

November 2019

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025

Draft for consultation



Contents

Forward.....	3
1 Introduction	4
2 Strategic Context.....	5
National context	5
Local strategic context	5
3 Services to tackle homelessness.....	6
Services that the Council provides or commissions	6
Torbay End Street Homelessness Campaign (TESH)	7
An Alliance Approach	7
Partner activities:	7
4 Issues and Challenges	8
5 The Picture of Homelessness in Torbay	9
Temporary Accommodation.....	10
Rough Sleeping	11
Housing First Feasibility Study 2018	12
Health and Social impacts effecting Homelessness in Torbay.....	13
Homeless families with children in Torbay	13
Young People at risk of Homelessness in Torbay.....	13
Deprivation in Torbay.....	14
6 Strategic Priorities	16
Conditions of success – the need for change.....	16
Priority 1: End rough sleeping in Torbay	16
Priority 2: Increase the prevention and early intervention offer for those vulnerable to homelessness	17
Priority 3: Increase access to a range of affordable and suitable housing solutions.....	18
Priority 4: Tackle the social, economic and health inequalities associated with homelessness	18
7 Building a network of support	20
Collaboration and Engagement	20
8 Delivering the Strategy	21
Governance	21

Foreword

I am pleased to share with you Torbay's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025. The strategy recognises and builds on the considerable work that is already taking place to prevent and address homelessness across Torbay, but I acknowledge that there is still more to do.

The strategy has been developed in a time of challenges. The impacts of economic austerity and welfare reform have impacted on many households' budgets and, coupled with high housing costs in Torbay, have led to increased demand for homelessness services. This additional demand, together with reductions in public spending, has placed considerable pressures on both the statutory and voluntary sectors. In response, this document outlines the co-ordinated approach required to tackling and preventing homelessness in our community over the next five years.

As well as individual impacts, homelessness has wider implications for Torbay as a whole, ultimately affecting levels of inequality; social exclusion; community cohesion and economic prosperity. It is my personal belief, shared by the rest of the Cabinet, that good quality housing advice and assistance is a fundamental element in supporting vulnerable people to address their problems and achieve the best possible outcomes.

Along with partners across the public, private and voluntary sectors, I am committed to addressing both the causes and impacts of homelessness and continuing to bring about effective change. To that end, this strategy aims to ensure that all homeless and vulnerably-housed households in Torbay receive appropriate and timely help and support.

Councillor Swithin Long

Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Tourism and Housing

1 Introduction

Torbay offers an unrivalled quality of life for individuals and families. With its natural environment, clean air, location, excellent schools, growing arts and cultural sector, low crime rate and wide range of outdoor activities, Torbay has the potential to provide everyone with the opportunity to live a healthy and fulfilled life.

Torbay is made up of the three towns of Torquay, Paignton and Brixham with a collective population of over 133,000. Torbay is the second largest urban area in the South West and a popular tourist and retirement destination for many. Like many coastal areas, Torbay has its challenges. A predominantly low-wage, low-skill economy that is over reliant on the tourism industry, there are high levels of deprivation.

We need to talk about Homelessness.....

Homelessness means not having a home, a place that provides security, privacy, and links to a community and support network.

While rough sleeping is the most visible form of homelessness, most people who are homeless don't actually sleep on the street. They are much more likely to be staying in temporary accommodation, on the floor or sofa of friends and family, or extreme overcrowding, or living in any other unstable or non-permanent situation. Most are never counted in the official homelessness figures.

There is no single reason why someone can end up without a home. For many, life events such as relationship break down, losing a job, addiction, domestic abuse, bereavement, debt or poor health can act as the trigger. Some may be leaving the care system, armed forces or prison. Others simply can't afford to pay the deposit or rent. Quite often, it is a mixture of these factors that creates a spiral of events that eventually leads to homelessness.

There are also fundamental social and economic causes of homelessness, including poverty, inequality, and the lack of affordable housing, welfare reform and unemployment.

Being homeless can be traumatic, as not having a home makes it so much harder for people to find a job, stay healthy and maintain relationships. It can easily lead to disempowerment, isolation and poverty. People and their families are often blamed and stereotyped for being homeless that it's the result of bad life choices or addictions which leads to embarrassment, shame and lasting feeling of worthlessness. Homelessness also impacts our communities in terms of the visibility of rough sleeping. The costs to our public services are considerable in terms of the critical support required from housing, health, criminal justice and social care services.

