

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.



September 2026

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Foreword

At Milton Keynes City Council, we believe that Everyone deserves to be safe, healthy and to have a place they can call home.

This Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy sets out our commitment to preventing homelessness wherever possible, responding effectively when it happens, and supporting people to build stable and sustainable futures.

Homelessness is not limited to rough sleeping. It also includes individuals and families living in insecure, temporary or unsuitable accommodation, often facing multiple challenges. Addressing it requires earlier intervention, coordinated support and a focus on long-term stability.

This strategy reflects our determination to reduce repeat and long-term homelessness, strengthen partnership working across Milton Keynes, and ensure that the voices of people with lived experience help shape the services we provide. By working together, we can deliver a more coordinated, person-centred response that is rooted in dignity, inclusion and opportunity.

This strategy sets a clear direction, but its success will depend on sustained partnership, shared responsibility and a continued focus on the people we serve.



Cllr Ed Hume
Cabinet Member for Housing



Cllr Donna Fuller
**Cabinet Member for Adults,
Communities and Health**

Introduction

Homelessness is most often associated with rough sleeping, but it is a much broader issue that also includes people living in temporary, insecure or unsuitable accommodation and those at risk of losing their home. Homelessness can affect anyone, but the risk is increased by factors such as domestic abuse, poor physical or mental health, substance misuse, financial hardship and relationship breakdown.

This strategy reaffirms Milton Keynes City Council's commitment to preventing homelessness wherever possible, providing timely and appropriate support when it does occur, and ending rough sleeping. It is shaped by local need, statutory duties and the Government's ambition to make homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring.

A major driver of homelessness is the shortage of suitable and genuinely affordable housing. Alongside housing pressures, homelessness is often linked to domestic abuse, family breakdown, mental ill health, substance misuse and financial insecurity, with many people facing more than one of these challenges at the same time.

Milton Keynes is not unique in facing the challenges of high demand for social housing, limited affordable housing options and rising private rents. Rough sleeping has also increased in recent years. The annual rough sleeping snapshot in autumn 2025 identified 27 people sleeping rough in Milton Keynes on a single night, more than double the figure recorded two years earlier.

The City Council has continued to ensure that emergency accommodation and support are available for people sleeping rough, including a 24-hour supported emergency accommodation service delivered with Connection Support since May 2025.

Under the Homelessness Act 2002, local housing authorities must take a strategic approach to preventing homelessness and publish a homelessness strategy at least every five years. This refreshed strategy builds on the previous 2023–2028 strategy and has been reviewed in light of changing local need, emerging evidence and the Government's national plan to end homelessness published in December 2025.

Strong partnership working across the statutory, voluntary, charitable, health and housing sectors will be essential to delivering this strategy and improving outcomes for residents.

Vision

To prevent homelessness wherever possible, provide timely and appropriate support when it does occur, and end rough sleeping in Milton Keynes. We will work to ensure homelessness is rare, brief and non-recurring, and that everyone could access and sustain a safe and secure home.

Strategic Priorities

The strategic priorities of this strategy are aligned with the Government's National Plan to End Homelessness, which sets out a clear framework built around prevention, early intervention, housing-led solutions, integrated support, and a whole-system approach to ending rough sleeping. Together, these aims support the ambition to ensure that homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

The overarching priorities of the strategy are to:

- 1. Prevent people from becoming homeless wherever possible.**
- 2. Where homelessness cannot be avoided, help people to find suitable and safe accommodation quickly.**
- 3. Improve access to support services and supported housing for people with complex needs.**
- 4. Increase access to sustainable, long-term accommodation.**
- 5. Make rough sleeping rare, brief and non-recurrent, in line with the Government's commitment to end rough sleeping.~**
- 6. Deliver a coordinated, partnership-led system to end homelessness.**

This strategy covers the period 2026–2030. Progress against the actions will be reviewed regularly to ensure delivery, respond to emerging needs, and reflect changes in legislation, national policy, funding, and the Government's evolving programme to end homelessness.

Priority 1. Prevent people from becoming homeless

Preventing homelessness early is the most effective way to reduce harm, improve outcomes and reduce demand on crisis services. It gives households a better chance of resolving housing problems before they reach crisis point and supports the wider ambition to make homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring.

