

Preventing Homelessness Strategy

April 2025



COTSWOLD
District Council

Foreword

Becoming homeless, or fearing that this could potentially occur, can have a major impact on the lives of individuals: their health, well-being, employment opportunities, education, and training may all be affected if suitable, long term accommodation options are not made available to them.

Homelessness is an issue which is high on the national agenda. The 'Everyone In' response to the COVID-19 pandemic has shown what can be achieved in addressing rough sleeping. Locally this helped people in transformative ways which has continued beyond the pandemic. The countrywide joined-up response gained national praise and attention. We need to continue to build on this progress and the commitments of this strategy reflect this.

Homelessness isn't just a term used for those that we see visibly rough sleeping and can happen to anyone at any time. Most people who approach our council for advice on their housing situation are not sleeping rough but are instead at various stages of being threatened with homelessness.

There are many reasons why someone may be threatened with homelessness with many people living in precarious or unsuitable homes. This could include people who are; private renting, but their tenancy is about to end; living with family or a partner but relationships are breaking down; are sofa surfing; or have suffered an income shock and are no longer able to afford their mortgage or rent.

As part of developing the strategy and setting out our Priorities we have reflected on a wide evidence base including reviewing data regarding our local housing market, our population demographics as well as assessing homelessness trends specific to our area.

In drawing up the strategy, we have consulted with our stakeholders and partners.

It is intended that this strategy be a live document with a regularly updated Action Plan and annual reviews to ensure this continues to reflect our shared aims and evolving priorities.

We cannot deliver the priorities and actions set out in the strategy alone, and therefore the continued collaboration and support of our partners is key to its success. A multi-agency approach and working alongside community partners is the only way that this can happen effectively.



Cllr Juliet Leyton

Contents

Introduction

About Cotswold District Council

Housing In Cotswold District Council

What we have achieved so far

What are the Challenges?

Strategic Aims and Priorities

Priority 1 Preventing Homelessness

Priority 2 Establishing effective partnerships and working arrangements.

Priority 3 Supporting rough sleepers to address their housing and other needs.

Priority 4 Increasing Accommodation Options

Action Plan, Monitoring and Review arrangements



Introduction

Working with our residents and partners to prevent and resolve homelessness and the threat of homelessness is at the very heart of this strategy.

The most obvious form of homelessness, those sleeping rough on the streets, is not common in the Cotswold district, thanks to our strong partnership approach to 'No Second Night Out' which aims to end rough sleeping and subsequent initiatives introduced during the pandemic.

However, homelessness in general is increasing in all local authorities. Factors such as the cost-of-living crisis, increasing rents in the private sector, substance misuse, mental ill health, family and relationships breaking down, increases in pressures financially and a lack of genuinely affordable housing are key reasons why homelessness is increasing. These are key issues for this strategy to address.

Preventing homelessness before it occurs is the main ethos of the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) 2017. However, Cotswold District Council has taken this even further by investing in a strong approach to engaging with residents at the very earliest stage, to prevent homelessness before official duties are triggered under HRA 2017 by increasing resources specifically to target this.

The Council has also supported a strong 'No Second Night Out' approach to ensuring that anyone who does find themselves rough sleeping is offered an accommodation option as soon as possible.

Cotswold Council works in close partnership with local partners to provide a Housing First scheme for adults with complex needs who have exhausted all other accommodation options. The council also works closely with our partners across the county on ensuring the adults with complex needs can access relevant supported accommodation and services when they need it. The council also owns and manages 2 properties that provide emergency accommodation with onsite support: one to adults with complex needs and the second to families which keeps stays in B&B/Hotel type accommodation to a minimum. These schemes are key contributors to the reason why the district has low to zero rough sleeping.

However, since 2020 despite the many proactive and progressive initiatives introduced as the result of the pandemic, homelessness within the district has increased by around 30%. The council is seeing increased requests for support from people who need to leave their homes due to many, and often complex issues. These include receiving notices from private landlords, are fleeing abuse or violence, are living in unsafe or insecure accommodation or whose home is not suitable to meet their specific housing needs for health or financial reasons.

