

North Tyneside

Homelessness

**Prevention and Rough
Sleeping Strategy**

2023 – 2028



North
Tyneside
Council

Foreword

I am delighted to introduce our latest five-year Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

Over the last three years we, along with our partners, have faced increased challenges in supporting some of our most vulnerable residents, none more so than throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. We can be proud of our response to Government-led initiatives during this time, particularly 'Everyone In', ensuring everyone rough sleeping or at risk of rooflessness was offered and provided with emergency accommodation. Our partners also deserve recognition as they worked tirelessly to maintain their service delivery within safe environments.

The priorities that shape this Strategy build on our progress over the last few years. We will strengthen our funding successes and invest in services and provision that contribute to preventing homelessness and minimise the risk of rough sleeping. Our accommodation pathway out of homelessness has already been enhanced, with the introduction of safe bed spaces to assist someone off the street and self-contained properties to support the transition through to independence.

We cannot deliver services in isolation. Our partners' contribution to supporting people through a very complicated period of their lives cannot be underestimated. We will continue to work with a wide range of organisations and agencies to provide a transparent approach to our homelessness response.

Finally, North Tyneside is a great place to live, and this opportunity must be available to all our residents. This Strategy links to the Our North Tyneside Plan and other Council strategies. Its introduction will support our ambition to achieve those priorities and ultimately ensure that everyone has the chance to live in their own safe and affordable home, within a sustainable community, and have access to services that promote and encourage health, wellbeing and training and employment prospects.

Cllr John Harrison
Cabinet Member responsible for Housing
North Tyneside Council



1. Introduction

The **Homelessness Act 2002** places a statutory duty on all local housing authorities to carry out a homelessness review for their area and, in consultation with local partners and stakeholders, formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on the results of that review, at least every five years.

The **Homelessness Reduction Act 2017** introduced new legal duties for housing authorities, making amendments to the Housing Act 1996 Part 7 (Homelessness). This focuses on the prevention and relief of homelessness, regardless of priority status and providing personal housing plans. This is reflected in our Strategy and our ways of working.



2. National Policy

Our last Strategy was published in 2019. Since then, there have been changes to national policy and legal context that may have an impact on how local authorities deliver housing and homelessness services. These include:

The Tenants Fee Act 2019: Applies to new or renewed tenancies from 1 June 2019. The aim of the Act is to reduce the upfront fees and ongoing tenancy costs, with responsible payment transparency from the start for tenants.

The Charter for Social Housing Residents: Social Housing White Paper 2020: Sets out the actions that Government will look to introduce to ensure that social housing is safe to live in, residents are listened to, the provision of good quality homes, and there is opportunity for change when things go wrong.

Building Safety Act 2022: Gives homeowners and residents more rights, powers, and protection so homes are safer.

Domestic Abuse Act 2021: Enacted January 2022, it is the first Act to include a legal definition of domestic abuse and recognises all the forms that domestic abuse can take. It introduces a statutory duty on local authorities to support survivors of domestic abuse.

Fairer Private Rented White Paper 2022: Aims to redress the balance between landlords and private renters, through support for cost-of-living pressures and new measures to tackle unfair rents.

Ending Rough Sleeping 2022: Building on the progress made since the introduction of the Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018, this Strategy sets out how Government will take action to end rough sleeping, with key themes being prevention, intervention, and recovery.

Stable Homes, Built on Love: Implementation Strategy and Consultation. Children's Social Care Reform 2023: Provides context to the barriers faced by care leavers in securing and maintaining affordable housing and places them at greater risk of homelessness. Alongside the Joint Housing Protocols for Care Leavers 2020, the Strategy focuses on increasing the number of care leavers in safe, suitable accommodation and reducing care leaver homelessness.

3. North Tyneside Context

The **Our North Tyneside Council Plan 2021–2025** has five themes to help create a North Tyneside that is thriving, family-friendly, caring, secure and green. The plan builds on the success of previous ones and recognises the challenges faced both now and in the future. ‘We listen, we care’ is our **Customer Promise** and has been developed based on what our residents have told us. This sets out what customers can expect from the Authority, as well as providing direction to give feedback across all of our services, including Homelessness.

