

**HOMELESSNESS REDUCTION AND SLEEPING ROUGH STRATEGY 2023 – 2028**

**Report of the Executive Director of Health, Housing and Communities**

**1.0 Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 To provide information around the adoption of the Homelessness Reduction and Sleeping Rough Strategy 2023 - 2028

**2.0 Introduction**

- 2.1 The Council adopted its first Homelessness Strategy in 2019 to meet a government requirement to have a strategy in place. Unfortunately, within a few months of the Strategy being launched with partners the Covid pandemic hit and changed dramatically the way in which we responded to homelessness and housing. This prevented the aims and priorities of the Strategy from being fully applied and implemented.
- 2.2 Despite the many challenges of Covid-19 the strength of our partnership working, innovations around rough sleeping and the focus on the connection between housing and health helped the Council effectively deliver and improve services for residents presenting as homeless or at risk of homelessness.
- 2.3 With a lot of details from the 2019 strategy still very much relevant and from learning through the Covid-19 pandemic period the process of reviewing the new Homelessness and Sleeping Rough Strategy has been a positive collaboration from partners and stakeholders in the development of the new Strategy now titled “The Homelessness Reduction and Sleeping Rough Strategy for Sunderland 2023 – 2028”
- 2.4 This new Strategy sets out the Council’s strategic direction to; prevent homelessness, provide assistance and advice to those threatened with homelessness and enable move on to independent living to reduce instances of repeat homelessness. The Council works in partnership across the city to achieve these aims.
- 2.5 The Homelessness Strategy for Sunderland does not stand alone and many priorities and actions within it, operate in tandem with existing strategies, plans and policies, such as the Housing Strategy.

### **3.0 Strategic Context**

3.1 It is necessary to ensure that the Strategy is aligned to the wider strategic context nationally and locally. The Strategy must sit within a range of statutory requirements, policies, guidance and local needs. Some of these are outlined below

#### **3.2 National Context**

3.3 From April 2018 the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 placed a duty on local authorities to intervene at an earlier stage to prevent homelessness and to take reasonable steps to help those who become homeless to secure accommodation.

#### **3.4 Ending rough sleeping for good**

3.5 On 5<sup>th</sup> September 2022 the Government published a strategy to “End rough sleeping for good”. The strategy is organised through four key themes – Prevention, Intervention, Recovery and a Transparent and Joined up System.

The strategy also sets out for the first time a clear definition of what the Government means by ending rough sleeping, which is that it is prevented wherever possible, and where it does occur it is rare, brief and non-recurrent.

#### **3.6 A Housing Strategy for Sunderland**

3.7 During the consultation process of the draft Housing Strategy for Sunderland 2023 – 2030, homelessness was raised as a priority issue which needed focus and attention. Although homelessness has featured in the previous Housing Strategy it has now been included in the draft document spanning all three strategic themes of: Grow, Improve and Support.

3.8 Particular emphasis and priority is made within the “Support” theme of the draft Housing Strategy where the Council and its partners aim to prevent homelessness across the city through early intervention.

3.9 The proposed Homelessness Reduction and Sleeping Rough Strategy is not a standalone document and should be considered in conjunction with the Housing Strategy for Sunderland.

3.10 There will be joint governance structures developed to ensure that all housing and homelessness issues are reviewed and monitored.

#### **3.11 Health Needs Assessment**

3.12 A Health Needs Assessment was conducted to support the drafting of the Housing Strategy for Sunderland 2023 - 2030 and the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023 - 2028. Understanding the health and support needs of our communities affected by homelessness is vital to a strategy that aims to help people in the city.

- 3.13 To gain the clearest picture of health needs amongst the target population in Sunderland, multiple methods were used to draw out priorities. These included:
- A review of best practice and national guidelines
  - Analysis of Local Authority-held data
  - Health questionnaires completed by the target population
  - Interviews with service users and other key stakeholders
- 3.14 A total of 21 recommendations across eight themes were identified and form part of the initial the strategy's action plan. An executive summary of Health Needs Assessment is attached to the Strategy (Appendix 1).
- 3.15 Throughout the strategy there is a strong emphasis on the early intervention and prevention of homelessness. Preventing homelessness is more cost effective, but more importantly delivers far better outcomes for the individuals concerned. Homelessness is a complex area and we have sought to gain a better understanding of the reasons for homelessness in the city.

#### **4.0 Homelessness Reduction and Sleeping Rough Strategy 2023 - 2028**

- 4.1 The proposed Homelessness Reduction and Sleeping Rough Strategy will provide a whole city approach to achieving the four key priorities:

**Prevention:** Prevention of homelessness

- Promote an early intervention ethos across the homelessness system
- Research into and review data to improve delivery of homelessness prevention
- Understand the needs of those threatened by homelessness before crisis point

**Intervention:** Intervention when somebody is homeless

- Improved temporary accommodation and move on offer
- Delivery of the right support at the right time for vulnerable groups

**Recovery:** Move on and recovery to reduce instances of repeat homelessness

- Review of local delivery models to meet need
- Support to sustain tenancies

**Partnerships**

- A partnership strategy
- Partnership led pathways

## 5.0 Governance

- 5.1 It is vital that the Homelessness Reduction and Sleeping Rough Strategy remains current, relevant, and able to adapt to changes in the housing environment. To enable this, a strong governance arrangement will be put in place which will be aligned to the Housing Strategy and incorporate the delivery of the Homelessness Reduction and Sleeping Rough Strategy.
- 5.2 The delivery of the Homelessness Reduction and Sleeping Rough Strategy will be aligned with the overall governance arrangements of the Housing Strategy, its action plan and KPIs owned by members of the Housing Strategy Support Subgroup. The governance diagram is shown below.
- 5.3 The Support Subgroup will report up to the Housing Strategy Review Group which is chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Dynamic City. Operational groups will be established for task and finish projects as well as related work (e.g. Domestic Abuse Review Group) and will have a reporting relationship to the subgroup.
- 5.4 Governance structure



In addition to the above reporting arrangements, it is proposed there are updates on the delivery of the strategy to the Health and Wellbeing Board via the Living Well Delivery Board.

## **6.0 Recommendations**

6.1 The Health and Wellbeing Board is recommended to:

- a. note the contents of this report;
- b. support the delivery of the Homelessness Reduction and Sleeping Rough Strategy; and
- c. receive updates on the delivery of the strategy via the Living Well Delivery Board.