In Milton Keynes, the main challenges include:

- continued pressure in the private rented sector, including tenancy loss, rising rents and limited affordability
- family and relationship breakdown leading to people losing settled accommodation
- domestic abuse as a significant cause of homelessness
- increasing complexity of need, including poor mental health, substance misuse and financial hardship
- limited awareness of housing options and support at an early enough stage
- barriers to early identification and joined-up intervention across services and partners

- the need to strengthen upstream prevention for young people and other groups at greater risk of homelessness

Our approach is based on early identification, timely advice and coordinated support. The City-Council works with landlords and partner services to identify risk sooner, strengthen prevention pathways and help households resolve housing problems before they reach crisis point.

Our focus under this priority is to:

- strengthen early identification and intervention for households at risk of homelessness
- improve access to clear housing advice, debt support and financial assistance
- work more closely with landlords and partners to prevent tenancy breakdown
- develop specialist prevention pathways for domestic abuse, family breakdown and single homelessness
- strengthen referral routes and information sharing across services and partners
- improve public information so people can access support earlier
- strengthen earlier, upstream prevention for young people

This priority is about intervening early, coordinating support effectively and helping people resolve housing problems before they reach crisis point.

Priority 2. Where homelessness cannot be avoided, help people to find suitable and safe accommodation quickly

When homelessness cannot be prevented, the City Council must respond quickly to ensure eligible households have access to suitable and safe accommodation. This means meeting statutory duties, providing emergency and temporary accommodation where required, and supporting earlier move-on into settled housing.

In Milton Keynes, the main challenges include:

- sustained pressure on temporary accommodation caused by rising homelessness and limited move-on options
- the risk of households, including families with children, spending too long in temporary accommodation
- the need to ensure placements are suitable, affordable and, wherever possible, close to local connections and support networks
- limited alternatives to bed and breakfast and out-of-area placements

- inconsistent support and communication for some households living in temporary accommodation
- a lack of continuity of support when people move on into settled housing

Our approach is to ensure that temporary accommodation provides safety, stability and access to support while housing issues are resolved. This includes improving suitability and communication, reducing reliance on unsuitable emergency accommodation and supporting earlier move-on into settled housing.

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Feedback from residents highlights the importance of:

- clear information and regular updates
- a named officer or consistent point of contact
- empathy and understanding of individual circumstances
- practical help to move on into settled housing

Our focus under this priority is to:

- reduce the use of unsuitable emergency accommodation
- improve the quality and suitability of placements
- strengthen support and communication for households in temporary accommodation
- plan for move-on at the earliest stage
- improve tenancy sustainment support so people can remain in settled housing and avoid repeat homelessness

This priority is not only about responding to crisis but about helping people move from homelessness into stability as quickly as possible.



Priority 3. Improve access to support services and supported housing for people with complex needs

People who are homeless or at risk of homelessness often need more than accommodation. Many also need timely, coordinated support to address the issues that place them at greater risk of crisis and repeat homelessness.

In Milton Keynes, the main challenges include:

- limited supported housing capacity for people with higher or multiple needs
- delays in moving people on from supported housing because of a shortage of suitable settled accommodation
- barriers to accessing mental health and substance misuse services early enough
- fragmented pathways between homelessness, health, adult social care and commissioned support
- gaps in support for people who need ongoing help to sustain accommodation and avoid repeat homelessness

Our approach is to ensure that people with complex needs can access coordinated support as well as accommodation. This includes strengthening supported housing, improving links to mental health and substance misuse services, and expanding flexible support to help people sustain accommodation and avoid repeat homelessness.

Our focus under this priority is to:

- improve access to supported housing and specialist support for people with complex needs
- strengthen links between homelessness, mental health, substance misuse and adult social care services
- improve move-on pathways from supported housing into settled accommodation
- expand flexible floating support for people at risk of repeat homelessness
- ensure domestic abuse survivors can access specialist accommodation and trauma-informed support
- simplify referral routes and coordination across pathways and panels

This priority is about ensuring that the people facing the greatest barriers to recovery can access the right accommodation, support and pathways at the right time.



Priority 4. Increase access to sustainable, long-term accommodation

Ending homelessness depends not only on responding to crisis, but on helping people access and keep suitable, affordable homes. This requires more sustainable housing options, and the support people need to sustain a tenancy and avoid repeat homelessness.

In Milton Keynes, the main challenges include:

- a shortage of genuinely affordable housing across all tenures
- high demand for social housing and limited supply
- continued affordability pressures in the private rented sector, particularly for single people and under-35s
- a gap between Local Housing Allowance rates and market rents
- limited move-on options for people leaving temporary or supported accommodation
- the risk of tenancy failure where households need ongoing support to remain housed

Our approach is to improve access to sustainable accommodation across all tenures and link housing pathways to the support people need to remain housed. This includes strengthening access through the private rented sector, making best use of social housing and supporting tenancy sustainment to prevent repeat homelessness.

