

**'It's never too
early'**



Our Homelessness Strategy for Cornwall 2015-2020

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Foreword

Over the past few years Cornwall has bucked the national trend in terms of homelessness. Although the numbers of households seeking advice around housing has remained the same the numbers in temporary accommodation have fallen, the number of rough sleepers has fallen and the numbers of 16- 17 year olds having to be placed in B&B has fallen. This is largely due to the efforts of all agencies, in both the voluntary sector and the statutory sector; where housing, social, health and inclusion services are working together to prevent homelessness.



We, in spite of the notable successes in implementing the 2010 homelessness strategy, still have much to do. Cornwall because of its geographic, social and economic nature can leave people vulnerable, potentially leading to homelessness.

As we know homelessness can lead families and single people into a cycle that can have a profound effect on health, emotional wellbeing and the life chances of those who experience it. These effects, especially on children, can be lifelong and can cause repeated homelessness of a generational nature. This is why we must all do what we can to prevent it happening and mitigate its effects on the people of Cornwall.

Cornwall's second Homelessness Strategy is set in a challenging and uncertain environment of budget reductions, prolonged government austerity measures and continuing reform of the welfare system it must therefore contain the commitment by all partners to prevent homelessness wherever and whenever possible.

Cornwall's challenge is significant; we must be proactive in working with our partners to intervene early and prevent homelessness wherever possible. We remain ambitious in our vision and know that we have very experienced skilled and innovative agencies within local partnerships; that will rise to the challenge and continue to prevent homelessness effectively and achieve Gold Standard status for Cornwall.

There is a strong desire within Cornwall to tackle homelessness and reduce its impact on the people of Cornwall. Cornwall's vision for tackling homelessness is straight forward:

“We will take every opportunity to prevent homelessness. Where we fail to do so, people will have a response that means that sleeping rough is no longer an option”

Cornwall Council is strongly committed to this vision, and is realistic about the challenges that are faced in trying to achieve this. The strategy has clear benefits for the Council, our partners and our community.

Councillor Joyce Duffin , Portfolio Holder for Housing and Environment.

Introduction

The Cornwall Homelessness Strategy 2015-2020 sets out how Cornwall Council and its partners aim to tackle homelessness over the next five years, By building on our existing successful partnerships and service provision and by developing new and improved ways of working we can assist anyone who is threatened by or is experiencing homelessness in Cornwall. This strategy will set the agenda, enabling us to continue to meet the needs of people in Cornwall and to eliminate the threat of homelessness from their lives. Cornwall Homelessness Strategy 2015-2020 includes:

- The homelessness challenges facing Cornwall
- What the influences on the Homelessness Strategy are
- How we plan to achieve the Gold Standard
- How we developed the strategy
- The key objectives of the strategy
- How we will deliver the strategy

Our strategy for tackling homelessness remains consistent in its approach. Improving access to housing, supporting vulnerable people and minimising rough sleeping continue to be our priorities, but with greater emphasis on developing clear pathways and effective preventive interventions.

Cornwall's Homelessness Strategy underpins Cornwall's strategic aims to:

- Ensure that all children, young people and adults are able to thrive and achieve,
- Tackle poverty and deprivation
- Reduce crime and the fear of crime
- Reduce substance misuse and anti-social behaviour
- Improve health and wellbeing



Cornwall Homelessness Strategy 2010- 2015

There has been significant progress through the implementation of Cornwall's first homelessness strategy. The strategy was based on three main strategic objectives:

- Improving Access to Housing
- Supporting Vulnerable People
- Minimising Rough Sleeping

Alongside the Council's [Wellbeing, Early Intervention and Prevention](#) Strategy we have:

- Removed some of the barriers to accessing suitable, long-term private and social rented housing through the provision of financial assistance
- Prevented homelessness and repeat homelessness by improving joint working, supporting people during transitions and providing practical, flexible and accessible support.
- Restructured the complex needs and youth homelessness services, introduced transitional support and community outreach to help people sustain independent accommodation
- Reduced the number of people placed into B&B and length of time young people stay in such accommodation, introducing a robust protocol between Housing and Children's' Services and creating a gateway to supported accommodation
- Reduced the numbers of families in temporary accommodation, only used B&B in an emergency and reduced the length of stay to under 6 weeks
- Reduced the number of people sleeping rough in Cornwall

Partnership Arrangements

Cornwall Council is in a unique position as the only organisation at the local level with a cross cutting remit and the democratic legitimacy to intervene in and ensure effective operation of all aspects of the local housing market. However, the authority is aware that it cannot tackle the challenges of homelessness alone. Cornwall has a number of partnerships that have been particularly successful, in particular around reducing rough sleeping and youth homelessness.