Our work around homelessness is complemented by a number of strategies and policies within Housing Services, which include:

North Tyneside Tenancy Strategy 2021–2025: Provides guidance to registered providers operating in the Borough, including our own landlord function. The Strategy emphasises the need to make best use of the housing stock to meet local housing need, maintain and create successful, sustainable communities and prevent homelessness.

North Tyneside Allocations Policy 2019 and 2021 review: Explains how people can access secure, suitable and affordable social sector homes within North Tyneside. A banding structure is in place, that includes recognition for North Tyneside residents, including those who are homeless or are threatened with homelessness.

North Tyneside Environmental Crime and Anti-social Behaviour Policy 2020: Sets out how, in partnership, the Authority will respond to low level environmental crime and tackle anti-social behaviour.

North Tyneside Housing Services Domestic Abuse Policy (refreshed 2021): Details our response to domestic abuse disclosures.

4. Review of the North Tyneside Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019–2021

4.1 Achievements

The Authority has continued to work with its partners within the Borough and the wider region to deliver new initiatives, create specialist roles, promote continuous engagement, and strengthen working relationships and partnerships. This includes:

Specialist roles

- A Homelessness Support Officer to work with current and former rough sleepers, and those at risk of rough sleeping.
- A Single Person Support Officer to provide support to individuals to resolve their housing crisis.
- A Mental Health Officer to provide guidance to both officers and clients.
- A Domestic Abuse Housing Outreach Officer to work with both officers and families.
- A Private Rented Officer, whose offer has been expanded to support customers to access and sustain accommodation.

Services

- A Homeless Response Service, including outreach to locate and engage with rough sleepers and deliver brief interventions.
- Provision of a sit-up service in a local resource hall for rough sleepers during periods of severe weather.
- A multi-service drop in/hub facility for current and former rough sleepers, those at risk of rough sleeping or living in insecure accommodation.
- Delivery of homelessness and housing educational sessions by a partner into schools and colleges.
- Introduction of an intensive support package for rough sleepers, linked with an accommodation offer.

Accommodation

- Proactive engagement with bed and breakfast and hotel establishments to increase the number of businesses who will accept homeless households.
- Introduction of Somewhere Safe to Stay bedspaces to improve the housing pathway with an immediate offer off the streets or to avoid rough sleeping.
- Funding through the Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP) to increase the number of dispersed properties available to homeless households.
- Enhanced the accommodation pathway offer with the introduction of five properties through the Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme (RSAP).
- Supported a partner's funding application to purchase properties in North Tyneside to assist with move-on from supported housing.
- Recommissioned supported housing provision for 16–24 year-olds and over-25s.

And...

- Accessed funding to assist people off the streets and into temporary accommodation, travel costs to reconnect to their home area if safe to do so, and basic provisions.
- Extended our membership with the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance, accessing tools and resources to support the delivery of services.
- Received recognition from Government advisors for our web pages on homelessness and the information provided to assist those in need of housing advice, which have been cited as best practice.
- Transferred the homelessness out of hours service to an in-house contact centre.
- The introduction of a 0800 Freephone number for those with limited finances and at risk of homelessness to contact the local authority on.

4.2 Current picture

4.2.1 Housing Options (homelessness)

The Housing Options Team (homelessness) is the first point of contact for any resident in need of free, independent advice regarding their current housing situation. A triage system identifies and prioritises those who require an appointment and have any queries that can be resolved through the provision of advice. Roofless presentations are dealt with the same day.

Located within the team are several specialist posts that support the delivery of a seamless and integrated service.

4.2.2 Access to homeless services

We collect and analyse data across our homeless service. Some of the outcomes of our work are reflected in the data and it also helps inform our priorities.