Our focus under this priority is to:

- improve access to affordable and sustainable accommodation across all tenures
- strengthen work with landlords and housing providers to increase options

- make best use of social housing and alternative housing routes
- reduce barriers to access for households facing homelessness
- improve tenancy sustainment support for people at greater risk of repeat homelessness
- link housing pathways to the support people need to remain housed

This priority is about creating better access to settled housing and ensuring that people are supported not only to secure a home, but to keep it.



Priority 5. Make rough sleeping rare, brief and non-recurrent

Rough sleeping remains the most visible and severe form of homelessness. Preventing it wherever possible and ensuring it is rare, brief and non-recurrent requires early identification, assertive outreach, rapid access to accommodation and sustained support.

In Milton Keynes, the main challenges include:

- renewed pressure in rough sleeping linked to housing affordability, health inequalities and limited move-on options
- the impact of poor mental health, substance misuse, trauma and repeat homelessness
- barriers to engaging some people who are sleeping rough or at risk of rough sleeping
- limited availability of suitable emergency, supported and move-on accommodation for people with higher needs
- the need for stronger coordination across services for people facing the highest levels of risk

- ensuring responses to street activity, including SWEP (Severe Weather Emergency Protocol) and encampments, are safe, coordinated and focused on long-term recovery

Our approach is based on early identification, assertive outreach and sustained engagement. This includes helping people access accommodation and wider support, maintaining persistent contact with those who do not immediately accept help, and using coordinated multi-agency responses for people with the highest risks and needs.

Our focus under this priority is to:

- strengthen early identification and assertive outreach with a multi-agency approach.
- maintain persistent engagement with people who are reluctant to accept support
- improve access to emergency, supported and move-on accommodation
- strengthen multi-agency coordination for people with the highest risks and needs
- use SWEP as part of a wider pathway off the streets
- ensure street-based responses are person-centred, safe and recovery-focused

This priority is about ensuring that rough sleeping in Milton Keynes is prevented wherever possible and, where it does occur, is ended quickly and sustainably.



Priority 6. Deliver a coordinated, partnership led system to end homelessness

Ending homelessness requires a whole-system approach that brings together housing, health, adult social care, criminal justice, the voluntary and community sector, and people with lived experience. Support needs to be joined up, timely and focused on long-term outcomes.

In Milton Keynes, the main challenges include:

- fragmented pathways across housing, health, adult social care and wider support services
- the need for stronger partnership governance and shared accountability across organisations
- inconsistent coordination between commissioned services and frontline delivery
- gaps in data sharing, shared intelligence and performance monitoring
- the need to involve people with lived experience more meaningfully in service design and review
- ensuring the workforce across partner organisations has the skills, relationships and confidence to respond consistently to homelessness and complex need

Our approach is to build a more coordinated local system across housing, health, support services and wider partners. This includes stronger governance, better-connected services, improved use of data and a shared commitment to preventing homelessness and improving outcomes.

Our focus under this priority is to:

- strengthen partnership governance and shared accountability
- improve coordination between homelessness services, health, adult social care and wider support systems
- support more integrated commissioning and service design
- make better use of data, shared intelligence and performance information
- ensure people with lived experience shape service design, review and improvement
- support a skilled, connected workforce through shared learning, trauma-informed practice and collaborative working

This priority is about creating a homelessness system in Milton Keynes that is more connected, more accountable and better able to prevent homelessness, respond to crisis and support long-term recovery.

Governance, delivery and monitoring

This strategy will be delivered through a detailed action plan that sets out the activities, milestones and measures needed to achieve the six priorities. The action plan will translate the strategy into practical steps, support accountability for delivery and ensure that progress can be tracked over time.

Delivery of the strategy will depend on strong partnership working across the City Council, housing providers, health and social care, criminal justice, domestic abuse services, voluntary and community organisations, and people with lived experience. Clear governance arrangements will be needed to maintain oversight of delivery, support shared accountability and ensure that homelessness continues to be addressed as a collective system responsibility.

Progress will be monitored through a combination of performance data, service intelligence, partner feedback and the views of people with lived experience. This will help identify emerging risks, measure the impact of actions and support continuous improvement across the homelessness system.