We rely on working closely with our delivery and management partners; our local communities; large and small private sector bodies ranging from developers and construction companies to private landlords; the broader public sector; and our local third sector.

We recognise that we are all working to achieve the same goals and that it is in everyone's interests for Cornwall to have homes where people can thrive. However, we also understand that each of our partners will have their own considerations to take into account and that we may not all take the same route to achieve our goal. However, considering the scale of the challenges we all face, it is more important than ever to have solid, effective partnerships built on a foundation of trust and mutual respect.

Funding context

This Homeless Review is written with the uncertain backdrop in significant reductions in Cornwall Council's budget potentially for the lifetime of the Homelessness Strategy. Cornwall Council published its proposals for saving £196 million over the next four years in October 2014

The Council's stated aim is to strengthen its partnerships with the rest of the public and community sector in order to make as many savings as possible without cuts to frontline services. The Council states it will also work on integrating services currently run by government departments, the NHS, voluntary and community sectors and Cornwall Council.

The unprecedented scale of the savings required means that all areas of the Council are affected by the draft proposals. The authority has developed a four year plan which will help protect the three key priority areas identified by the public and Members during last year's budget consultation. These are services for the most vulnerable in society (including vulnerable adults, children, older people and the poorest), public transport, and road repairs and maintenance.

Given the significant savings to be made by Cornwall Council during the life of this strategy it is likely that services (including some statutory services) could reduce, as well as existing supported housing schemes. Particularly complex and/or vulnerable people may be put at further risk of homelessness.

In 2011 the Supporting People (SP) budget was reduced by £6.4m (40%). In 2013 the Wellbeing, Early Intervention and Prevention (WEIP) budget was reduced by £2m for all supported housing services and a further reduction of £1.4 million was made to this budget in 2014. There will also be a reduction to the WEIP budget of £70k every year for the next four years according to the budget papers but we are unsure at this stage how this will impact on homeless services.

The Homelessness Strategy (2015 – 20) should be used to tackle some of the root causes of homelessness in the county to make use of the most effective strategic partnerships to strengthen the safety nets for key vulnerable groups, whether via joint commissioning, effective partnerships/protocols or direct investment.

Homelessness in Cornwall: Key Findings

The 2014 **Homelessness Review, Evidence Base** and **Consultation Report** contain full details of the conclusions of the review.

Clear, complete and meaningful housing and support pathways

- Minimising Demand
- Reducing Crisis Presentations
- Service at point of contact
- Appropriate Accommodation Options: ensuring people have improved access to accommodation and realistic expectations of what accommodation they can expect
- Work with landlords to improve access to and quality of the Private rented sector

Progression and sustainment of accommodation

- Work to monitor the effects of Universal Credit and mitigate effects as required
- Ensuring there are clear links to wider education, training and employment opportunities and a range of ongoing support to increase the likelihood of ongoing tenancy sustainment.
- Development of community peer support networks that enable people to improve and maintain their independence.

Making support more flexible and person centred

- Consider people's assets, as well as their support needs and risks
- Redefine the support available when a person is transitioning between stages / accommodations.
- Consider support models that offer choice and control
- Encourage the co-production of services
- Ensure people's needs are catered for holistically

Improving Partnerships and co-ordination of resources

- Commitment to strategic leadership and joint decision making
- Ensuring all relevant information and data is shared and used
- Commissioners to be more visible and accessible Opportunities to develop partnerships, networking and best practice sharing between providers.
- Comprehensive information about services and pathways available
- Work with providers to develop expertise and skills