While the right to a home is a basic human right, homelessness continues to pose a major concern for Torbay. This strategy lays out the five-year road map for how Torbay will work together to support all residents to have a safe, stable place to live, by focusing on the following priorities:

- **End rough sleeping in Torbay**
- **Prevention and early intervention**
- **Increase access to a range of affordable and suitable housing solutions**
- **Tackle the social, economic and health inequalities associated with homelessness**

“Homeless is an experience people have. It is not a statement of being.”

2 Strategic Context

This strategy has been developed with regard to the following national and local strategies:

National context

The Homelessness Reduction Act which came into force from April 2018 placed new duties on Local Authorities to prevent homelessness earlier, extending the 'trigger' of homelessness from 28 days to 56 for all eligible applicants. This was an important change as historically, homeless people in England had only been able to get help if they were considered a priority.

The Act has brought about the biggest review of homelessness services in decades and has resulted in collaborative approaches to preventing homelessness, including a new duty to refer for public services

The **National Rough Sleeper Strategy 2018** commits to halving rough sleeping by 2022 and ending it by 2027. The strategy takes a three-pronged approach to tackling rough sleeping:

1. Prevention: understanding the issues that lead to rough sleeping and providing timely support for those at risk.
2. Intervention: helping those already sleeping rough with swift support tailored to their individual circumstances.
3. Recovery: supporting people in finding a new home and rebuilding their lives.

Local strategic context

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy also seeks to align with a number of local and sub-regional strategies and partnerships, including:

- Housing Strategy and Housing Delivery Plan 2020-2025
- Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2018-2022
- The Children and Young People's Plan 2018-2023
- Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy 2018-2022
- Local Economic Strategy 2017-2022
- Local Plan 2012-2030
- Devon and Cornwall Reducing Reoffending Board

3 Services to tackle homelessness

Torbay has undertaken a tremendous amount of work to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping. This section **includes an overview of services, initiatives and campaigns which have laid the foundations for delivery of this strategy.**

Services that the Council provides or commissions

- Statutory housing services are provided by the Housing Options team. In response to a growing demand for its services, the Housing Options team has been reviewing how it can more effectively manage the high numbers of people requiring temporary accommodation, and refocus efforts towards its prevention role and low-level support to help people maintain tenancies. Not only are more people going into temporary accommodation but they are staying in there longer due to a lack of suitable, affordable housing options for people to move onto. The team are exploring ways to move towards a rapid rehousing pathway that seeks to assist people in longer term homes without the need to go into temporary accommodation first. An out of hour's duty service is offered for emergency assessment and intervention for housing crisis.
- A rough sleeper team has been in operation since 2017, funded by the government's Rough Sleeper Initiative. It provides both resettlement and outreach support. Its mission is to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and eradicate it by 2027.
- The wider Community Safety team, hosts a variety of functions committed to tackling homelessness, providing specialist support for people with mental health issues and complex needs through Vulnerability and Complex needs practitioners, including a qualified mental health nurse. Alongside this the Community Safety Team has a designated Anti-Social Behaviour Unit, coordinating and prioritising street issues, enabling partnership working to reduce rough sleeping and crime.
- Prison Resettlement Worker enabling a smooth transition from custody to community, creating a bridge of support for women and men coming out of prison with a local connection identifying pathways into the community to prevent re offending and homelessness.
- Adult Social Care, a social worker is commissioned to specifically work with people who are homeless to enable correct care pathways for vulnerable adults who are homeless or rough sleeping.
- Housing First, in 2018 Torbay Council endorsed the introduction of a service that provides intensive support for people moving into accommodation, who have been homeless for a long period of time and have additional challenges such as drug/alcohol use, debt and health issues.
- The Leonard Stocks Centre, a 26 bed engagement and resettlement centre is commissioned to work with single people with housing and support needs, and a local connection. A GP and nurse service, is delivered for Leonard Stocks residents, and people experiencing street homelessness, from the purpose-built surgery room. 3 of the units are accessible for people with disabilities, and there is a kennel, to ensure the hostel can house people with dogs.
- Integrated Domestic Abuse Service provides crisis accommodation, floating support, IDVA (independent domestic violence advocates for high risk cases).
- An in house Youth Homelessness Prevention and Mediation Service who work closely with young people and their families to prevent homelessness in conjunction with Children Services. Supported accommodation is commissioned specifically for young people.