However, as volumes of people needing housing and homelessness interventions increase, use of unsuitable and expensive B&B accommodation is increasing; therefore, the council has developed strong a prevention focused Housing service that aims to increase the numbers of households who are prevented from becoming homeless at the earliest possible stage.

In developing this strategy, Cotswold District Council has reviewed the key issues that are driving up homelessness both locally and nationally which has informed the focus of the strategy to the following four objectives:

- Priority 1 **Preventing Homelessness**
- Priority 2 **Establishing effective partnerships and working arrangements**
- Priority 3 **Supporting rough sleepers to ~ address their housing and other needs**
- Priority 4 **Increasing Accommodation Options**

These priorities are intended to be high level and therefore the strategy will be sufficiently flexible to accommodate and respond to changes in the external environment during its lifetime.

A detailed action plan has been developed in collaboration with our partners to support and deliver the strategic objectives. We recognise that during the five-year life span of this Strategy we will need to prioritise and even change direction with certain objectives and actions.

This document will provide a basis for the direction of travel and will guide us in our current and future activities.

Cotswold District Council Overview



91,311
Population
(2022)



26% of the local
population are over
65, which is **8%**
above the national
average



Median House Price:
£440,000
(December 2024)



Median House Price v
median earnings median:
14.88 x
median wage
(single person)



Tenure Split
Owner Occupied **65%**
Private Rent **19%**
Social Housing **15%**



Estimated Total Number
of Dwellings from Census
2021:
37,217

District

Cotswold

District Council

Location

One of six districts within Gloucestershire
County, England

Area

1200 km²

Character

??



244
Households offered
Affordable or Social
rents in 2024/25



1,794
Applicants registered
for Housing
(March 2025)



1,018
Number of
households seeking 1
bed accommodation



Total number of housing advice and
homelessness inquiries, including housing
register applications:

Pre Covid: around **300** approaches
annually

During and post Covid:
2021/22: **490** approaches
2022/23: **633** approaches
2023/24: **742** approaches



31
Number of
Households
in emergency
accommodation
(March 2025)

Housing In Cotswold District Council

General



53

Number of Licenced
HMO's



15.4%

of the Cotswold district
have a defined disability
under the Equalities Act



One in eight
households in
the district are
considered to be in
fuel poverty



900

Number of Empty Homes
(January 2025)



Average monthly rents
in the Private Sector:

1 bed **£726**

2 beds **£951**

3 Beds **£1,278**

Homelessness

Top three Main Reasons for Homelessness



1

Rough Sleeper
identified as rough
sleeping March
2025 snapshot

36%

Family/
Relationship
Breakdown

13%

Ending of
a Private
Rented
Tenancy

12%

Domestic
Abuse



Number of households
seeking accommodation
by bedroom need
March 2025:

1 bed **1,018**

2 bed **472**

3 bed **239**

4+ bed **65**

Successes



Maintained a low to zero number of Rough Sleepers – recording between **0-2** consistently at official monthly and annual counts



Provision of two properties providing **16** units of emergency accommodation dedicated onsite support



Worked with our partners at Bromford to provide an additional **10** units of emergency accommodation



Worked with our partners at Bromford and P3 to provide a Housing First option for the most complex of our residents



Prevented over **200** households from becoming homeless in 2024/25



Provided emergency accommodation for over a **120** households whose homelessness couldn't be prevented in 2024/25



Worked with our county partners, our housing provider partners and Domestic Abuse support agencies to provide places of safety in the district for those fleeing violence



xxx Affordable homes delivered between 2019 and 2024, of which **xxx** were affordable homes for rent

Challenges for Cotswold District Council in Preventing Homelessness

- Affordability and access to the private rented sector
- High demand for affordable housing
- High support needs compared to locally available services.
- Lack of available wider short term temporary accommodation options
- Lack of available emergency accommodation for people with disabilities
- Meeting the housing needs of young people, especially care leavers and those from rural areas;
- Lack of One bed general needs accommodation
- Low number of HMO's to meet the needs of under 35's

Wider challenges within the Cotswold District that contribute increasing homelessness

- Low wages compared to housing costs
- Air B&B / Second Homes/ Holiday Lets / Empty Homes
- Tackling disrepair and poor standards of accommodation in the private sector

Strategic Aims and Priorities

Priority 1: Preventing homelessness

Given the challenges we face around increasing homelessness it is crucial that we continue to put homeless prevention at the heart of everything we do. This principle will form the basis of how we respond to the economic hardships faced by our residents impacted by the continuing cost of living crisis.