The bigger picture: Where homeless prevention fits

National Policy and Our Local Response

The National Context

The Gold Standard

The Gold Standard is the standard by which we will demonstrate achievement against our homelessness strategy objectives. The Council has committed to the Gold Standard, already achieving the Bronze Status in January 2015. Cornwall regards the achievement of the Gold Stand as one of the key measures of successfully delivering the Homelessness Strategy. The challenges are:

1. To adopt a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness which has buy in across all local authority services
2. To actively work in partnership with voluntary sector and other local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs
3. To offer a Housing Options prevention service to all clients including written advice
4. To adopt a No Second Night Out model or an effective local alternative
5. To have housing pathways agreed or in development with each key partner and client group that include appropriate accommodation and support
6. To develop a suitable private rented sector offer for all client groups, including advice and support to both client and landlord
7. To actively engage in preventing mortgage repossessions including through the Mortgage Rescue Scheme
8. To have homelessness strategy which sets out a proactive approach to preventing homelessness and is reviewed annually to be responsive to emerging needs
9. To not place any young person aged 16 or 17 in Bed and Breakfast accommodation
10. To not place any families in Bed and Breakfast accommodation unless in an emergency and for no longer than 6 weeks.

No Second Night Out

Cornwall remains committed to the No Second Night approach to tackling rough sleeping. Since 2011 Cornwall has introduced a number of measures addressing the needs of new and existing rough sleepers using temporary funding from government via the Devon & Cornwall Rough Sleeper Partnership, Homelessness Transitions Fund and Department of Health funding. This has enabled firstly a stabilisation of the numbers of rough sleepers (77) and then in 2014 an overall reduction in the estimate of people sleeping rough on a typical night in Cornwall (40). Cornwall is proud of this achievement; however work will need to continue to be targeted at rough sleeping to maintain this reduction.

The Cornwall Strategic Tenancy Policy

Cornwall Council Strategic Tenancy Policy allows for Registered Providers to continue to issue secure and assured tenancies, but also to issues flexible and fixed term Assured Shorthold Tenancies. All tenancies can be subject to an introductory period of 12 months, extendable to 18 months if required. The Strategic Tenancy Policy also seeks to ensure that homelessness is prevented wherever possible by requiring providers to use evictions as a last resort.

