER PARTNERS	SMART TARGET	PROGRES (RAG) & COMMENT
	Continue to maximise the successful shared outcomes from working with our neighbours across the County			<u>Lead</u>		
	Learn from the lived experiences of homelessness of the widest range of residents			<u>Lead</u>		
	End the cycle of homelessness by working with partners to expand the outreach service to include former rough sleepers			<u>Lead</u>		
	Understand the scale and impact of hidden homelessness across the district			<u>Lead</u>		

Version Control Log

Version	Date	Details of changes included in update	Author

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