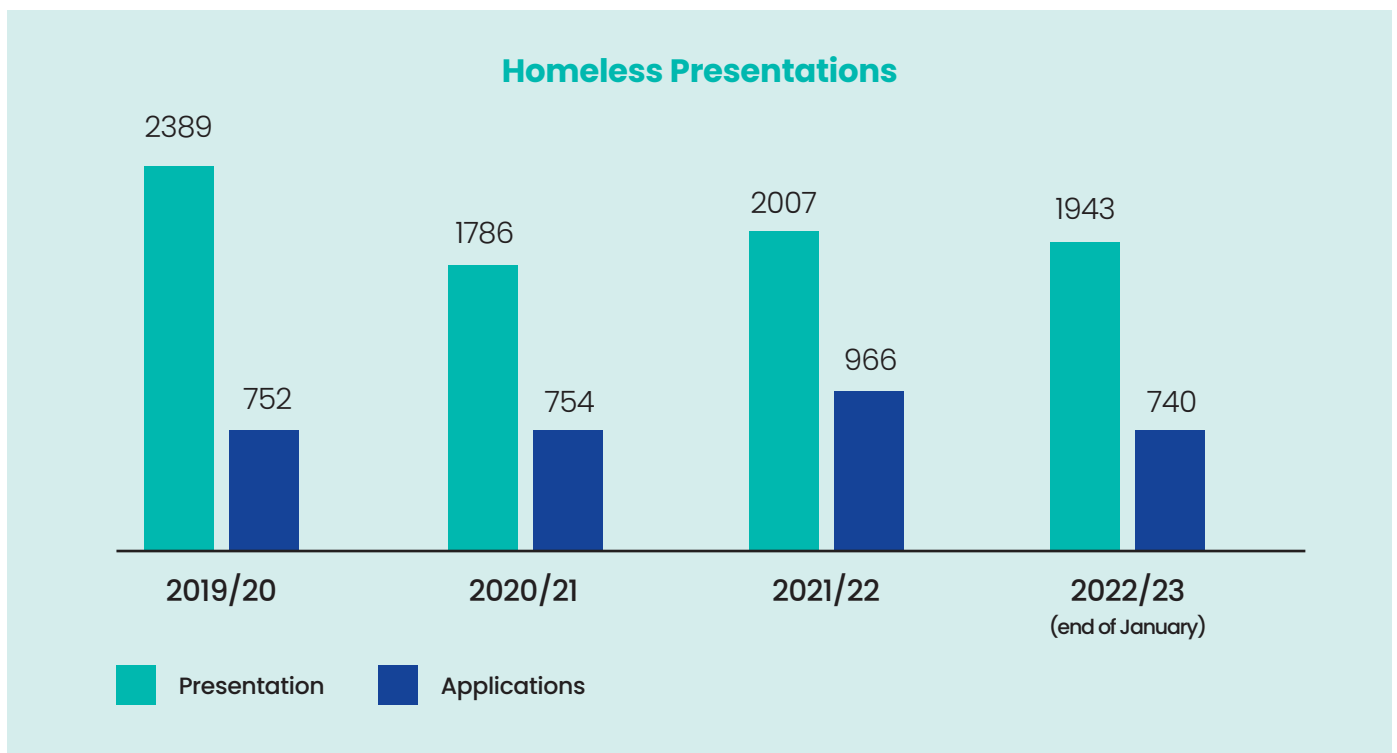
4.2.3 Homeless presentations

We offer housing advice to our customers who are at risk of homelessness, threatened with homelessness, or believe they currently are homeless, all of which are represented as a homeless presentation.

The response to a homeless presentation is tailored to individual circumstances and follows relevant legislation and code of guidance. The majority of cases are resolved with housing advice, with a fewer number of cases progressing to a full homeless application.

The main reason for presentations were:

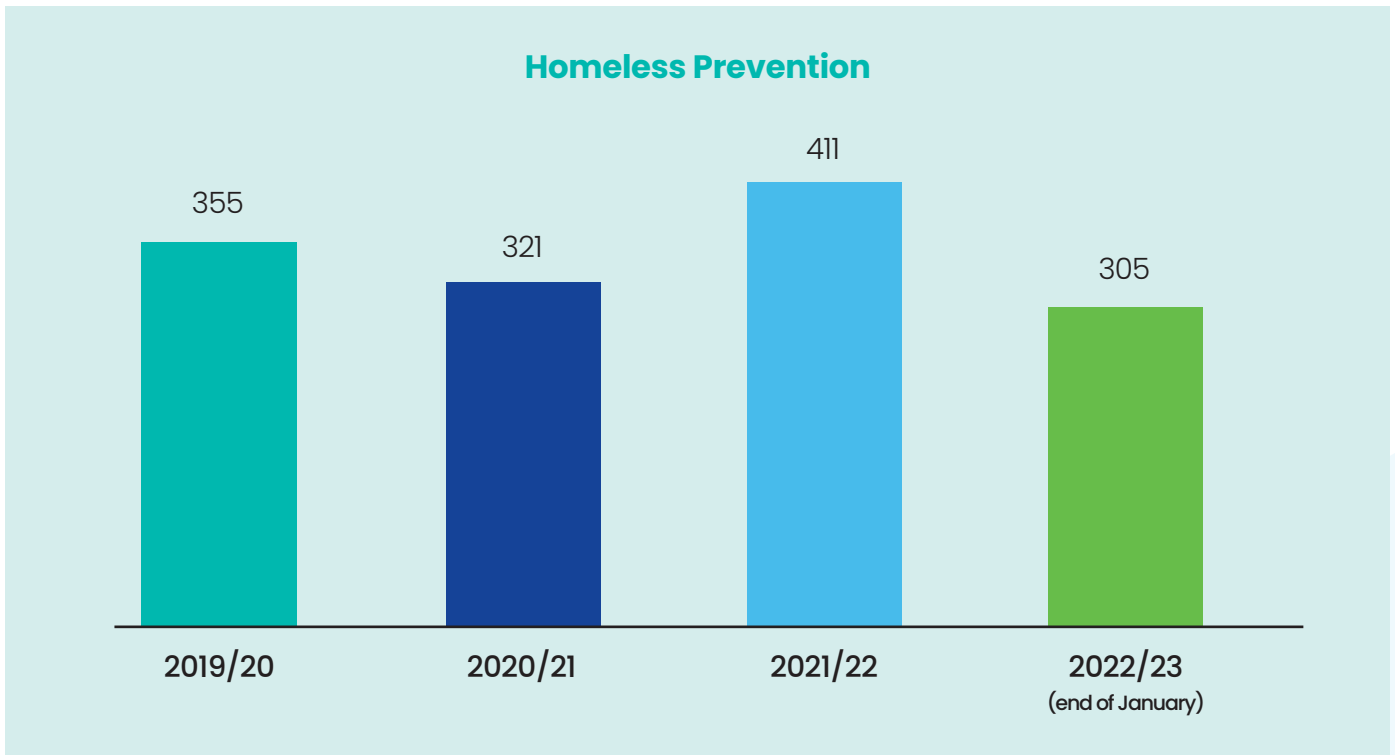
- 2019/20 – End of assured shorthold tenancy
- 2020/21 – Asked to leave by family
- 2021/22 – Asked to leave by family
- 2022/23 – End of assured shorthold tenancy



4.2.4 Prevention

We encourage early presentations to the service, as this helps support the prevention of homelessness. Prevention is the first option we explore with our customers.

We use a range of measures such as mediation with family members, financial support or negotiation with private landlords to help sustain current accommodation.