The Cornwall Homechoice Scheme

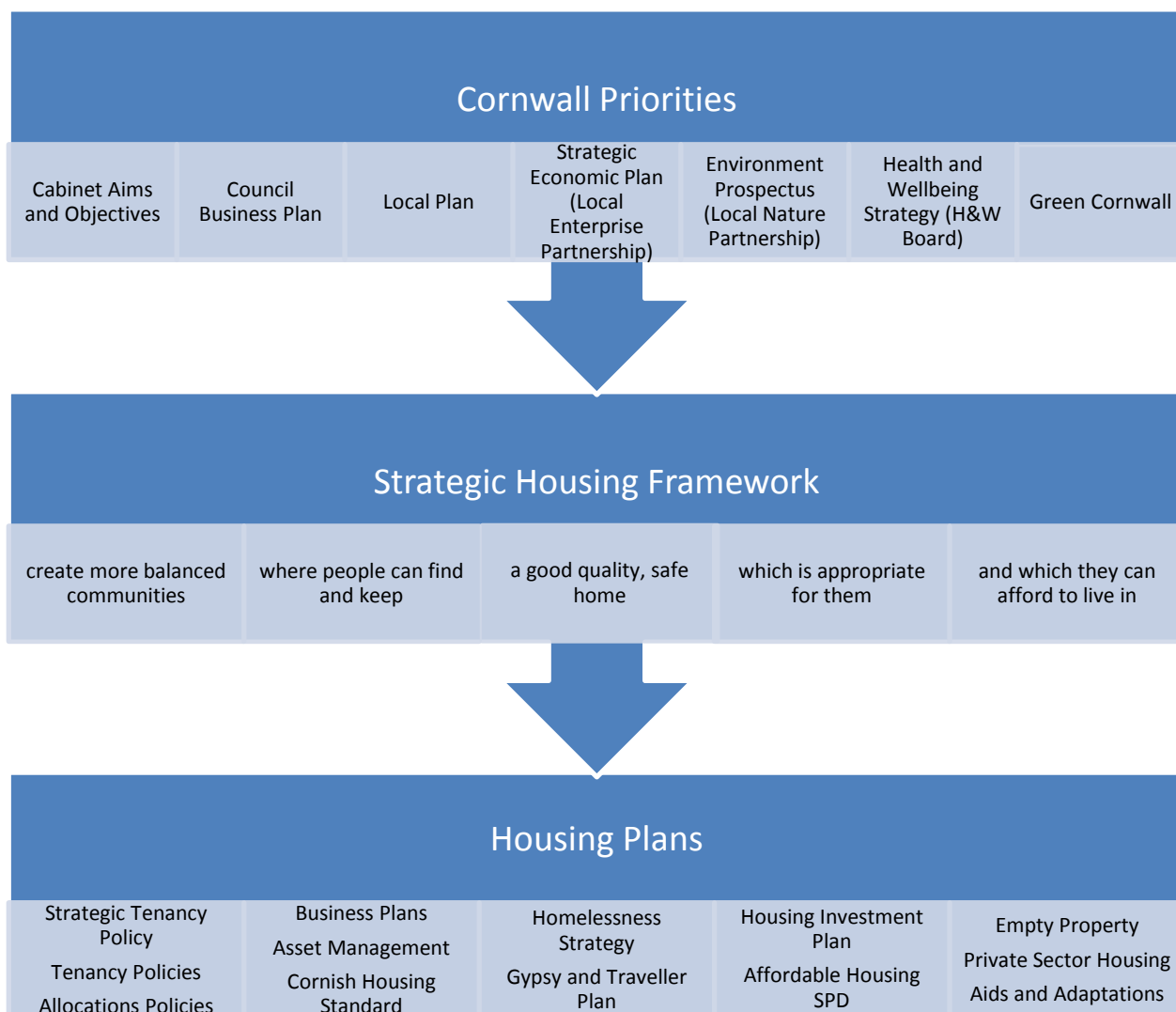
A separate review of the Allocations (Homechoice) Policy has been completed and a new policy was adopted by Cornwall Council in October 2014. The changes to the Common Housing Register and the Council's Allocation Scheme will enable the Homechoice Partnership to be the primary register for social and affordable housing, with a common assessment framework for all landlords. The changes will also assist with Council to deliver a more manageable, live register with applicants being encouraged to take more proactive approach to managing their application.

Temporary Accommodation Strategy for homeless people 2014-2017

Cornwall Housing Limited's Housing Options Directorate has adopted a strategy to inform future temporary accommodation (TA) requirements for the period 2014/15 to 2016/17. The Strategy sets targets for reducing the use of temporary accommodation and emphasises homelessness prevention as a key part of achieving the required reductions.

The Local Context

Homelessness has an impact on, and is affected by, a broad range of other agendas. It is important for us to understand these relationships and work closely with our colleagues in these other services and organisations to ensure that we are supporting each other's work.



The Council Strategy

The Council Strategy was agreed in September 2014, and clearly defines our corporate strategic aim of:

'Creating a prosperous Cornwall that is resilient and resourceful. A place where communities are strong and where the most vulnerable are protected'

This translates into eight strategic themes, all of which can impact upon or deliver improved homeless prevention services to our communities:



The Cornwall Strategic Housing Framework 2014- 2019

The [Cornwall Strategic Housing Framework 2014- 2019](#) is the parent document for the Homelessness Strategy. The framework identifies five key priorities and associated outcomes which, when measured, will show we are making a difference. The housing sector in Cornwall will work together to:

1. Increase supply: Create more balanced communities
2. Meet demand: Where people can find and keep
3. Improve quality: A safe, good quality home
4. The right type: Which is appropriate for them
5. Minimise cost: and which they can afford to live in

