



2026-31

Homelessness and rough sleeping housing strategy

**Co-produced by the
Homelessness Partnership**





Foreword

by Cllr Kieron Wilson – Portfolio Holder for Housing and Regulation at BCP Council

Homelessness remains one of the most significant challenges facing Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole today.

Every person who reaches out for help brings with them a story shaped by pressure, uncertainty and often avoidable hardship. Our responsibility is to respond with compassion and determination, recognising that homelessness is not inevitable, and that the systems around people can – and must – work better.

This strategy has been shaped by the voices of residents, partners, and people with lived experience who have been open about what has gone wrong in the past and what needs to change for the future. Their contributions have strengthened our understanding and sharpened our focus. We have an opportunity now to work differently: to prevent homelessness wherever possible, to respond more quickly and consistently when help is needed, and to ensure that once someone has a home, they can truly sustain it.

Ending homelessness is achievable if we work together with shared ambition and accountability. I invite all services, partners, and members of our community to join us in delivering the change this strategy sets out.



Cllr Kieron Wilson

Portfolio Holder for Housing & Regulation



Foreword

from our **Experts by Experience**

Being part of the development of this strategy has felt important, because it shows a commitment to listening.

But we want this to go much further than consultation. For this strategy to make a real difference, people with lived experience need to be involved at every stage of decision-making, not just at the beginning. We should be routinely invited into conversations, updated on what is changing, and able to see evidence of what is working.

We hope to see a meaningful culture shift across BCP's homelessness services. Lived experience should not be an afterthought; it should be at the heart of shaping, governing and improving services from day one. Co-production should be genuine, equal, and built on trust. We want to work alongside professionals, bringing insights that only we can offer, and helping to set the agenda rather than just reacting to it.

It is also important to acknowledge that the trauma of homelessness does not end when someone receives a set of keys. For many people, the emotional, psychological, and practical impact lasts long after they are housed. This affects how people engage with services, how they trust, and how they cope with day-to-day challenges. These experiences matter – not only to us, but to many others who remain unheard. Real solutions will only come from working with people, not around them.

**Shelter Coproduction Group
BCP Homelessness Partnership**

Our Vision

Our united vision is for homelessness in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole to become rare, brief and unrepeatable. We want everyone to have a safe, secure place to call home.

This strategy sets out how we will work as a system to prevent homelessness wherever possible, respond quickly and effectively when someone is at risk, and ensure that people can remain safely housed with the right support. The strategy reflects what we have learned through data and insight as well as through extensive engagement; including from people who have personal experience of homelessness, from our workforce and from the organisations working tirelessly across our communities to help people in housing crisis.

The detailed evidence and recent performance underpinning this Strategy is set out in the accompanying Narrative and Evidence Base.



Working as a partnership

Homelessness in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole cannot be addressed by any single organisation acting alone. It is the product of overlapping social, economic, health and housing pressures that span across many services.

This Strategy therefore places partnership working at its centre, reflecting both national expectations and the strong local insight and feedback received from residents, partners and frontline staff.

The BCP Homelessness Partnership brings together more than forty-five organisations across statutory, voluntary, community, faith, private and lived experience groups. Partners include BCP Council services, NHS Dorset, mental health and substance use providers, Police, Probation, community and faith organisations, education partners, supported housing providers, landlords and local employers. Each brings specialist knowledge and responsibilities which collectively shape the system that supports people at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness.

Through our engagement programme, partners told us clearly that prevention, rapid response and sustained stability depend on shared ownership, earlier coordination and jointly agreed pathways. Health partners, in particular, emphasised the need for clearer visibility of how mental health, substance use, physical health and wider determinants of wellbeing are built into homelessness prevention and relief. Voluntary and community organisations stressed the importance of timely information sharing, consistent expectations, and pathways that recognise trauma and complexity. People with lived experience emphasised the value of services working together so that they do not need to repeat their story or navigate multiple agencies alone.

To reflect this, partners will codevelop a shared Delivery Plan which sets out how responsibilities, actions and decision making will be aligned across the system. The Delivery Plan working group will draft a shared statement of joint intent, which will be included as part of this Strategy's implementation framework. This shared commitment will ensure that prevention, support and recovery are treated as collective duties across all public agencies, in line with the Government's expectations for crosssectorcross sector responsibility in preventing and reducing homelessness.

This Strategy is intentionally presented in a partnership-neutral design to reflect that it belongs to the system as a whole, not solely to the Council. Our commitment is to work differently, together, so that homelessness across BCP becomes rare, brief and unrepeated.



Our strategic approach

Our focus begins long before someone loses their home. Prevention means recognising early signs of risk and acting quickly – whether that involves working with landlords, supporting families through crisis, or intervening when someone’s health, income or relationships are under strain.



