

DRAFT Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy - Executive Summary

2024 - 2030

Introduction

Everyone deserves good quality, safe and secure housing.

More people experience homelessness and rough sleeping in Torbay than we want. Therefore, tackling homelessness and rough sleeping is a key priority for Torbay Council.

Today more than ever, homelessness can affect anyone at any time.

While most people affected by homelessness will have support networks in place, some do not. We want to support people in the best way we can.

Our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy focuses upon preventing and relieving homelessness. It sets out areas where we want to do things differently. We have worked with our partners to co-produce the draft Strategy, including the vision and our priorities.

The Strategy complements our Housing Strategy and sits alongside our other strategies, including our Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy and Drug and Alcohol Strategy, with the aim that people receive the support that they need at the appropriate time.

Key facts

A person is homeless if they have nowhere to stay or are living on the streets. But you can also be homeless if you have a roof over your head. There are people in insecure or poor housing at risk of homelessness. This will include those with notice to quit who cannot afford to rent anywhere else. There will be people in suitable but temporary accommodation. Others will be about to be discharged from prison or hospital with nowhere to live permanently.

People experiencing the most acute forms of homelessness will include those:

- sleeping rough
- sofa surfing, or
- living in hostels, night shelters or unsuitable temporary accommodation.

- On average, within Torbay there are 140 households in temporary accommodation at any one time. There is an average of 293 children housed in temporary accommodation each year, staying for approximately 22 weeks.
- On average, 19% of households needing homeless assistance required temporary accommodation.
- More than 1 in 4 households in Torbay privately rent. There is an increasing trend of homelessness from private rented accommodation.
- There are approximately 30 rough sleepers in Torbay at any one time.

Vision

The Strategy aims to make:

- Homelessness a rare occurrence
 - We want to increase prevention and make earlier interventions at a community level.
- Homelessness as brief as possible
 - We want to improve temporary and supported accommodation, so that it becomes a positive experience.
- The experience of homelessness unrepeated
 - We want to increase access to settled homes and provide the right support at the right time.

Everyone has a role to play in working towards making homelessness in Torbay rare, brief and unrepeated. It is time for a new approach to homelessness – one that is proactive, not reactive.

Strategic Priorities and Principles

There are three priorities within the draft Strategy. We've developed these through our engagement work. They also reflect Government and legislative requirements.

Priority 1: Increasing early help and prevention

We will support people at risk of becoming homeless. We will ensure people at risk of homelessness can stay in their existing home or can make a planned move to alternative accommodation.

We will make our prevention and engagement services more accessible. This will include strengthening our joint working. We will develop a universal training programme to improve knowledge and understanding. We will provide housing advice through our Family Hubs and other locations.

We will achieve better outcomes for families and young people through improving working practices across Housing and Children's Services.

We will develop a plan to integrate housing and mental health practices in Torbay.

We will deliver a range of solutions so that no one in Torbay needs to sleep rough. This will include joint working protocols so that people are not discharged from prison or hospital directly onto the street.

We will enable all partners to make timely referrals where there may be a risk of homelessness. We will develop our relationship with landlords to improve communication. We will work with them to increase standards, reduce evictions, and make Torbay's private rented sector the 'sector of choice'.

Objectives

- Provide the right advice at the right time
- Target prevention to
 - reach people whose homelessness is hidden from services, and
 - prevent and reduce repeat homelessness, rough sleeping and youth homelessness
- Reduce homelessness from private rented accommodation

Priority 2: Intervention

When people fall into crisis, we will act swiftly to give them targeted support to get them into accommodation or off the streets.

We will develop a variety of support so that there are alternative offers for those with multiple and complex needs, rather than relying on the hostel. We will carry out targeted rough sleeping outreach work in the community.

We will provide additional accommodation space to meet changes in demand, including having the ability to meet short term peaks in demand. We will provide a Sustained Tenancy Service to support people recovering from homelessness.

We will have planned pathways and appropriate information and support to meet the needs of care experienced young people. We will have sufficient accommodation for 16 and 17 year olds so that we never place them in bed and breakfast accommodation, except in an emergency.

We will aim to never place families in bed and breakfast accommodation. If, in an emergency, we do, it will be for no longer than six weeks.

We will attract and maximise funding and investment to improve and deliver services or support.

Objectives

- Provide somewhere safe to stay
- Provide targeted support

Priority 3: Better outcomes, better lives

A home is not the end, but the start of the journey. We will support people to live independently and lead meaningful quality lives to create a home.

We will continue to transform systems through our Multiple and Complex Needs Alliance. This will include preparing a single multi-agency plan to support individuals with complex needs.

To help sustain tenancies, we will establish local networks to provide support such as:

- access to furniture and food banks
- help with budgeting
- benefits advice, and
- offering employment and skills training.

We will provide practical and ongoing support that meets the individual needs of households. This will include engagement with mental health and other services and specialist support for young people and victims of domestic abuse.

We will be proactive in understanding and responding to current homelessness causes and risk factors. We will learn from local experience, including from with 16 and 17 year olds and care experienced young people, to increase our effectiveness in preventing homelessness.

We will understand the actual cost of homelessness, both as an organisation and wider system. This will inform us in making the case for homelessness services and prevention activities.

Objectives

- Support people with complex lives
- Build people's resilience
- Build upon experience to develop and improve services

Our Shared Principles

- Person Centred
 - We will empower people to make decisions and choices about their lives. We will create a culture of continuous improvement by delivering quality services. We will recognise the potential of an individual by growing knowledge, self-belief, and responsibility.
- Working Together
 - We will work collaboratively with our partners and within the community to ensure that services are informed by the voices of those with lived experience. We will deliver services collectively that meet people's needs.
- Delivery of quality services
 - We will work in a relational way to transcend traditional patterns, rules, and relationships. We will create something new and valuable to meet people's needs. We will recognise that:
 - systems are complex,
 - everyone's homelessness journey is different, and
 - that we must work in a trauma informed manner.

This document can be made available in other languages and formats.
For more information please contact housing.advice@torbay.gov.uk
