Appendix 1

North Hertfordshire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Plan 2026 - 2029

Our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

Our current Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy is incorporated within the North Herts Housing Strategy 2024 – 2029. This sets out the challenges we face and our strategic approach to prevention, accommodation and support.

Core to our Strategy is the recognition that a decent, affordable home is so much more than a roof over a person's head – it provides safety and stability from which individuals can lead healthy, productive and fulfilling lives.

Preventing homelessness from happening in the first place is key to ending homelessness and rough sleeping. It is the first of four key priorities identified in our Strategy:

- Prevent homelessness in all its forms
- Increase provision of good quality accommodation and support for homeless people facing multiple disadvantage, including people sleeping rough
- Support victims and survivors of domestic abuse
- Improve access to affordable, local housing options

North Herts Council does not own or manage any housing and we therefore rely on strong partnerships with local housing providers, government bodies, statutory services (such as health and social care) and a range of voluntary and other third-sector organisations to help us to deliver our priorities.

Our Action Plan

We are keen to continue to improve our core service to local residents and our Action Plan sets out how we will deliver the priorities identified in our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

Within a fast-evolving policy environment, this Action Plan has been developed within the context of a suite of existing documents:

Housing Strategy 2024 – 2029: Two Year Achievement review
This reviews the first two years of our Housing Strategy

Housing Strategy Action Plan 2026/27
Sets out wider actions to deliver the Housing Strategy

Review of Homelessness in North Hertfordshire
A comprehensive review of the scale of homelessness and accommodation, support and resources available to tackle the issue

We have also taken the opportunity to review our policy on the suitability of temporary accommodation placements [LINK].

This Action Plan has been published in response to the government's A National Plan to End Homelessness and includes actions to bolster our single homeless pathway so that we can continue to offer a "Route off the Street" for people sleeping rough. Our Plan also

includes specific actions to reduce homelessness amongst other vulnerable groups including: people leaving public institutions, young people leaving care, survivors of domestic abuse and those with support needs such as physical or mental health needs.

The Action Plan will be reviewed and updated annually.

Action	Milestones	Targets	Progress
Prevent homelessness in all its forms			
Work with partners to improve opportunities for early intervention, ensuring services are accessible to all.	Identify gaps and engagement opportunities. Agree arrangements for drop-in sessions, co-location and other opportunities with partners.	By end 2026/27: early intervention plan agreed with partners and in place.	Discussion underway with partners. Drop-in sessions with Citizens Advice and domestic abuse services successfully trialled.
Secure the ongoing provision of specialist services to support young people facing homelessness.	Secure necessary approvals for allocation of funding.	By end 2026/27: provision secured until the end of 2028/29 for secondary school education sessions.	Approved by Cabinet Sept 2026.
Secure the ongoing provision of specialist housing advice services from Citizens Advice.	Secure necessary approvals for allocation of funding.	By end 2026/27: provision secured until the end of 2028/29, to include free legal/court representation.	Approved by Cabinet Sept 2026.
Refine tenancy sustainment activities including pre-eviction protocols with our LSVT registered provider following recent merger.	Tenancy sustainment work embedded across entire homelessness team (rather than with one dedicated officer as previously). Reconfirm procedures etc with newly merged registered provider.	By end 2026/27: tenancy sustainment measures, protocols etc embedded in NHC and RP working relationship.	Regular meetings between Housing Options Team and Lifestone Neighbourhood Team.
Review our local offer to care-experienced young people.	Working with Hertfordshire County Council, review and implement updated guidance due Autumn 2026.	By end 2026: clear local offer and pathways accessible via Council website.	Local connection exemption implemented in allocation policy. Exemption from intentionally homeless decisions in place.

Action	Milestones	Targets	Progress
Continue to embed implementation of the Renters' Rights Act within Housing services.	Continue to work with landlords, ensuring compliance with new legislation and grounds for eviction. Together with Environmental Health, work to ensure landlord compliance with registration deadlines for the PRS database.	Ongoing.	Training undertaken by all officers.
Work with partners to improve early interventions for people leaving institutions, including those leaving hospitals and prisons.	Key contacts with local health and justice service partners identified and engaged, intervention points and key risks mapped.	By end 2027: early intervention plans/discharge protocols agreed with key partners, improved outcomes for individuals leaving institutions.	Building relationships with local mental health teams, encouraging shared assessments and joint planning.
Establish an additional officer post to focus on early interventions particularly around family/friend exclusions.	Scope out officer role. Secure necessary approvals for new post.	By end 27/28: new post in place.	Funding bid proposed and roles evolving with additional responsibilities.
Increase provision of good quality accommodation and support for homeless people facing multiple disadvantage, including people sleeping rough			
Continue to seek opportunities to reinforce the single homeless accommodation pathway.	Review pathway, identify gaps and seek opportunities for securing Houses in Multiple Occupation and 'Housing First' units in particular.	Ongoing (ongoing need for additional units particularly for those with the most complex needs).	Funding secured Sept 2026 for 17 additional units in main Anderson House service for single homeless people with complex needs. Discussions for on the day placements and other move opportunities.
Secure provision of additional move-on units.	Ongoing work with partners to leverage opportunities and funding.	Ongoing (ongoing need for additional units).	Funding secured Sept 2026 for additional eight move-on units at Anderson House.