- Bond Scheme, the aim of our Bond Scheme is to help people to rent a home in the private sector where they cannot get a deposit together. This provides assistance to people who cannot afford a cash deposit and Landlords/Letting Agents are instead offered a Bond replacing the traditional cash deposit. The Deposit Bond Scheme can help those who are unable to afford the deposit to be able to move into a home in the private sector.
- Torbay operates a Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) which is used when severe weather is forecast. SWEP triggers take into account: weather warnings, near-freezing temperatures, rain, snow, wind chill, gales, heat. Upon SWEP being activated, additional accommodation is quickly put in to place to prevent harm and death due to severe weather conditions. SWEP operates outside usual eligibility and entitlement frameworks that govern access to housing and individuals are allocated access to accommodation based on need.

Torbay End Street Homelessness Campaign (TESH)

- In 2017 Torbay joined the European End Street Homelessness Campaign, a movement of 13 cities coordinated by World Habitat working together to end street homelessness.
- Campaign partners include Torbay Council, Shekinah, Police and many other voluntary sector organisations.
- Activities include regular connection events, where volunteers go out on the streets and talk to rough sleepers, a 24 hour telephone reporting line for anyone concerned about a rough sleeper.

An Alliance Approach

- In 2017 an innovative street homelessness Alliance was established between Torbay Council and Shekinah to deliver Housing First and manage Rough Sleepers Initiative funding. The Council is now exploring widening the alliance to include drug and alcohol treatment and domestic abuse services. The Alliance contract shares risk and responsibility between Council and provider, and service provision, evaluation, and monitoring are all agreed and undertaken jointly.

Partner activities

- In Torbay a wider range of partners and organisations works alongside each other to address the needs of those affected by homelessness and rough sleeping. These include substance misuse services, food banks, day centres, advocacy, mental health support as well as those that help in finding work and learning new skills.
- ToWNS, - (Torbay Winter Night Shelter). ToWNS operates in January and February rotating between churches in Torquay and Paignton providing somewhere safe to sleep, food and drink and support to those who are homeless and sleeping or at risk of sleeping rough

4 Issues and Challenges

This section aims to provide an overview of the issues and challenges facing Torbay in its ambition to provide **support all residents to have a safe, stable place to live.**

There is no 'quick fix' to resolving many of these broader social and economic challenges, but identifying them and understanding their impact will be crucial to the delivery of this strategy and the future delivery of services. Among the key challenges are:

Public sector funding cuts: Torbay in particular has seen substantial reductions in its annual Local Government settlement, estimated at nearly 70% of what it was in 2010. Public sector funding cuts also affected other services whose work impact on homeless people, for example the Police, adult social care, mental health services, and substance misuse services, alongside those working in the voluntary and community sector.

Social housing: Approximately 8% of households in Torbay live in social housing. In 2018-19 there were between 982 and 1074 households on the Housing Register waiting for affordable housing. This subsequently means that access to accommodation can be a challenge.

Affordability: The welfare system has historically played a key role in preventing and tackling homelessness. Since 2010, there have been a range of changes to the UK's welfare system that have impacted on those affected or at risk of homelessness. Most relevant for Torbay have been reductions in Housing Benefit for renters in the private sector, where the Local Housing Allowance no longer covers the cost of renting. Larger families have also been affected due to a reduced income tax credits changes, Housing Benefit reductions as well as an overall cap on total benefit receipt. Many of these changes have had a significant impact on homeless people and those who support them.

The housing crisis: According to the 2019-20 Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, Torbay has higher levels of private rented accommodation (23%) and a significantly lower percentage of social rented housing (2%) compared to England.

This analysis also shows that 14.5% of postcodes in Torbay are transient renters - single people who pay modest rents for low cost homes. Mainly younger adults (20-30yrs) living alone or house-sharing, they tend to live in a property for only a short length of time before moving on.

5 The Picture of Homelessness in Torbay

Torbay Council collects data on the number of homelessness cases dealt with by the Housing Options team, where homelessness was prevented or relieved.