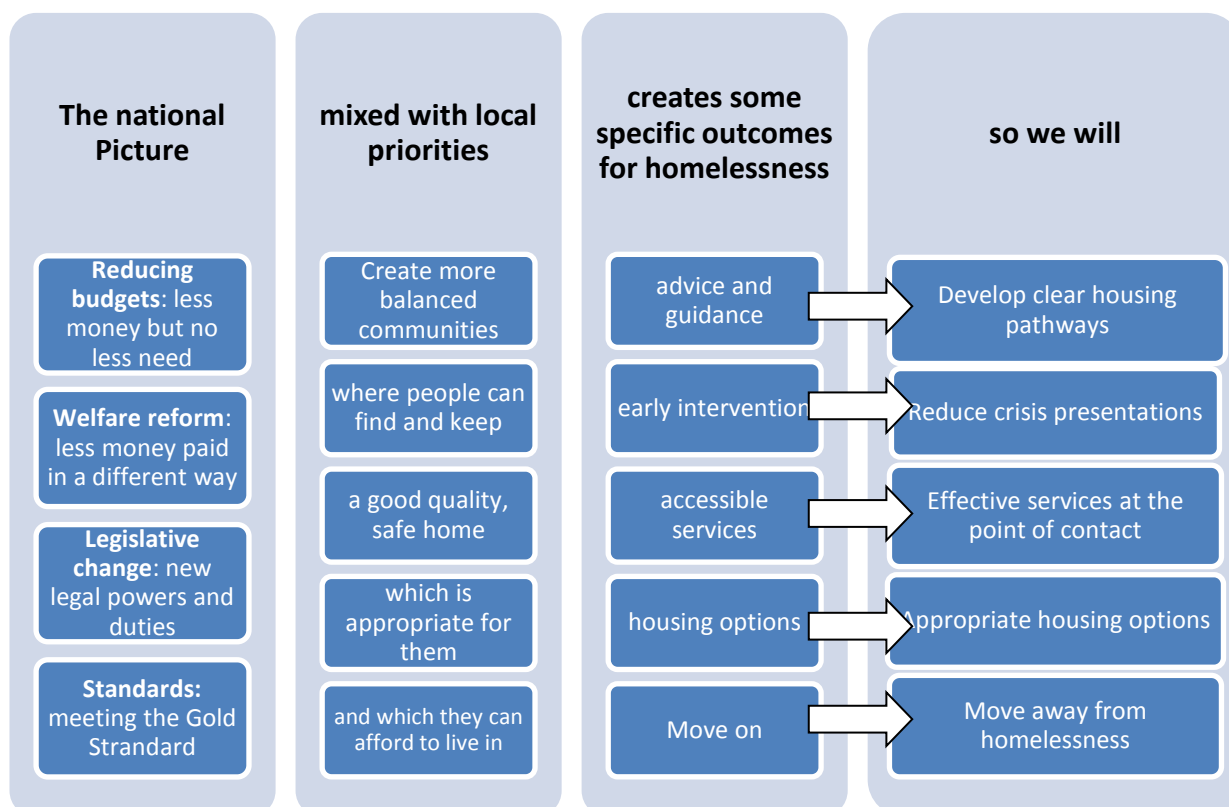
The framework sets out a range of outcomes that relate to the provision of homelessness prevention and homelessness services:

- There will be a choice of homes and tenures which meet a range of housing needs
- There will be tailored advice and guidance for people on the housing options available to them
- there will be support and guidance for vulnerable people to access affordable homes
- there will be better security of tenure in the private rented sector
- there will be less homelessness
- there will be less rough sleeping
- people will have access to the right information to enable them to make an informed choice

Where we want to be

Our Challenge

Our homelessness challenge is to make sure that there is enough accommodation of the right type, in the right places, and of good quality which people can afford to live in.