4.2.5 Temporary accommodation

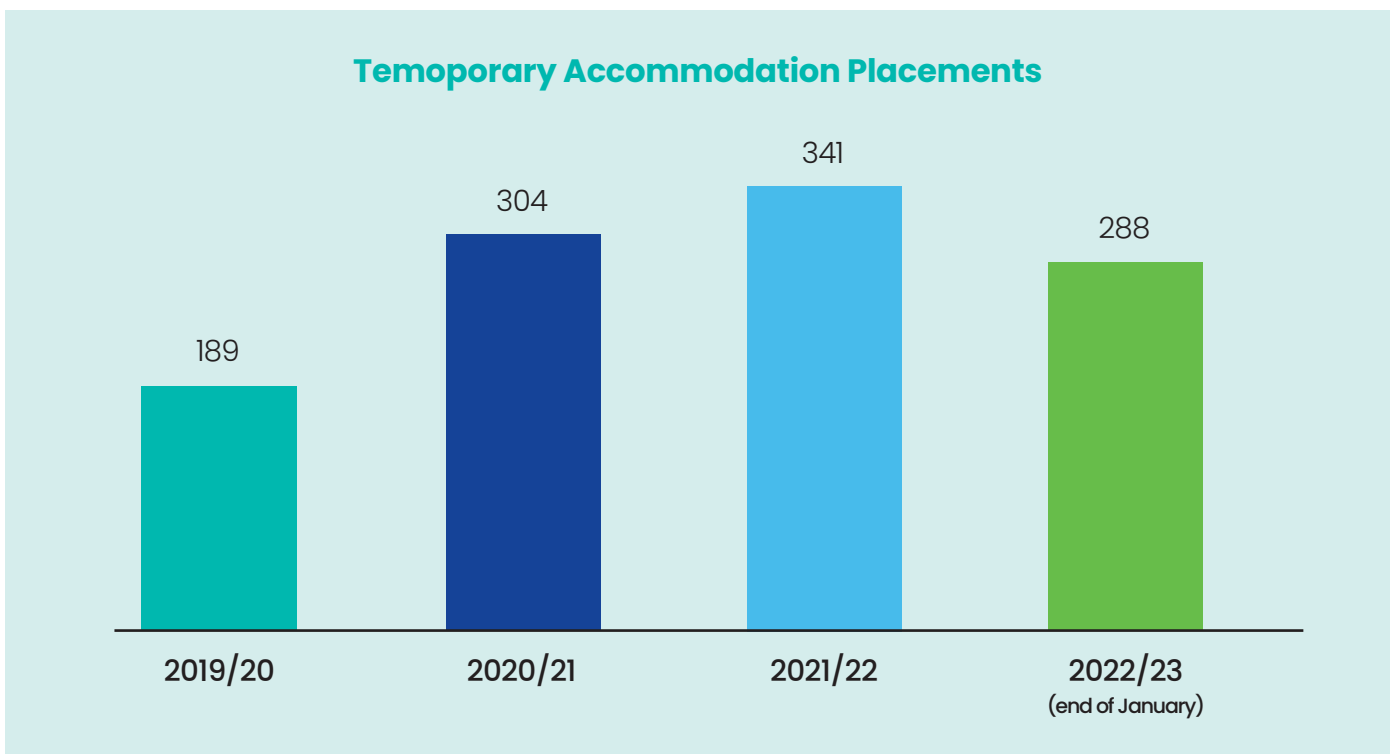
A specialist temporary emergency accommodation team is responsible for arranging emergency and temporary accommodation and providing support for the duration of the placement.

Households are placed in temporary accommodation if there is a duty to do so, i.e. they are believed to be eligible, homeless and likely to be in priority need while their application is dealt with, or it has not been possible to prevent or relieve their homelessness and they have been accepted as homeless and in priority need.

Temporary accommodation is provided until the Council's statutory duty comes to an end, normally through a household moving into a permanent home.

Temporary accommodation is provided through our existing social housing stock, with furnished homes dispersed throughout the Borough. Only in exceptional circumstances is bed and breakfast or hotel accommodation used for homeless applicants. If there is no provision available in North Tyneside, or it is not safe to remain in the area, then a placement is secured out of area. The household is moved back to North Tyneside as soon as it is possible to do so, where it is appropriate.

The Covid-19 pandemic and Government initiative of 'Everyone In', which ensured no one was left on the streets or without a roof over their head during periods of national and local lockdowns, resulted in an increase in the number of households placed in temporary accommodation. Numbers have since fallen, but remain higher than prior to 2020.