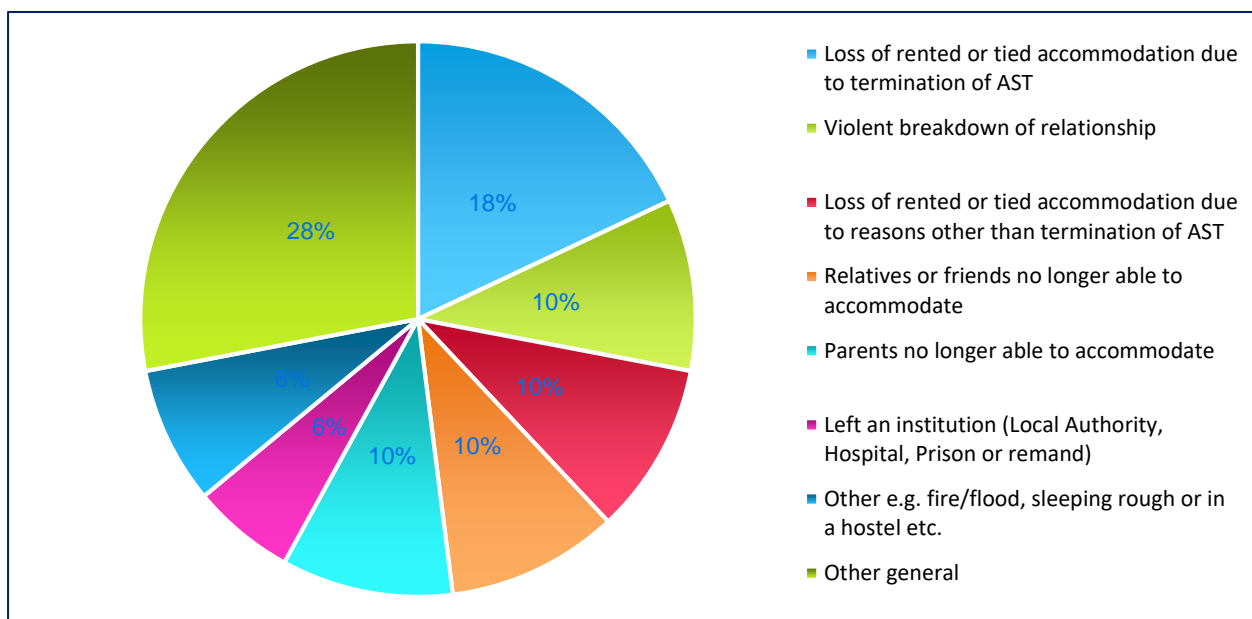


Figure 1: Reasons for Homelessness in Torbay 2018/2019

The main reason for homelessness within Torbay is the loss of rented accommodation. Rent levels have increased beyond the amount people are entitled to claim to help them pay their rent. This means that rented accommodation is not accessible for many people. We will develop new ways of engaging with private sector landlords and agencies to mitigate the perceived risks landlords face in order to support our clients to access privately rented accommodation.

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 introduced an entirely new responsibility to ‘relieve’ homelessness. This means that wherever someone is actually homeless the local authority has a duty to try and help that person relieve their homelessness. Although this does not necessarily mean they will get temporary accommodation the Council has a responsibility to help them to find a suitable home.

Temporary Accommodation

Temporary accommodation is offered to households who meet certain criteria whilst their circumstances are investigated. If the main housing duty is accepted then temporary accommodation continues to be provided until suitable alternative accommodation is found. With a lack of suitable, affordable options for people to move onto, not only are more people going into temporary accommodation, they are finding themselves there longer. The graph shows the monthly changes to applications received, for temporary accommodation.