Being flexible, agile and adapting to local challenges will be key in meeting future issues that may lead to homelessness if not tackled.

We will find innovative and proactive ways of both understanding and addressing the factors that can lead to homelessness - such as the impact of the Renters Rights Bill on private sector tenancies and landlords, family/relationship breakdown and discharge from institutions.

We will also develop a greater understanding of the impact of wider social issues such as poverty and disadvantage, unemployment, poor health and wellbeing and lack of access to affordable, decent homes.

We believe this will greatly increase the chances of positive outcomes for people at risk of becoming homeless.

Key Objectives

- Monitor and act on the impact of the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act within the council's Housing Team and wider housing services.
- Develop further preventative actions based on the evidence of what has previously been successful in preventing homelessness
- Understanding and tackling the economic impacts of the cost-of-living crisis that may otherwise lead to homelessness.
- Develop greater understanding of the 'triggers' that are driving homelessness presentations
- Identify and respond to the housing needs of vulnerable groups.
- Review how customers contact us and interact with our service.
- Promote the HomeseeckerPlus housing application process and provide support for people to use it
- Continue to effectively communicate with people about how to avoid the risk of homelessness, ensuring that advice and appropriate support is readily available.

Priority 2: Establishing effective partnerships

The previous Preventing Homelessness strategy emphasised partnership working to co-ordinate activity and focus combined energies on preventing homelessness and improving services for homeless people.

With this new strategy we will develop this approach further. Over the life of this strategy, we will build stronger relationships with our partners and ensure that our collective efforts to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping are effectively aligned.

Key Objectives

- Continue to establish appropriate pathways for customers between agencies which reinforce the early identification of factors that may be likely to lead to a risk of homelessness.
- Build on and improve existing processes to ensure an effective 'duty to refer' from all relevant public sector bodies as set out in the Homelessness Reduction Act.
- Ensure that the council's workforce have the appropriate skills to assist all client groups
- Challenge and resolve barriers to effective service delivery as part of business as usual.

Priority 3: Supporting rough sleepers to address their housing and other needs

Although the intelligence-based estimates show low to zero numbers of rough sleepers in the district, our priority remains to prevent all forms of rough sleeping when it does occur.

We recognise many more people are living in insecure accommodation such as having to 'sofa surf' or rely on the good will of friends or relatives and are therefore at risk of rough sleeping.

Key Objectives

- Align efforts and resources with partners to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping.
- Work with our countywide partners to support and evaluate a new Outreach service, to better understand the causes of local rough sleeping as well as the pattern and locations of rough sleepers.

- Work with the community and local businesses act as 'eyes and ears' to ensure that no rough sleeper goes without support
- Support rough sleepers who are ready for independent living to move into longer-term accommodation and to sustain their tenancy.
- Evaluate and adapt housing pathways, and develop new ones where they do not exist, to ensure they meet the needs of those living with complex needs as well as new/emergent client groups.
- Build on existing work with partner organisations to develop appropriate supported housing solutions, such as the 'Housing First' model, for homeless people with the highest level of need.

Priority 4: Increasing Accommodation Options

The use of impractical expensive B&B placements for people experiencing homelessness has long been viewed as unsuitable for anything more than to address an urgent need for safe accommodation.

Therefore, developing new temporary accommodation solutions to meet local needs is a more sustainable way to address this and is a key priority for the council.

Key Objectives

- Ensure that council priorities are aligned by linking this strategy with the targets included in the Local Plan to increase affordable housing supply.
- Ensure that our countywide priorities are aligned by working with our county partners to develop an increase in the supply of move on accommodation for all supported housing pathways.

- Maintain efficient and appropriate use of all council owned temporary accommodation, ensure that all residents are provided with high level support to enable them to move on into long term accommodation.
- Expand the range of temporary accommodation available to our customers, including investigating all options to purchase or lease buildings and working with the private sector
- Develop a greater understanding of what may encourage private landlords to increase the supply of rented accommodation at a cost households can afford and how we may assist with making this a realistic housing solution.
- Work with Registered Providers to develop schemes that increase accommodation options.