Action	Milestones	Targets	Progress
Secure improved provision of on-the-day emergency accommodation.	Ongoing work with partners to leverage opportunities and funding.	Ongoing: to reduce reliance on hotel and nightly paid accommodation.	Potential opportunity is being costed.
Continue to work with partners on joint arrangements to secure lasting outcomes for individuals with complex needs.	Continue to participate in all relevant multi-agency conferences as appropriate.	Ongoing.	Proposed changes to CHAS to increase move on from supported accommodation.
Continue to work with provider to ensure that Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme provision continues to meet young persons' local need including programme requirements.	Reviewed at regular monitoring points.	Ongoing to end of 2028/29.	Review opportunities for step down accommodation.
Implement new temporary accommodation notification duty.	Training and operational needs identified.	By 31/08/26: arrangements in place to meet duty.	Complete
Explore viability of establishing a framework agreement for the procurement of emergency accommodation, to regularise activity and ensure standards.	Feedback from PME to determine viability.	By end Feb 2027: framework agreement in place, if viable, or alternative.	Preliminary Market Engagement underway (6th Oct – 5th Nov 2026).
Explore options for a local, responsive support service for people with substance misuse issues.	Work with partners to identify options.	By end 26/27: proposals ready for approval.	Initial meetings with potential provider underway.
Secure the ongoing provision of local rough sleeping outreach service.	Secure necessary approvals for allocation of funding.	By end 2026/27: provision secured until the end of 2028/29.	Approved by Cabinet Sept 2026.
Develop and publish a new Local Supported Housing Strategy.	Initial findings due November 2026.	By end 2026/27: new Supported Housing Strategy in place.	Work co-commissioned with Hertfordshire County Council and all ten Herts district/borough councils.

Action	Milestones	Targets	Progress
Implement further requirements of the Supported Housing Regulatory Oversight Act.	Develop action plan to implement Supported Housing Strategy once in place. Along with Environmental Health, implement/manage impacts of new provisions as they rollout, including new national supported housing standards.	2027/28 onwards.	Not yet actioned.
Support victims and survivors of domestic abuse			
Secure the ongoing provision of specialist services for domestic abuse survivors.	Secure necessary approvals for allocation of funding.	By end 2026/27: provision secured until the end of 2028/29.	Approved by Cabinet Sept 2026.
Determine if a viable model is possible to extend the pilot women's only scheme in the district.	Potential proposal (if viable) to be submitted to Cabinet in early 2027.	By end 2026: provision secured until the end of 2028/29.	Proposals being costed.
Improve access to affordable, local housing options			
Develop the Council's private rented sector offer for private landlords to secure additional properties for our clients.	Secure necessary approvals for allocation of funding.	By end 2026: new offer in place.	Approved by Cabinet Sept 2026.
Implement the Council's Empty Homes Strategy.	Statutory Nuisance interventions in place. Aim to work with other services to implement more of the Strategy.	By end 2026/27: review existing Strategy. Start drafting new Strategy for 2028-2032	Staffing issues have prevented Environmental Health progressing further implementation of the Strategy.

Action	Milestones	Targets	Progress
Review options to expand provision of temporary accommodation in the district.	Commission research via CHoSS.	Ongoing: to reduce reliance on hotel and nightly paid accommodation.	Work undertaken with Council Housebuilding Support Service (CHoSS) with final report submitted Sept 2026.
Continue to ensure that affordable housing is allocated to those in most need.	Regular reviews including review of income thresholds due 2027.	Ongoing.	Recent review identified minor amendments, to seek approval Nov 2026.

How we will measure our progress

Our Action Plan will help us improve performance against each of the homelessness and rough sleeping metrics in the government's Local Outcomes Framework by the end of the Parliament (ie August 2029).

These metrics are listed below, together with targets and milestones that have been developed using local performance data, operational intelligence and known service pressures.

They align with government's national targets:

- Eliminate the use of B&B accommodation for families
- Increasing success at preventing and relieving homelessness
- halve long-term rough sleeping

The government also announced a new national Rough Sleeping Programme in September 2026, which aims to provide a route off the street for everyone before Christmas this year.

The number of people sleeping rough in North Herts is typically very low, although the small numbers we do see tend to be very entrenched. Nevertheless we are clear that one rough sleeper is one person too many, which is reflected in our targets and our continuing commitment to developing our single homeless pathway and resourcing outreach work.