The action plan and wider strategy will be reviewed regularly to reflect changing local need, funding, legislation and national policy. This will ensure that the strategy remains relevant, responsive and focused on achieving the long-term ambition that homelessness in Milton Keynes is prevented wherever possible and, where it does occur, is rare, brief and non-recurring.

Version number	Strategy author	Review trigger	Brief description and reason for the main changes
V1	Leona Evans & Sunny Memhi	Changes to National strategy	New National Plan to End Homelessness

Performance Measures and Action plan

Progress against this Strategy will be monitored through a combination of national and local performance measures. The framework aligns with the Government's Local Outcomes Framework, the National Plan to End Homelessness and local priorities. Performance data will be reviewed regularly with partners to monitor delivery, identify emerging risks, support continuous improvement and ensure that homelessness in Milton Keynes becomes increasingly rare, brief and non-recurring. The Council will publish annual progress updates against the measures and targets set out below.

Action plan

Priority 1. Prevent people from becoming homeless			
Our focus	Lead	Timescale	Measures of success
Strengthen early identification and intervention for households at risk of homelessness	Head of Service Homelessness	2026-2029	• Reduction in the number of households becoming homeless. • Increase in the number and percentage of households whose homelessness is successfully prevented. • Increase in households seeking support before reaching crisis point. • Reduction in the use of temporary accommodation. • Reduction in repeat homelessness. • Reduction in rough sleeping and the risk factors that lead to rough sleeping. • Increased customer satisfaction with homelessness prevention and housing advice services.
Improve access to clear housing advice, debt support and financial assistance	Head of Service Homelessness	2026-2029	
Work more closely with landlords and partners to prevent tenancy breakdown	Head of Service Homelessness	2026-2029	
Strengthen referral routes and information sharing across services and partners	Head of Service Homelessness	2026-2029	

Improve public information so people can access support earlier	Head of Service Homelessness	2026-2029	Increased partnership referrals resulting in successful housing outcomes.
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Local and Government Outcomes Framework measures	Baseline	2027	2028	2029	2030
% duties prevented or relieved	Currently operating at 37%	42%	45%	47%	50%
% duties prevented or relieved for households experiencing multiple disadvantage.	025/26 H-CLIC annual prevention outcomes (to be confirmed from annual return).	35%	38%	40%	43%
Number of households prevented from becoming homeless	A/A	+10%	+20%	+25%	+30%

Priority 2. Where homelessness cannot be avoided, help people to find suitable and safe accommodation quickly

Our focus	Lead	Timescale	Measures of success
Improve the quality and suitability of placements	Supply and Acquisitions Manager	2026-2029	- Reduction in the number of households living in temporary accommodation. - Reduction in the average length of stay in temporary accommodation. - Increase in the proportion of households placed in suitable accommodation that meets their needs. - Increase in successful move-on from temporary accommodation into settled housing. - Improved resident satisfaction with accommodation and support services. - Increase in tenancy sustainment rates following move-on. - Reduction in repeat homelessness. - Reduction in the use of emergency and nightly paid accommodation.
Strengthen support and communication for households in temporary accommodation	Head of Service Homelessness	2026-2029	
Plan for move-on at the earliest stage	Head of Service Homelessness	2026-2029	
Improve tenancy sustainment support so people can remain in settled housing and avoid repeat homelessness	Head of Service Homelessness	2026-2029	

Local and Government Outcomes Framework measures	Baseline	2027	2028	2029	2030
Households with children in TA per 1,000 households	644	-10%	-15%	-20%	-25%
Total number of Families in B&B over 6 weeks	0	0	0	0	0
Average length of stay in TA	405	-10%	-15%	-20%	-25%
Number of out of area placements	62	50	40	30	20

Priority 3. Improve access to support services and supported housing for people with complex needs

Our focus	Lead	Timescale	Measures of success
Improve access to supported housing and specialist support for people with complex needs	Head of Mental Health and Complex Needs	2026-2029	- Increased access to appropriate supported housing and specialist support for people with complex needs. - Increase in successful move-on from supported housing into settled accommodation. - Increase in the number of households receiving floating support to sustain accommodation. - Reduction in repeat homelessness among people with support needs. - Improved housing stability and tenancy sustainment rates. - Improved access to specialist accommodation and support for domestic abuse survivors. - Reduced reliance on crisis services and emergency accommodation
Improve move-on pathways from supported housing into settled accommodation	Head of Mental Health and Complex Needs	2026-2029	
Expand flexible floating support for people at risk of repeat homelessness	Head of Mental Health and Complex Needs	2026-2029	
Ensure domestic abuse survivors can access specialist accommodation and trauma-informed support	Head of Service Homelessness	2026-2029	