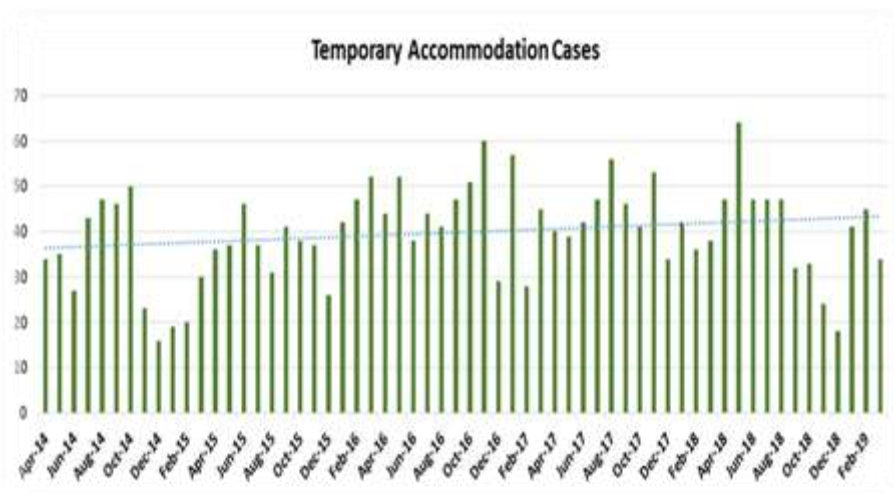


Figure 2: Number of Households in Temporary Accommodation

Who is applying for Temporary Accommodation?

The main applicants of temporary accommodation comes from those aged 25-35 years of age, this could be due to the high costs of private rental and the low level LHA rates under 35s are entitled to. In addition there is a lack of HMO style accommodation in Torbay which is within the cost availability for this age group.

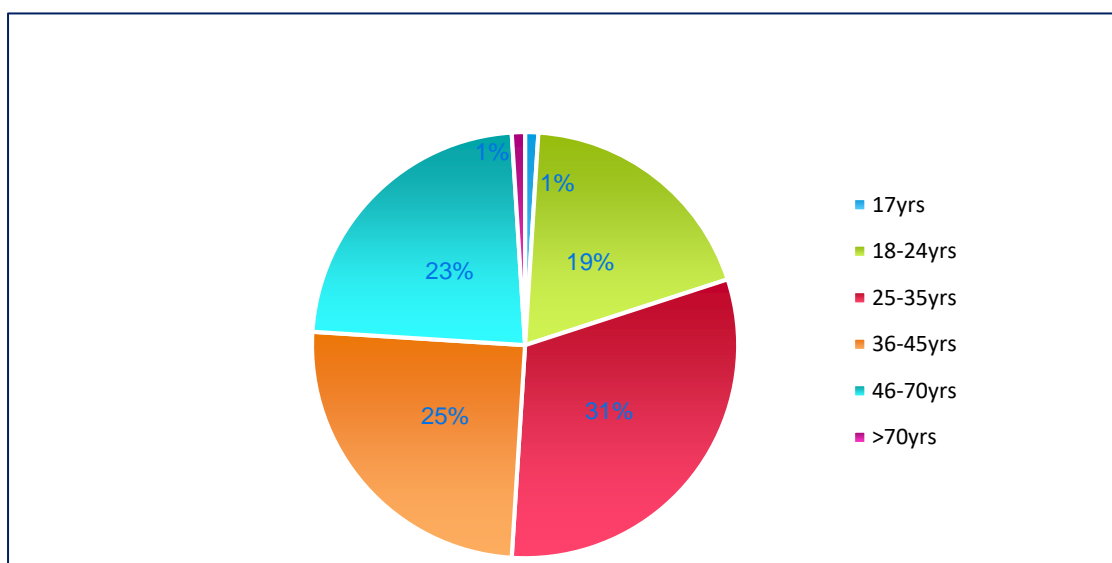


Figure 3: Age Range of those applying for temporary accommodation (2018/2019)

A more detailed analysis of the data indicates the range of issues that contributed to those presenting as homeless, as follows:

Torbay faces an ongoing challenge in sourcing suitable temporary accommodation for homeless families for whom the Council has accepted a homelessness duty or is making investigations.

The percentage of families for the period April – Oct 2019 has increased by 47% compared to the same period in 2018. Lack of appropriately sized and suitable accommodation means that the Council

currently has to resort to short term, expensive solutions that do not facilitate normal family activities or space for children to play.

Rough Sleeping

For statistical purposes, rough sleepers are defined as people sleeping, or bedded down, in the open air such as on the streets, or in shop doorways or park benches.

The official count figures are problematic because they are collected annually through a count on **one night**, and as such tend to under report the number of people due to the guidelines about who can be counted.