		Baseline Autumn 2025	Checkpoint 1 31/03/27	Checkpoint 2 31/03/28	Target 31/03/29
Households with children in temporary accommodation	Rate per 1,000 households (Sept 25)	1.01 (59 households)	0.97 (57 households)	0.92 (54 households)	0.85 (50 households)
Families in B&B over 6 weeks	No. of households (Sept 25)	0	0	0	0
Success at preventing and relieving homelessness	Successful outcomes / duties owed (Q2 25/26)	57%	60%	63%	66%
Success at preventing and relieving homelessness for those experiencing multiple disadvantage	Successful outcomes / duties owed (Oct-Dec 25)	57%	58%	59%	60%
People sleeping rough on a single night	No. of households (Autumn 25)	1	0	0	0
People sleeping rough long-term	No. of households (Nov 25)	1	0	0	0

Our ongoing commitment to prevention work means that we are able to prevent homelessness for a significant proportion of people who approach us for assistance. The Action Plan contains new early intervention measures which will help to strengthen our approach, particularly around family and friend exclusions which is the most common reason for homelessness.

Almost two-thirds of households that we work with have support needs, with physical and mental ill health being the most prevalent. In particular, the pandemic revealed a previously hidden cohort of vulnerable single homeless people and we have worked hard to develop our pathway to meet this demand. New work outlined in our Action Plan aims to further bolster this pathway although our targets reflect the ongoing challenges of sourcing viable sites for supported accommodation in the district and of affordability issues.

The number of households in temporary accommodation is a small proportion of our total population, currently one family in every thousand households in the district. The baseline rate recorded in the table above corresponds to 59 households with children in temporary accommodation. Given the small numbers involved, modest improvements are not demonstrably visible via the target as prescribed – our final target of 0.85 (50 households) means 9 fewer families in temporary accommodation at any one time by the end of 2028/29. This is an ambitious reduction which will be driven by early intervention measures, improved move-on pathways and better access to private rented options.

Risks

The Council is committed to reducing homelessness in our district and improving outcomes for our residents. We recognise the challenge this involves and have a identified a number of key risks which lead officers will be responsible for monitoring and mitigating.

- As a non-stock holding authority, reliance on housing providers for accommodation in an uncertain market including recent merger of our largest provider.
- Increasing homelessness demand, including from ongoing cost of living pressures.
- Ongoing affordability challenges in the district, with a small private rented sector.
- Increasing complexity of support needs, requiring resourcing from key partners including health and criminal justice partners.
- Local Government Reorganisation: current uncertainty and possible disruption with creation of new authority.
- Staffing and morale: we rely on a small team of highly experienced and capable officers and work hard to look after them in what is often a highly stressful job. Small changes such as an officer leaving can have a significant impact.

Local Governance Structures

The Council is responsible for its statutory housing and homelessness functions. This Action Plan supports the delivery of those functions and will be subject to clear and effective oversight and coordinated partnership working. At its core is:

Officer accountability and performance monitoring The Homelessness & Housing Advice Manager and the Housing Register & Accommodation Manager will lead implementation of the Action Plan with strategic oversight provided by the Strategic Housing Manager. Progress, including against targets, will be monitored regularly using internal case level data and published H-CLIC data to benchmark against nearest neighbours. Monitoring will link to the Council's corporate performance, risk and management arrangements.

Member oversight and decision-making The Action Plan and annual updates will be taken to the Council's Cabinet for review, scrutiny and approval.

Local partnership oversight We will agree proportionate delivery reviews with housing providers, other statutory services and voluntary sector partners, dependent upon commissioning arrangements for specific services. Wider oversight will be through the North Herts Homelessness Forum, on which key partners sit.

County-wide coordination This will be provided through Hertfordshire Heads of Housing and other regular meetings, which are key for joined up working on shared prevention, accommodation and support priorities.

How we work with our partners

Delivery of this Action Plan is dependent on strong partnership working with local housing providers, statutory, voluntary and community sector organisations. We have consulted with our partners and residents during the development of this Action Plan.

We will continue to work closely with our key housing providers, particularly those providing accommodation on the single homeless pathway and temporary accommodation for local residents. We have collaborated successfully over the years to secure additional funding for provision in the district, including most recently with YMCA Chiltern on the Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme.

We grant fund specialist support services provided by Survivors Against Domestic Abuse, Herts Young Homeless, Citizens Advice and YMCA Chiltern (rough sleeper outreach services) and work closely with these partners to maximise positive outcomes for individuals and ensure delivery in line with expectations.

The Council also participates fully in countywide arrangements to bring partners together to support individuals facing multiple disadvantages, including Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA), Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) and Team Around Me meetings, Joint Housing Protocol MDT.