COTSWOLD
District Council

Trinity Road, Cirencester, Gloucestershire, GL7 1PX
Tel: 01285 623000 www.cotswold.gov.uk

Action Plan

Priority 1: Preventing homelessness.

What do we want to achieve?	What are we going to do to achieve this?	Actions 2025/26	Progress	Date
Put Homelessness Prevention at the heart of everything we do.	Monitor and act on the impact of the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act within the council's Housing Team and wider housing services	Monitor the impact of the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) on housing services and customer outcomes.		
		Review H-CLIC data quarterly, perform case reviews on Housing casework.		
		Collect feedback from partner agencies and other internal services.		
	Develop further preventative actions based on the evidence of what has previously been successful in preventing homelessness	Integrate local and national homelessness prevention data to improve services.		
		Compare our service to our Nearest Neighbours (demographically not geographically) and implement 'good practices' identified.		
		Seek feedback from our customers their experiences.		
		Analyse successful pre- prevention outcomes achieved by the Complex Needs Team and embed this learning into the principles and systems of the service.		
	Understanding and tackling the economic impacts of the cost-of-living crisis that may otherwise lead to homelessness	Understand the impact of the cost-of-living crisis and other financial impacts such as welfare reform on rising evictions due to rent arrears.		
		Work with our internal partners to ensure our financial support offers meeting the needs of the clients (including the Prevention Fund, Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP), Client Support, links to charities).		
		Strengthen relationships with local private rented landlords.		
		Develop partnerships with Registered Housing Providers and local voluntary sector financial advice services.		

What do we want to achieve?	What are we going to do to achieve this?	Actions 2025/26	Progress	Date
Put Homelessness Prevention at the heart of everything we do.	Develop greater understanding of the 'triggers' driving homelessness presentations.	Identify triggers of homelessness related to family breakdowns and implement intervention strategies.		
		Ensure staff are fully trained in negotiation and mediation techniques.		
		Monitor the effects of the increased pressures of the Refugee crisis.		
		Review and analyse the information that we gather in relation to homelessness and adapt future services and interventions in response to what we learn.		
	Identify and respond to the housing needs of vulnerable groups.	Build on existing interventions for vulnerable client groups and develop new interventions where there are identified gaps for:		
		Care leavers		
		Young People		
		Adults with Complex Needs (e.g. Mental Health, Addictions, Learning Disabilities)		
		Domestic Abuse Victims		
		Prison Leavers		
		Veterans		
		Refugee's		
	Review how customers contact us and interact with our service.	Ensure that there are multiple, easy to access channels for people to get in touch: phone, email, face to face.		
		Ensure that customers are offered a range of options to meet their specific needs.		
		Work with partners on Digital Inclusion, Outreach and contact points with internet access.		
	Promote the HomeseekerPlus housing application process and provide support for people to use it.	Schedule regular social media campaigns to promote HomeseekerPlus.		
	Continue to effectively communicate with people about how to avoid the risk of homelessness, ensuring that advice and appropriate support is readily available.	Schedule regular social media campaigns to raise awareness of homelessness and the support available.		

Priority 2: Establishing effective partnerships, working arrangements and support to those who are threatened with homelessness, to improve their resilience and reduce the risk