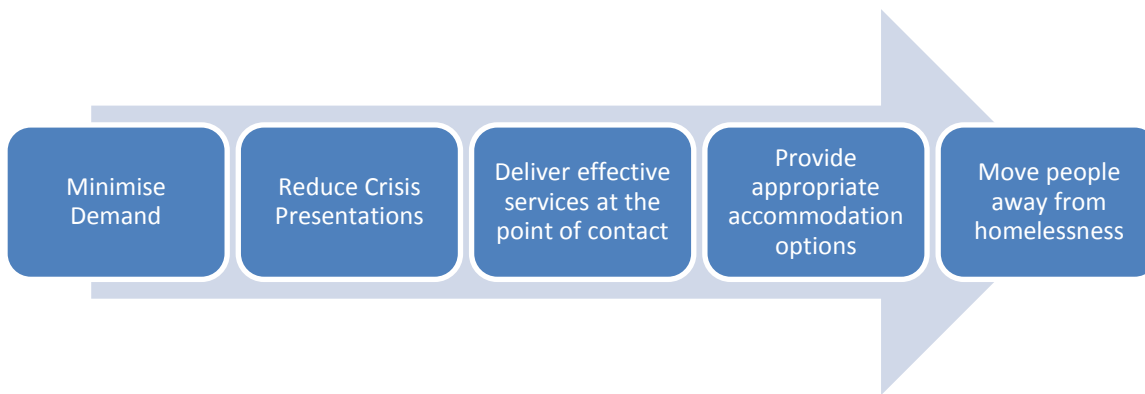


Our Vision

Our vision for homelessness is:

“We will take every opportunity to prevent homelessness. Where we fail to do so, people will have a response that means that sleeping rough is no longer an option”

We are strongly committed to our vision, and we are realistic about the challenges that we face in trying to achieve this. We won't be able to solve all of our housing problems overnight, but we can make sure, along with our partners in, that we are moving towards our vision over the lifetime of this framework. The framework identifies five key priorities and associated outcomes which, when measured, will show we are making a difference. We will work with our partners to:



Our priorities

Our ability to achieve our vision will depend on how successfully we manage to address all of our priorities together

1. Minimise Demand

We will work to minimise demand for homelessness by adopting a strong multi agency approach. We will implement interventions that will ensure households know where to access advice and support that assists them to avoid or deal with issues that could lead to homelessness. Particularly important will be targeting young people in schools and other youth provision, providing a consistent message about the difficulties of leaving home at a young age, the realities of housing choice, including affordability and the likelihood of needing to share accommodation.

Outcomes: How we will know we are there

Minimise Demand

- There will be a choice of homes and tenures which meet a range of housing needs
- There is a full programme of resources and training for young people and their educators around homelessness and its consequences
- there will be less homelessness
- the impact of welfare reform will be mitigated by through the early identification and provision of interventions for affected households
- There will be less rough sleeping

To get there we will:

- We will work in partnership to educate people in the reality and risks of being homeless.
- We will closely monitor the impact of Welfare Reform to both households and the housing sector and seek to minimise negative consequences
- We will ensure good quality information and advice is available to prevent homelessness
- We will have an updated Allocations Scheme which is easy to use and which prioritises
- We will offer support that promotes independent living skills and prevents relationship breakdown

- We will work with landlords to enable them to accommodate all people, including those with support needs
- We will recognise that there are groups of people with specific needs and ensure there is equality of access

2. Reduce Crisis Presentations

Agencies across Cornwall have opportunities to reduce housing crisis amongst their core client groups. This can be achieved by working in a more joined up way to identify those households at high risk of homelessness by making sure agencies can recognise the indicators of housing stress and be able to act appropriately to prevent homelessness. Every opportunity should be taken as early as possible to prevent homelessness.

Outcomes: How we will know we are there

Reduce Crisis Presentations

- there will be a more straightforward and transparent system to access affordable homes of all types
- there will be a reduction of households presenting as 'homeless tonight'
- there will be no 16 - 17 year olds placed into B&B
- there will be fewer families placed in to emergency accommodation

To get there we will:

- We will endeavour to offer consistent advice and assist at the earliest opportunity
- We will ensure Homelessness Services are approachable and easy to access
- We will advise and enable mediation within families to facilitate a return home to allow for a planned move rather than one in crisis (where appropriate)
- We will use Housing and partner evidence to predict potential future housing issues

3. Deliver effective services at the point of contact

This priority is about ensuring that households who approach services will be able to access effective advice and assistance to prevent homelessness, either by enabling them to remain where they are or by facilitating a move into appropriate accommodation. Homeless people and households will be able to access pro-active homelessness prevention services, a full assessment of need and a range of advice and options that will enable access to short stay or longer stay accommodation. These services will also provide easy access to other services promoting education, training and employment opportunities, health services, life-skills and benefits advice. These in turn will strengthen people's chances of resolving their housing problems.

