

Sunderland City Council

Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee

5th March 2024

Homelessness

Homelessness Strategy

- 16th March 2023 Cabinet approved the Homelessness Reduction and Sleeping Rough Strategy 2023 – 2028
- 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.
- To deliver the strategy aims effectively the Council works in partnership across the city.
- There was extensive consultation in the development of the strategy with partners and stakeholders. It was clear that partners were passionate to collaborate to tackle homelessness and work together to target the end of homelessness in the city.



Homelessness Working Groups

- Two working groups were established: the cross-party Member Working Group and the Partners Working Group
- These Working Groups undertake detailed homelessness review activity
- The working groups have been essential in the development of the Homelessness Action Plan to support and underpin the wider Strategy progress
- There have been 11 meetings through the year:

Member Working Group

- 11th January 2023
- 15th February 2023
- 24th May 2023
- 23rd June 2023
- 7th August 2023
- 19th September 2023

Partner Working Group

- 7th March 2023
- 5th April 2023
- 15th May 2023
- 13th June 2023
- 24th July 2023

Working Group representatives

Partners

- Sunderland City Council
 - Housing Options
 - Housing Strategy
 - Vulnerable Groups
 - Housing Operations
 - Adult Social Care
 - Public Health
- Probation Service
- NHS
- ICB
- Wearside Women in Need

Partners

- Wear Recovery
- Together for Children
- Gentoo
- Oasis Community Housing
- Changing Lives
- The Salvation Army
- Thirteen
- Northumbria Police
- Centrepont
- Homeless Action

Member Working Group

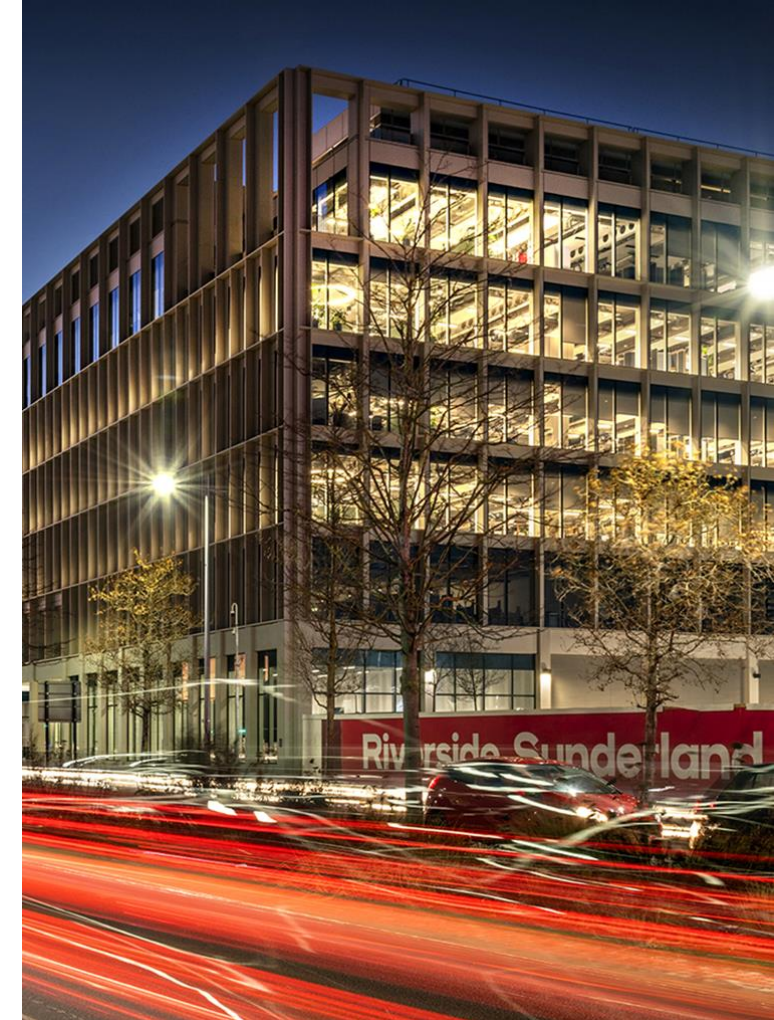
- Councillor Kevin Johnston
- Cllr Alison Smith
- Cllr Allison Chisnall
- Cllr Sean Laws
- Cllr Linda Williams
- Cllr John Price
- Cllr Louise Farthing
- Cllr Dianne Snowdon
- Cllr Kelly Chequer