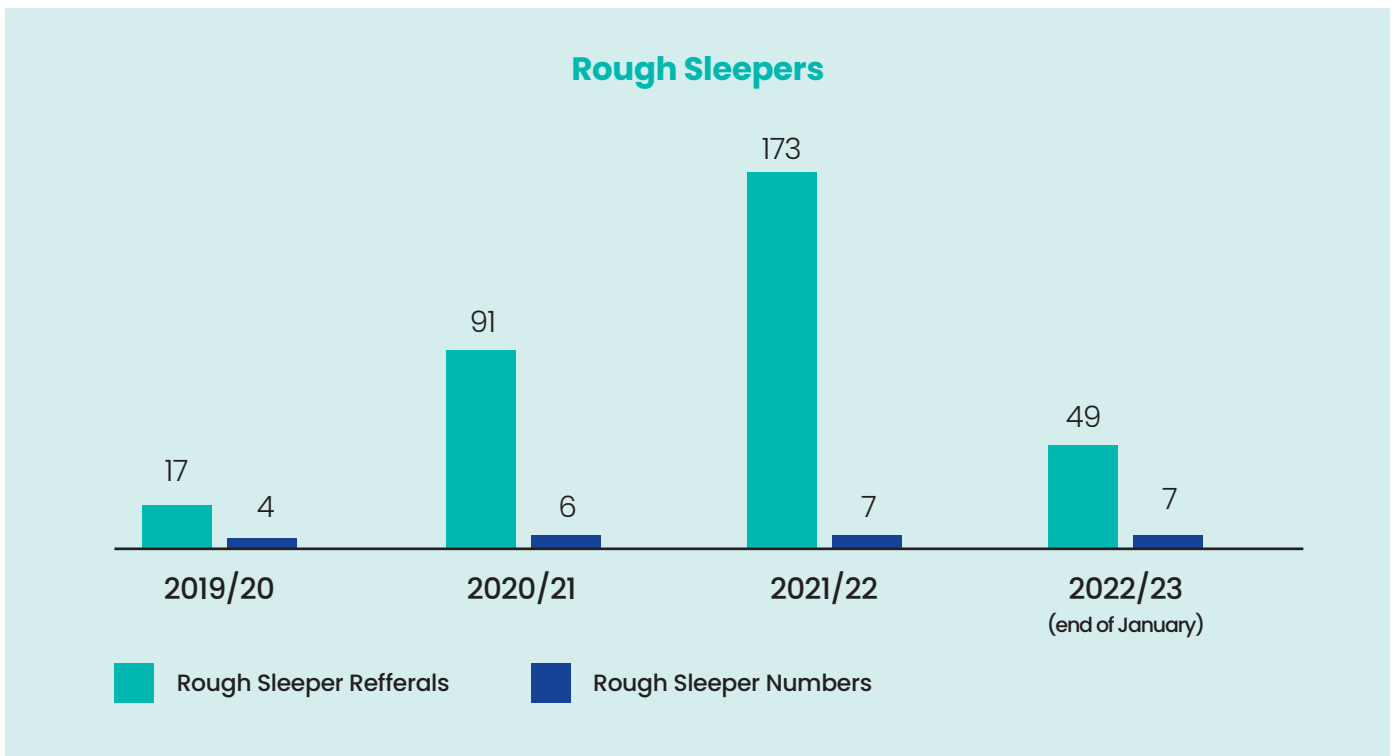


4.2.6 Rough sleeping

North Tyneside Council provides an immediate response to reports of rough sleepers, working in partnership with commissioned services.

The service offers a personalised approach to current and former rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping. This has ensured there is a specialist service available to some of our most vulnerable residents when they need it most. This has resulted in no rough sleepers currently reported in North Tyneside.

A bi-monthly rough sleeping count, or estimate, takes place to monitor levels of rough sleeping and identify hotspots. This work is supported by the Government requirement to submit an annual figure to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) indicating the number of people sleeping rough on an agreed typical night. This is carried out between 1 October and 30 November.



4.2.7 Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP)

There are no legal requirements placed on local authorities to provide shelter to rough sleepers during periods of severe weather. This includes extreme cold, high winds, heavy rain, and heat. However, providing shelter to rough sleepers in these conditions feels the right thing to do and our Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) sets out the arrangements that we implement to ensure that rough sleepers, or those at risk of rough sleeping, can access a safe shelter when the protocol is activated.

5. Our Priorities

Homelessness is more than not having a home. The associated underlying issues and complexities can have a detrimental effect that can stay with someone for several years.

Our priorities have been shaped and agreed by recent legislative changes, review of our achievements, outcomes and challenges identified throughout the lifespan of the previous Strategy.

Engagement has also taken place with organisations that deliver and/or support the preventing homeless agenda, residents and – most importantly – customers of the services to gather their views.

Consideration has also been given to the economic crisis, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and lessons learned from service delivery.

Priority one: Ending rough sleeping

This priority focuses on ending rough sleeping in North Tyneside, with improved intervention to prevent rough sleeping in the first instance.