It is important to create change, belief and confidence that you really mean to do something”

Shelter Co-pro

In BCP this approach is especially important. The area faces a combination of high private-rented sector use, significant affordability pressures, seasonal and insecure employment, and a growing number of people with complex health and wellbeing needs. These local factors increase the risk of homelessness and mean that early, proactive intervention is critical.

Our preventative approach therefore places strong emphasis on working closely with landlords, improving access to stable accommodation, and supporting households whose finances or living arrangements are vulnerable to sudden change. Strengthening partnerships with health, education, social care, communities and the voluntary sector is essential in BCP, where many individuals rely on multiple services and where early coordination can prevent escalation into crisis.

Prevention also means providing clear, accessible information so that people understand their rights and options—and ensuring that this is tailored to the needs of BCP’s diverse communities

When someone does become homeless or is at risk of losing their home, the way we respond matters enormously. People told us that the first conversation with a service can shape their whole experience. We are committed to making this first contact quick, compassionate and practical by training staff in trauma-informed practice, improving access routes, and ensuring clear handovers between teams so no one is left waiting or repeating their story.

We will ensure that any experience of homelessness is as short as possible by developing clear and fast pathways into suitable housing, including direct access to emergency accommodation, simplified assessment processes, and stronger coordination with landlords and supported housing providers. We will strengthen navigation support through dedicated case coordination so people can move smoothly between services, and we will embed joint working protocols so all partners understand their role and act quickly.

By reducing duplication, sharing information more effectively, and removing avoidable delays—for example through shared plans, joint meetings and clear escalation points—we will help people resolve homelessness quickly and move forward with stability.

A home is not the end of the journey. People often need ongoing and coordinated support to maintain stability, rebuild wellbeing and reconnect with their community. We will strengthen our wider and connected support by expanding tenancy sustainment activity, improving links with mental health and substance use services, growing community based support options, and increasing access to education, employment and training pathways. We will also work alongside peer based support options, and increasing access to education, employment-based support options, and increasing access to education, employment and training pathways. We will also work alongside peer-led programmes to ensure people can be supported by others with similar experiences.

To understand whether support is working in the long term, we will improve how we record and analyse outcomes, using shared data across the partnership, regular follow-up checks, and better use of the Government’s Local Outcomes Framework. This will help us identify early risks, adapt support when needed, and recognise where positive differences have been made.

Our 5 Core Aims and Commitments



Rare

Prevent homelessness before it occurs

- 1 Trauma informed, person centred practice** > Put into place approaches that recognise and address overlapping disadvantages such as poverty, domestic abuse, neurodiversity and poor physical and mental health, reducing re-traumatisation.
- 2 Collaboration** > Strengthen joint working with health, education, criminal justice and social care so risks are identified earlier and responses that are not jointly agreed are reduced. Clearly taking forward the Government commitment that preventing homelessness is a shared responsibility across all public services.
- 3 Strategic funding reform advocacy** > Work to influence long-term funding reform, including increasing Local Housing Allowance and securing lasting investment in prevention and temporary accommodation.
- 4 Youth & family prevention focus** > Prioritise upstream support for families, young people leaving care and those at risk of domestic abuse including VARG (Violence Against Woman & Girls).
- 5 Health informed early intervention** > Work with health partners to identify the biggest health related triggers and join up prevention pathways with emerging Neighbourhood Health Plans.
- 6 Private sector prevention role** > Work alongside private landlords and employers in early intervention efforts through forums, incentives and Corporate Social Responsibility opportunities.
- 7 Recognition of hidden homelessness** > Broaden identification of nontraditional or precarious living situations, including people living in vehicles, and focusing on groups who are higher risk of being hidden such as women.-
- 8 Plain English & inclusive language** > Ensure all materials and communications are accessible, stigma free and easy to understand; including for people who speak other languages or who can't read.

Brief

Minimise the duration of homelessness

- 1 Quick and helpful first contact** > Put into place approaches that recognise and address overlapping disadvantages such as poverty, domestic abuse, neurodiversity and poor physical and mental health, reducing re-traumatisation.
- 2 Navigator roles** > Have a team of dedicated navigators who guide people through services, reduce duplication, and prevent repeated retelling of their story.
- 3 Support the national temporary accommodation standards** > Keeping to our commitment to minimise the use of Bed & Breakfast for anybody, especially families.
- 4 Rapid rehousing models** > Expand models that secure stable accommodation quickly so people spend less time in all temporary settings.
- 5 Halve rough sleeping** > Creation of a BCP Homelessness Partnership plan to help those who experience street homelessness.
- 6 Stronger health integration** > Improve coordination with health services so physical, mental health and substance use needs are properly addressed as part of rapid solutions.
- 7 Business & employer partnerships** > Strengthen links with employers to prevent homelessness linked to job loss, income insecurity, or workplace vulnerability.
- 8 Equity of opportunity** > Ensure all groups, especially those at higher risk and facing inequity or discrimination; can access appropriate support pathways when they need them.