What do we want to achieve?	What are we going to do to achieve this?	Actions 2025/26	Progress	Date
Establishing effective partnerships, working arrangements and support to those who are threatened with homelessness, to improve their resilience and reduce the risk homelessness occurring.	Establish partnerships with local agencies (e.g., housing, social services, mental health, and employment support) to create a collaborative framework for supporting individuals at risk of homelessness.	Monitor and review trends in homelessness approaches from customers.		
		Build on existing partnerships and allocate resources for training and coordination.		
		Work with our commissioning partners to review the Alliance services around Prevention.		
		Work with Registered Providers on identifying households at threat of eviction.		
	Work with our Commissioning partners to ensure Countywide services meet the needs of our clients.	Work with our commissioning partners to review the Alliance services around Outreach services.		
		Monitor rough sleeping referrals with our Outreach Provider to establish trends and respond accordingly.		
		Develop clear referral pathways between agencies such as housing, health, and employment to ensure early identification of at-risk individuals.		
	Build on and improve existing processes to ensure an effective 'duty to refer' from all relevant public sector bodies as set out in the Homelessness Reduction Act.	Review the effectiveness of the current IT system that supports 'Duty to Refer'.		
		Promote 'Duty to Refer' in all dealings with statutory agencies.		
	Ensure that the council's workforce have the appropriate skills to assist all client groups.	Identify skills gaps in the council's workforce related to homelessness prevention and ensure targeted training for all employees who interact with at-risk individuals.		
		Ensure that the workforce has a strong 'trauma informed' approach to tackling the most complex casework by offering continuous training.		
		Ensure that all staff receive regular Domestic Abuse and Safeguarding training to maximise referrals to appropriate services.		
		Ensure Retrospective Learning principles are embedded into practise.		
	Challenge and resolve barriers to effective service delivery as part of business as usual.	Identify key barriers to service delivery (e.g., bureaucratic, financial, or communication-related) and implement solutions to overcome them.		

Priority 3: Supporting Rough Sleepers to address their housing and other needs

What do we want to achieve?	What are we going to do to achieve this?	Actions 2025/26	Progress	Date
Supporting rough sleepers to address their housing and other needs.	Align efforts and resources with partners to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping before it occurs.	Focus on early intervention to prevent rough sleeping from occurring.		
		Work with our countywide partners to support and evaluate a new Outreach service for 2025 onwards, to better understand the causes of local rough sleeping as well as the pattern and locations of rough sleepers.		
		Investigate new and innovative ways of providing Outreach to those that need it.		
	Work with the community and local businesses act as 'eyes and ears' to ensure that no rough sleeper goes without support.	Promote Streetlink through regular social media campaigns.		
		Provide ongoing and regular training sessions for Parish Councils and Members.		
	Evaluate and adapt housing pathways, and develop new ones where they do not exist, to ensure they meet the needs of those living with complex needs as well as new/emergent client groups.	Develop clear referral pathways between agencies such as housing, health, and employment to ensure early identification of at-risk individuals.		
	Build on existing work with partner organisations to develop appropriate supported housing solutions.	Review the effectiveness of the current 'Housing First' model with our stock transfer partner, for homeless people with the highest level of need.		
		Encourage and broaden the participation of other providers in 'Housing First' type solutions.		

Priority 4: Increase Accommodation Options

What do we want to achieve?	What are we going to do to achieve this?	Actions 2025/26	Progress	Date
Increasing Accommodation Options.	Ensure that Council priorities are aligned	Link this strategy with the targets included in the Local Plan to increase affordable housing supply.		
	Ensure that Countywide priorities are aligned	Work with our county partners to develop an increase in the supply of move on accommodation for all supported housing pathways.		
	Maintain efficient and appropriate use of all council owned temporary accommodation, ensure that all residents are provided with high level support to enable them to move on into long term accommodation.	Imbed the Temporary Accommodation Service Standard process in all that we do.		
		Provide support to households placed in all forms of temporary accommodation to help them address issues that may be barriers to moving into settled housing.		
		Review our current policy and processes to support more rapid move-on from temporary and supported accommodation and provide support into new permanent accommodation when possible.		
		Work with our Registered Provider partners to reduce the use of bed and breakfast and nightly paid temporary accommodation, instead providing appropriate temporary accommodation options or move on options from emergency accommodation.		
	Develop a greater understanding of what may encourage private landlords to increase the supply of rented accommodation at a cost households can afford and how we may assist with making this a realistic housing solution.	Work with our colleagues in Empty Homes to find ways to incentivise and/or encourage owners of Long-Term Empty Properties to bring them back into use.		
		Ensure that our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping grant is utilised to encourage offers of private rented accommodation to assist in discharging our homelessness duties.		
	Work with Registered Providers to develop schemes that increase accommodation options.	Work with our Registered Provider partners to encourage tenants who are under occupying to downsize into non-family accommodation.		