People living in unsuitable accommodation, sofa surfing or hidden households continue to mask the risk of individuals ending up rough sleeping or intermittently rough sleeping.

The commissioning of dedicated rough sleeping services and the personalised approach to working with current and former rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping, has ensured there is a specialist service available to some of our most vulnerable residents when they need it most.

To support our commitment to ending rough sleeping, we need to know where people are, why they are falling into rough sleeping, or at risk of rough sleeping, and review and revise our response and any interim accommodation offer.

Key actions:

- Complete a review of our rough sleeping support offer
- Introduce a new approach to data collection to inform our response to rough sleeping
- Research and introduce new approaches to prevent rough sleeping
- Explore accommodation pathways for rough sleepers

Priority two: The accommodation offer

This priority focuses on temporary, supported, and permanent housing, for all of our customers, including specialist groups such as care leavers, young people and survivors of domestic abuse.

If there is reason to believe that a homeless applicant may be in priority need, then temporary accommodation will be offered and provided.

The demand for social and affordable homes continues to exceed supply. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) 2021 confirms that there is an annual need of 477 affordable homes.

Suitable, affordable housing for under 35-year-olds continues to be a pressure. The lack of one-bedroom properties and the local housing allowance rates applied to private properties restricts housing options for this cohort.

Some vulnerable client groups are at a greater risk of homelessness and/or repeated housing instability. Therefore, a housing pathway including various options needs to be available to them. Some of our most vulnerable groups may include:

- Young people, including care leavers
- Substance misusers
- Those with an offending history
- Survivors of domestic abuse
- Those with a mental health issue
- Those with complex needs, including one or more of the above

In addition to the supported housing schemes for single person households delivered through our commissioned partnerships, the accommodation pathway has expanded to include somewhere safe to stay bed spaces and self-contained supported housing for current and former rough sleepers.

The somewhere safe to stay beds introduce an immediate offer to help someone off the streets or prevent being on the streets. They provide a safe, supported place for an agreed period until suitable move-on accommodation can be sourced.

The self-contained supported properties for rough sleepers are available for up to two years and enable someone to develop their life skills and sustain a home, in preparation for moving on into their own permanent independent property.

The commissioned partnerships also deliver outreach support to help someone through the first few weeks of their tenancy, or provide targeted intervention work to prevent someone from losing their home.

When the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) is activated, the accommodation offer is a 'sit-up service' delivered through community volunteers. There is no night shelter provision at other times of the year, therefore this will be explored.

The private sector housing market has been increasingly competitive. Engagement with the sector will be strengthened to support both landlords and tenants, through the provision of timely advice to prevent a housing crisis and increase successful housing outcomes.

Key actions:

- Deliver an improved temporary accommodation offer
- Introduce new options to support and sustain accommodation
- Review our outreach support offer to ensure we continue to meet our clients' needs
- Work with specialist housing commissioners to identify further service needs
- Continue to improve the private rented offer and work collaboratively with landlords and tenants

Priority three: Collaborative partnerships

To improve how we tackle homelessness within North Tyneside, we recognise the importance of strengthening our existing relationships with partner agencies and all organisations that contribute to early intervention to prevent homelessness within the Borough.

We will also continue our regional work with local authority colleagues to collectively support ending rough sleeping, joint funding initiatives and preventing homelessness.

Linked to collaborative partnerships is effective communication and access to information for those in need of assistance. Ensuring information is easy to find and accessible to all may help prevent a housing crisis and someone becoming homeless. We promote our services and offer, so it is easy to know who to contact and where to signpost to.

Key actions:

- Continue to strengthen our local and regional partnerships to tackle homelessness
- Work with our partners to identify further funding opportunities
- Actively promote homeless-related services and signposting to partners
- Review our service information and ensure that it is accessible to all

6. Implementation of the Strategy

We will work with our partners to develop a delivery plan. This will be formed from the key actions in our priorities. The plan will be reviewed and revised each year to ensure any legislative changes are included.

The North Tyneside Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Partnership will monitor delivery of the plan.



If you need us to do anything differently (reasonable adjustments) to help you access our services, including providing this information in another language or format, please call (0191) 643 6202.