Member Working Group

- Cllr Michael Dixon
- Cllr Pam Mann
- Cllr Tracy Dodds
- Cllr Paul Donaghy
- Cllr Michael Hartnack
- Cllr Fiona Miller
- Cllr Allen Curtis
- Cllr Julia K. Potts
- Cllr Iain Scott

Working Group activity

- General awareness building of homelessness in the city
- The Council's legislative responsibilities and duties
- Comprehensive homelessness data review
- Overview of the Council Housing Options Team – its structures and operational working
- The current challenges being faced in tackling and responding to homelessness.
- The achievements in delivery and service and what is being planned for the future.
- Homelessness Health Needs Assessment; its findings and recommendations
- External presentation from the University of Northumbria on a research Study on “Tackling Trauma, Ending Homelessness”.
- Presentations from partners and service providers regards their insights into services in Sunderland



Pathway priorities

- Homelessness is a wide ranging and complex service area that responds to many types of case and referrals which engages with many services and
- Needed to establish priorities across key homelessness pathways
- The Working Groups agreed that there would be an initial 8 priority Pathways that would be reviewed

Priority Pathways

- Domestic Abuse
- Hospital admission and discharge
- Hard to Place Offenders
- Young people 18 – 25
- Rough sleeping
- Duty 2 Refer
- SWEP and winter provision
- Complex Needs / Mental Health

Pathway priorities

- There were a wide range of other Pathways that the Working Groups identified
- It was recommended that these would form part of a future work programme. These included

Wider Pathways

- LGBTQ+
- GP access and support
- Medical interventions
- Physical disability
- Families
- Single Men
- Single Woman
- Single Mothers
- UK Non-Nationals / No Recourse to Public Funds
Outreach services

Homeless Service Directory

- Through the partners Working Group a range of partners came together, many for the first time
- This was a huge step forward in relationship building and the broadening of discussions around joint and collaborative working
- Partners recommended that we harness the developing relationships and contacts and develop a Homelessness Service Directory
- This Directory will be a practical operational support directory
- To be issued quarterly to all partners to review and update so that it remains current and up to date



Homelessness Action Plan

- The Action Plan has 96 actions that cover all 8 pathways and the Health Needs Assessment recommendations
- Ten identified actions within the Domestic Abuse Pathway have been removed and transferred to the Domestic Abuse Violence against Women and Girls Executive Board associated action plan as it was felt more appropriate to place those actions in that area
- All actions will have a named Council lead to enable a focus and momentum with partners
- Governance arrangements agreed and in place on operational delivery and strategic review with Portfolio Holder Dynamic City and wider Partners
- Action Plan approved by Council Cabinet on 7th December 2023 and will be driven forward through 2024



One Bed Accommodation pressures

University of Sunderland

- International Student intake is 3000 students and dependents by end November 2023 and a further 920 arrivals in January 2024 without dependents. Most accommodation needs are one bed
- **Homelessness Duties**

Duty	Male	Female	Combined
Initial Assessment	41	28	69
Prevention	25	22	47
Relief	79	35	114
Main	33	18	51
Total	178	103	281

- All emergency accommodation for single people who are homeless are full, a total of 128 bed spaces, assuming at 10% Move On position for those ready to leave emergency accommodation - 13 people
- Potential imminent identified need for one bed accommodation is 294
- As the Move On position continues there needs to be a continued supply of one bed accommodation