Local data is collected through staff working with people who are street homeless, and show the same trend but higher numbers.

There are no figures for hidden homeless – sofa surfing, sleeping on floors etc. There is not a significant issue with entrenched rough sleeping in Torbay. There is however a constant flow of people that are either new to rough sleeping or returning. Interventions are therefore tailored to the individual rather than meeting a trend.

Torbay also delivers Connections Week, an informal rough sleeper engagement exercise, where volunteers conduct interviews on a nightly basis with rough sleepers to understand the needs of rough sleepers in the Bay.

The graph below shows the official annual rough sleeper figures from 2010 to 2018.

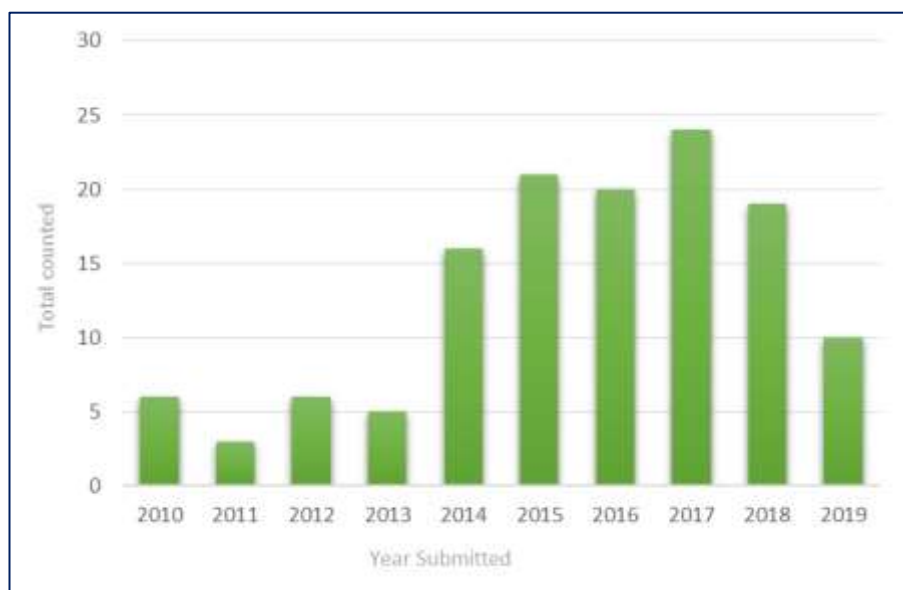


Figure 4: Official National Count Data for Torbay 2010-2018

More specifically is a breakdown of the data obtained from the outreach team from April-September 2019. This shows the total number of rough sleepers engaged with services, whether they are new presenters or familiar clients. In addition it also shows those with no local connection which is very low.

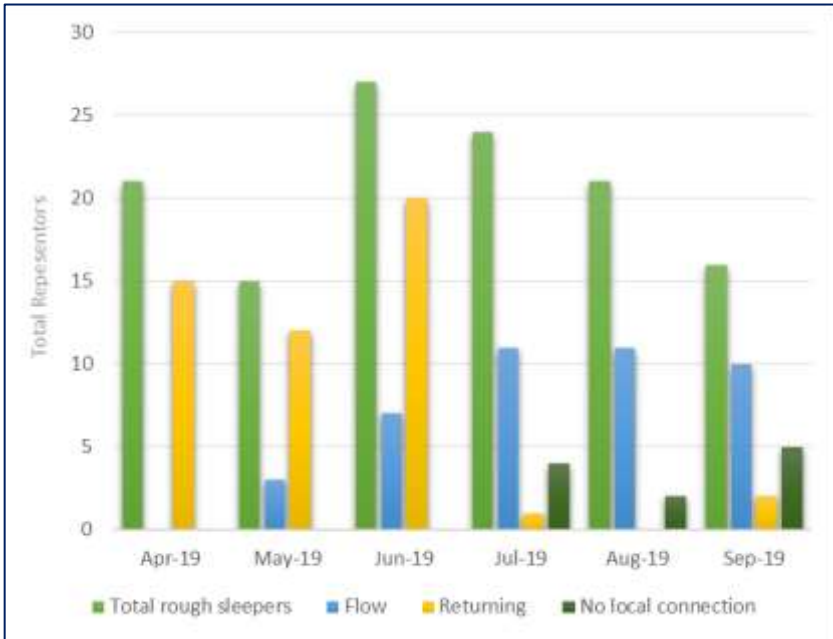


Figure 5: Detailed data of number of individuals sleeping on the streets of Torbay

Housing First Feasibility Study 2018

A Housing First Feasibility Study was undertaken by Crisis in 2018. This was commissioned by Shekinah, and funded by the Nationwide Foundation in partnership with Torbay Council and Westward Housing. It reviewed the homelessness system in Torbay, as well as provision and use of services for homeless people with complex needs.