Local and Government Outcomes Framework measures	Baseline	2027	2028	2029	2030
% prevention and relief outcomes achieved for households experiencing multiple disadvantage.	A/A	590	560	530	500
Reduction in repeat homelessness	A/A	-5%	-10%	-15%	-20%

Priority 4. Increase access to sustainable, long-term accommodation

Our focus	Lead	Timescale	Measures of success
Improve access to affordable and sustainable accommodation across all tenures	Head of Service Homelessness	2026-2029	- Increased access to affordable and sustainable accommodation across all tenures. - Increase in the number of households successfully securing settled accommodation. - Increased housing options available through partnerships with landlords and housing providers. - Improved tenancy sustainment rates across social and private rented housing. - Reduction in homelessness caused by a lack of suitable accommodation. - Reduction in repeat homelessness among households receiving tenancy sustainment support. - Improved housing stability for households at greater risk of homelessness.
Strengthen work with landlords and housing providers to increase options	Supply and Acquisitions Manager	2026-2029	
Improve tenancy sustainment support for people at greater risk of repeat homelessness	Head of Service Homelessness	2026-2029	

Local and Government Outcomes Framework measures	Baseline	2027	2028	2029	2030
Number of households housed into settled accommodation	678	+5%	+10%	+15%	+20%
Tenancy sustainment after 6 and 12 months	81%	85%	87%	89%	93%
PRS access outcomes	280	+5%	+10%	+15%	+20%

Priority 5. Make rough sleeping rare, brief and non-recurrent

Our focus	Lead	Timescale	Measures of success
Strengthen early identification and assertive outreach	Head of Mental Health and Complex Needs	2026-2029	• Reduction in the number of people sleeping rough. • Increase in the number of people engaged through outreach and support services. • Increase in successful transitions from rough sleeping into emergency, supported and settled accommodation. • Reduction in the number of people returning to rough sleeping. • Improved access to accommodation and support for people with complex and multiple needs. • Increased effectiveness of multi-agency interventions for people at highest risk. • Increase in positive outcomes achieved through SWEP and severe weather interventions. • Improved housing stability and wellbeing for former rough sleepers.
Maintain persistent engagement with people who are reluctant to accept support	Head of Mental Health and Complex Needs	2026-2029	
Improve access to emergency, supported and move-on accommodation	Head of Mental Health and Complex Needs	2026-2029	
Strengthen multi-agency coordination for people with the highest risks and needs	Head of Mental Health and Complex Needs	2026-2029	
Use SWEP as part of a wider pathway off the streets	Head of Mental Health and Complex Needs	2026-2029	

Local and Government Outcomes Framework measures	Baseline	2027	2028	2029	2030
Rough Sleepers – Snapshot Count	Current baseline	-10%	-15%	-20%	-25%
Long-Term Rough Sleepers	Current baseline	-10%	-20%	+30%	+40%
Numbers assisted off the streets	Current baseline	+10%	+15%	+20%	+25%
Repeat rough sleeping rate	Current baseline	-5%	-10%	-15%	-20%

Priority 6. Deliver a coordinated, partnership-led system to end homelessness

Our focus	Lead	Timescale	Measures of success
Improve coordination between homelessness services, health, adult social care and wider support systems	Head of Homelessness/Head of Mental Health and Complex Needs	2026-2029	- Improved coordination and joint working between housing, health, social care and support services. - Increase in positive housing and wellbeing outcomes achieved through multi-agency interventions. - More integrated and responsive services that meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness. - Improved use of data and performance information to inform decision-making and service improvement. - Increased participation of people with lived experience in service design, delivery and review. - Improved customer satisfaction with homelessness and support services. - Reduction in service duplication and gaps in support provision. - Stronger partnership arrangements and shared accountability for outcomes.
Support more integrated commissioning and service design	Head of Commissioning	2026-2029	
Ensure people with lived experience shape service design, review and improvement	Head of Homelessness/Head of Mental Health and Complex Needs	2026-2029	

Local and Government Outcomes Framework measures	Baseline	2027	2028	2029	2030
Number of multi-agency panels held	X12 per month	X12 per month	X12 per month	X12 per month	X12 per month
Partnership attendance at panels	Current baseline	75%	80%	85%	90%
Lived Experience engagement activity	Current baseline	Quarterly x 4 Per annum	6 PA	Quarterly + AR	8PA