One Bed Accommodation pressures

Registered Providers

- They have lower property turnover and void rates than ever before
- There is very limited one bed accommodation available in the city
- Some RPs have some low demand one bed accommodation available, however these are connected to low and medium rise accommodation which have an age restriction of over 55. Most of our client group are under 55
- RPs are not seeing one bed homes as a priority; the Council will be identifying one bed homes as a strategic need along with wider support programmes for the future
- RPs do want to help but have their own business challenges, such as, asset management issues and investment needs, out of date stock and potential decommissioning, achieving EPC C and moving to net zero



Homelessness Accommodation pressures

- There are no vacancies on a regular basis in any emergency supported accommodation, they are constantly full. When a vacancy comes up it fills immediately. This included projects at: Swan Lodge, Poplar House, YMCA, Athena, The Knoll, Gladstone Street, 13 Housing and Wearside Women in Need.
- Huge pressure on HOT to secure accommodation – situation is compounded as more demand and more complex cases
- Due to current accommodation pressures and demands we are placing more in bed and breakfast and hotels, rather than the normal supported accommodation options
- Many cases present to hospital. When cases admitted to hospital its more difficult to arrange suitable discharge due to complexity of the cases
- As at 26th January 2024 we had 60 placements in bed and breakfasts or hotels. 30 are within the city and 30 placed outside of the city. The breakdown by LA is:
 - Sunderland 30
 - Gateshead 12
 - North Tyneside 5
 - Newcastle 4
 - Stockton 9

Asylum Claims – Fast Track process

- Home Office using their powers to veto our view on properties deemed unsuitable
- Fast Tracking process to deal with backlog in operation by the Home Office
- In 11 weeks, we seen a dramatic impact.....
 - 233 positive decisions made
 - 64% single people, 61% are single males
 - Average of 13 cases per week
- Temporary Accommodation impact
- 39 people still in property served notice to leave
- Previously 28-day notice now at 11.51 days
- Increased service demand on HOT
- Limited TA or one bed accommodation available
- Risk of increased street homeless

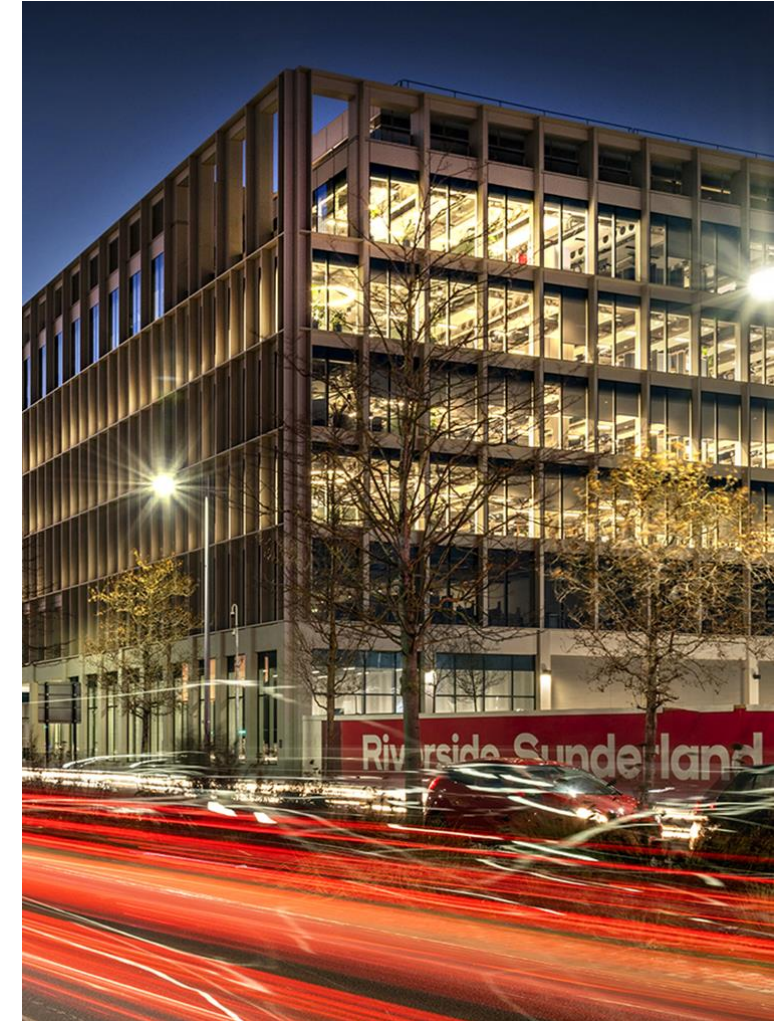
As @ 24/10/23										
Ave notice (days)	Total Number of people	Designation			Location				Status	
		Single Male	Single Female	Family / Couple	Still in property	In TA	Unknown	With Friends	Case Open	Case Closed
10.65	88	56	3	9	35	2	21	9	42	26
As @ 11/01/24										
Ave notice (days)	Total Number of people	Designation			Location				Status	
		Single Male	Single Female	Family / Couple	Still in property	In TA	Unknown	With Friends	Case Open	Case Closed
11.51	233	141	7	27	39	7	104	15	53	122