Outcomes: How we will know we are there

Effective Services at the point of Contact

- There are a range of housing pathways in place that enable people to resolve their housing difficulties
- there will be a reduction in the numbers having to sleep rough
- there will be a reduction in the numbers of households entering temporary accommodation
- There is improvement in the health of homeless households and a reduction in the numbers accessing Accident & Emergency services

To get there we will:

- We will ensure services are approachable and easy to access
- We will take a proactive preventative approach to make every contact matter
- We will undertake a comprehensive assessment of need
- We will provide housing advice, facilitating access to short and longer stay accommodation and support
- We will provide clear and meaningful housing and support pathways
- We will provide easier access to other services that promote health and wellbeing, employment, education and training opportunities.

4. Provide appropriate accommodation options

Facilitating access to appropriate accommodation is crucial in preventing and resolving homelessness in the short, medium and long term. This includes:

- The Private rented sector; by facilitating access to tenancies for all groups where landlords can feel confident that these tenancies will be sustainable
- Social housing: the allocation of which will be needs led and Cornwall Homechoice can be a useful tool to prevent homelessness.
- Supported housing: ensuring not only access to this type of housing where it is appropriate, but to ensure meaningful pathways into independent tenancies when people are ready to move on.

Outcomes: How we will know we are there

Appropriate Accommodation Options

- there will be a clear pathway in place to enable people to progress to a secure and sustainable accommodation
- there will be fewer failed tenancies
- there will be less repeat incidences of homelessness
- there will be less rough sleeping
- Fewer households in Temporary Accommodation

To get there we will:

- We will ensure people have access to appropriate accommodation
- We will ensure people have a range of housing options
- We will support people to develop their independent living skills, where appropriate

- Developing partnerships with housing providers and landlords, in particular the private rented sector by supporting landlords and facilitating access to the sector via the Cornwall Housing Private Lets Scheme.

5. Move people away from homelessness

Crucial to the Homelessness Strategy is ensuring that people do not become homeless again by enabling access to the range of schemes that will help them achieve their aspirations in terms of education, training and employment. This will strengthen current tenancies and assist people as they progress away from homelessness

Outcomes: How we will know we are there

Move Away From Homelessness

- community peer support networks that enable people to improve and maintain their independence will be in place
- there will be fewer people becoming homeless for a second time
- more homeless people will access education, training and employment

To get there we will:

- We will ensure people have access to housing
- We will ensure there sufficient move on options from supported accommodation
- We will ensure that people can access timely support when tenancies start to fail
- We will develop opportunities for peer support
- Ensuring there are clear links to health promotion, education, training and employment opportunities

Delivering our Strategy

Delivering the Homelessness Strategy

Governance, Performance and Outcomes

We will review the Homelessness Strategy on an annual basis and will monitor the actions and measures set out in the delivery plan on a quarterly and annual basis. Reporting to the Council's Health and Wellbeing Board, a steering group of members and partners will have overall responsibility for the delivery of the Homelessness Strategy. This steering group will need to respond to the challenge to lead and drive Cornwall to ensure there are the structures, skills, effective commissioning decisions and strategic partnerships in place to deliver against the key priorities over the next five years.

Via the national Gold Standard Framework, Cornwall Council has made a pledge and a corporate commitment to tackle and prevent homelessness wherever possible, with buy in across all Council services.

The Council (Cornwall Housing Limited) will facilitate a quarterly homelessness Forum that will consider reports from operational groups responsible for the development and implementation of the tasks identified in the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan.

Delivery Plan

We will prepare a detailed delivery plan each year setting out our targets for that year, key projects and activities, and how we will measure our progress. Delivery against the plan will be reported to Members and Partners and an annual update will be available on our website. The overall Homelessness Strategy action plan will be developed in partnership with colleagues and will be in line with the priorities outlined above. This action plan will be augmented by a series of plans relating to specific groups, such as young people, those experiencing Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence or people with complex needs or are rough sleeping.

Future Commissioning

The Council will commission services that directly contribute to the delivery of the priorities set out in this strategy. Commissioning will be carried out according to the following principles:

- Resources will be aligned to specific outcomes across key strategic partners
- Investment will be based on robust evidence and analysis of need, and with a clear focus on prevention and early intervention
- Investment will be linked to clear and specific outcomes but will demonstrate benefits on a local level

Any decommissioning or 'disinvestment' will be carried out responsibly, and will require appropriate consultation, risk assessment and comprehensive impact assessments