The specific barriers and challenges identified by clients and services across the system include:

<p>People with lived experience:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The system is generally disjointed, without a clear, seamless pathway from prevention, to intervention, to recovery and then move on for everyone who is homeless or at risk of homelessness. • Application of local connection criteria restricting access to the Housing Register and to assistance into the PRS • Challenges of bidding for properties online through The Devon Home Choice system • Not being considered ready to move on into independent housing as support needs were deemed too high • The high cost of deposits and rental advances required by private sector Landlords difficulties in accessing furniture and appliances even if you are able to find a property. • Identified need to include emotional support, independence and opportunities for rehabilitation and longer-term planning, a focus on social integration, and a swift and flexible response to people with addictions who are at the right stage in the cycle of motivation.
<p>Private Rented Sector:</p>	<p>Letting Agents advised that with the right offer of support they felt properties from the PRS could be found. However, they did report that they felt promises of support from services at the start of a tenancy were often not followed through during the tenancy which made them wary and sceptical.</p>
<p>Criminal Justice:</p>	<p>Very short windows to put a package in place as key services are not given enough time when notified of an individual’s upcoming release. This includes delays to benefit payments.</p>
<p>Health and Social Care:</p>	<p>Evidence demonstrates increasing numbers of people with ‘complex needs’ – that is, multiple needs in relation to mental health, drug use, homelessness, offending and/or learning disability, which tend to interact with each other. An increasing complexity of need and lack of</p>

	wider support provision is making it less likely people will make a success of moving on. Within mental health services the threshold for people to access residential care is very high. It was also identified that there is a lack of lower level (tenancy) support and many professionals noted the gap created by the reduction in Supporting People funding for floating support. There was reported scepticism from professionals about the willingness of GP surgeries to proactively engage and support homeless people.
Department for Work and Pensions:	Delays in payment was cited as the key barrier for homeless people in securing housing.
Drug and Alcohol Services:	It was felt that expectations placed on people with chaotic lives and challenging needs were sometimes damaging and not conducive to recovery.

Health and Social impacts effecting Homelessness in Torbay

Homelessness impacts on an individual's health not just those who are street homeless. People who are street homeless experience higher rates of premature death than the general population, particularly with regards to suicide and unintentional accidents. Less likely to access primary and preventive health services, they are at greater risk of diseases.

According to the 2019/20 Joint Strategic Needs Assessment there are currently 28 areas in Torbay in the top 20% most deprived in England; up from 12 in 2004. Torbay is also ranked as the most deprived local authority in the South West region.

Children who have experienced homelessness are more likely to grow up with respiratory illness and poor mental health, and they are twice as likely to leave school with no GCSE qualifications.

Homeless families with children in Torbay

Homelessness and placement in temporary accommodation renders both children and parent(s) generally more vulnerable, and in greater need of Safeguarding. It can leave families more vulnerable to a variety of risk factors including:

- Personal issues, such as loss of security and control, feelings of isolation and loss of confidence and self esteem
- Housing issues, such as overcrowding and mobility (being moved to another borough or area for instance)
- Disruption to education, with children not being enrolled in school, or impacting on the ability to study
- Lack of security, space, privacy and play areas.

Young People at risk of Homelessness in Torbay

Young people that face higher risks of homelessness include those with experiences of the care system, those from a BME background, and those who identify as LGBTQ+. The top support needs of young homeless people were education or employment, lack of independent living skills and mental health problems.

The accommodation available to young people in Torbay has changed significantly in recent years and they are likely to rely on the private rented sector (PRS) for accommodation. As already presented, this can be particularly challenging for young people as they receive a lower rate of both Housing Benefit and Income Support.