NOTE: Government have in January 2024 changed their policy on early evictions from accommodation due to increased street homelessness across the UK. This should help LAs as more time to assist those homeless to secure accommodation. The numbers in the system for assessment is significant and will be a pressure on homeless teams and available accommodation.

Homeless service data

As at 30/1/2024.....

- 603 Current open HRA cases
- 15 Duty to Refers awaiting assessment.
- 428 have contacted Customer Service Network for assistance from Housing Options – this is up from 269 in November 2023
- An additional 191 households have provided documentation and are now awaiting allocation of a Homeless Reduction Officer
- An additional 65 households awaiting urgent allocation.



Homeless service data

As at 30/1/2024.....

- In January there were 308 Street Homeless appointments
- Ave. of 13.39 per day
 - On 12th February (one day) there were 40 presentations that the team had to deal with of which 28 were street homeless, this compares to 25 presentations on 12th November 2023
 - 62% of applications present with a mental health support need, and the average support need per case is above 3.
- Private Landlord issues
 - Significant increase in those being evicted by private landlords – S21 Notices
 - Cost of living crisis impact and affordability issues following mortgage increases.
 - Landlords are increasing rents making it unaffordable to their tenants resulting in homelessness.
 - Some landlords are also failing to pay mortgages resulting in repossession and tenants being evicted.
 - More people are presenting with rent arrears due to affordability issues.
- There is an increase in people presenting with a budgeting/financial pressure support need, this is up 5% compared to previous years.



Homeless service data

Budgetary pressures

- The costs for all temporary accommodation over the last 4 years are below
- This shows the significant increase in costs as demand and more cases with complex support needs increase;

2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023 – 31/12/2023
£390,241	£655,604	£824,080	£1,183,163.86



Homelessness Action Plan - progress

- Nappads - £100k secured from ICB to support
- Drop-in Service supported and extended services until March 2025
- Nurse approved to support those homeless – via Drop-in
- New Homelessness Hub progressing
 - Salvation Army / wider partners
 - OHID approved £190k to support future capital works
- Two new supported accommodation projects approved by Cabinet on 31/1/24 – both now progressing with procurement for support providers



Homelessness Action Plan - progress

- The Shieling received planning permission for 5 self-contained units of supported accommodation for young females experiencing homelessness
- Floating Support Service approved for Rough Sleeper service provision – two new Officers to be recruited
- Two additional Homeless Reduction Officers supported by Public Health to help meet demand pressures
- Secured funding to extend range of homeless projects:
 - The Homeless Support Project with Changing Lives until 31 March 2025, provides 18 units of dispersed accommodation
 - Lewis and Barnabus House extended until June 2025 which provides 19 units of supported accommodation
 - Athena House extended until March 2025 which supports 8 females with complex needs and sleeping rough
- Additional Hospital (HRO) to widen support in hospital assessments and discharge

Sunderland City Council

Thank you & any questions!