Unrepeated

Ensure homelessness does not recur

- 1 Strengths based practice** > Deliver support that builds on people's strengths, goals, and lived experience to support lasting stability.
- 2 Peer support networks** > Expand peer led and community-based support that reduces isolation after housing is secured, helping reduce the risk of a repeat.
- 3 Tenancy sustainment monitoring** > Use proactive data tracking to identify early tenancy risks and intervene before problems get worse.
- 4 Health linked wraparound support** > Make sure mental health, physical health, and substance use support into tenancy sustainment plans.
- 5 Long term housing approaches** > Use national evidence, including from Housing First pilots, to shape our long-term stability and sustainment support
- 6 Employment & skills pathways** > Grow access to employment, training and progression opportunities in partnership with local employers and national programmes.

Change the narrative

Build understanding, reduce stigma, shift public perception

- 1 Inclusive, person first language** > Use stigma free, respectful communication that accurately reflects people's experiences and avoids blame.
- 2 Public education campaigns** > Lead targeted campaigns to challenge myths and misinformation about homelessness, build empathy, and promote a strengths-based understanding.
- 3 Coproduced communications** > Work with Experts by Experience to co-design written and visual materials that reflect real stories and realities.
- 4 Community dialogue spaces** > Create safe spaces for public conversation, co-creation, and learning between residents, services and people with lived experience.
- 5 Staff training on inclusive communication** > Deliver training to ensure all staff understand how language, tone and framing impact dignity and engagement.
- 6 Monitor narrative shift** > Track progress through community feedback, media audits and annual reporting to assess changes in public attitudes.



First contacts are very important and can be make or break when seeking support”

Space Youth Project

Embed lived experience

Coproduce solutions at every level

- 1 Coproduction as standard practice** > Integrate Experts by Experience into strategy development, service design, performance monitoring and governance from the start, not as an add on.
- 2 Safe, supported participation** > Provide training, support and psychologically safe spaces to enable meaningful involvement.
- 3 Diverse voices at the table** > Ensure representation across youth, LGBTQ+, people with disabilities, racially minoritised and other disproportionately affected groups
- 4 Storytelling & feedback loops** > Collect and share stories of lived experience to inform practice and embed feedback in continuous improvement.

“ Challenge public perceptions and don't blame people for their circumstances, especially as much of society is increasingly being conditioned to do so”

Shelter Co-pro

Alignment with the National Strategy

The national Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy sets out clear expectations for prevention, rapid response, reducing rough sleeping and improving outcomes for people with complex needs. This Strategy aligns directly with those priorities.



Prevention

Our commitments to early identification, youth and family prevention, landlord engagement and health-informed early intervention reflect national expectations for upstream action.



Rapid Response

Our focus on fast, trauma-aware first contact, rapid rehousing models, coordinated pathways, and strengthened health integration mirrors the national goal of reducing the duration and harm of homelessness.



Reducing Rough Sleeping

Our commitment to halving rough sleeping aligns with the national ambition and will be delivered through strengthened outreach and supported accommodation.



Long-Term Stability

National priorities on tenancy sustainment, complex-needs pathways, skills, employment and long-term housing solutions are reflected in our approach to preventing repeat homelessness.



Data, Accountability and Outcomes

Our performance framework is aligned with the Government's Local Outcomes Framework, ensuring consistency with national monitoring expectations.

This alignment ensures that BCP is delivering locally on the commitments expected nationally, while also responding to our distinct local challenges such as the private rented sector pressures, health complexity, coastal housing dynamics and rising demand.

Delivering Change and Measuring Progress

The Homelessness Delivery Board will oversee delivery of this strategy, supported by the Housing Strategy Steering Group and with annual reporting to Cabinet. We will be open about what is working and where we need to adjust course.



Our measures of progress will include reductions in homelessness presentations and rough sleeping, shorter stays in temporary accommodation, increased tenancy sustainment, improved health and wellbeing outcomes, and stronger involvement of people with lived experience. We will also monitor how effectively partners are working together and how accessible our services are for those who need them.

In addition, our performance framework will be aligned with the Government's new Local Outcomes Framework. This will ensure that our local monitoring fully reflects national expectations and that we are consistently measuring the outcomes that matter most. We will incorporate these indicators into our regular reporting so we can track whether the changes we are making are delivering the intended impact.



We will use data and evidence to target resources where they make the biggest difference, and our collective performance as a Partnership will be assessed against national targets for reducing homelessness. Just as importantly, we will continue to listen to those who use our services – understanding what works for them, where improvements are needed, and how we can strengthen our response.

“ I really helps having someone to talk to who listens in my accommodation. It takes time to have the confidence to speak to them, and they have been patience.”

Health bus interviews with people currently/recently rough sleeping