A 12 month snap shot analysis was undertaken in 2018 to review the needs of 42 young people in different parts of the leaving care or youth homelessness system. This analysis found a lack of short-

term accommodation (including crisis beds) and accommodation for young people with chaotic and complex lives.

- Young people leave their supported accommodation through exclusion and subsequently placed into B&B accommodation
- Young people represent as homeless and in some instances are known to the wider children services system.

Some of the key needs and issues identified as part of this analysis included:

- Challenging behaviour and non-engagement was a recurring theme.
- Young males are more challenging to place
- Young people want a place of their own, not shared, but cannot afford it.
- Landlords in the private rented sector want 6 month's rent in advance and deposit – impossible for this age or without guarantor
- Young people are convinced they will get accommodation, which meets their aspirations, whilst the reality is very different.
- Many young people in the homelessness system have poor life and daily living skills.

These results demonstrate that not only are a broader range of options required to meet needs, but that interventions are needed in the wider system to prevent potential homelessness at a much earlier stage. This includes work with families and in schools well before a young person may approach as homeless, as well as facilitating move on and tenancy sustainment.

Deprivation in Torbay

The following map provides a ranking nationally on how Torbay compares to others across the county on how hard it is to access appropriate accommodation. The ranking is based on criteria such as overcrowding, homeless and housing affordability.

- Is it recognised that there is an increasing disparity between LHA rates of the average rent in Torbay. It is estimated that the average rented cost in Torbay has increased.
- For one bedroom properties within Torbay, the median monthly rent has increased from £450 (2016/17) to £475 (2018/19), an increase of 5.6%. The lower quartile rent has increased from £412 (2016/17) to £425 (2017/18), an increase of 3.2%
- For comparison, during the same period median monthly rents in England for one bedroom properties have increased from £595 (2016/17) to £615 (2018/19), an increase of 3.4%.
- The lower quartile rent has increased from £450 (2016/17) to £475 (2018/19), an increase of 5.6%.
- Just over 1 in 10 Torbay residents live in an area that is amongst the most deprived in England when it comes to accessing good quality housing.

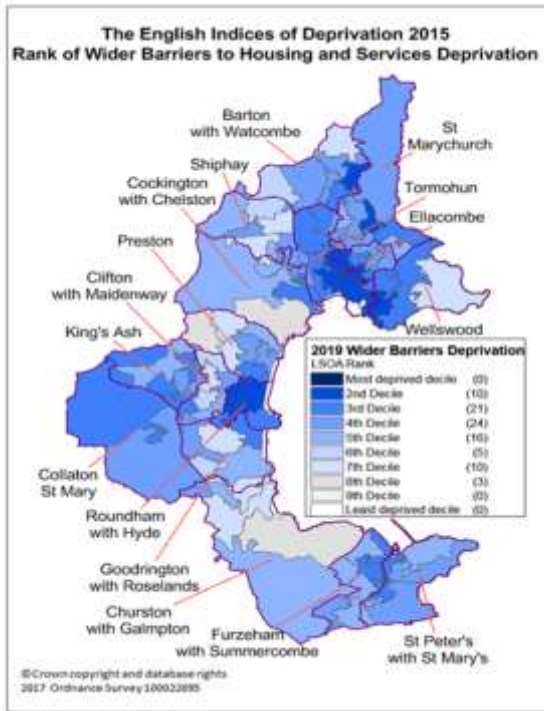


Figure 6: Indices of Deprivation - Wider barriers to housing and service deprivation

6 Strategic Priorities

Conditions of success – the need for change

The homelessness system can be very complex, both for those experiencing it as well as for those providing support.

Torbay is seeking to change not only the outcomes for people experiencing homelessness, but also the way the system works.

For the strategy to fully achieve its aims, the organisations and homelessness services need to plan and deliver in a new way. There is a fundamental need for a shift in our thinking, assumptions and ways of working, and will require new facilitative forms of leadership, collaboration, reflection and learning.

This five year strategy covers the period 2019-2024 and looks at strengthening the already high level of partnership working across Torbay and how we can continue to make significant improvements across homelessness services. In order to bring about significant change within our communities, this Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy focuses on four key priorities, which have been agreed by a number of key partners.

More detail on the actions being undertaken against each priority is included in the accompanying action plan.

Priority 1: End rough sleeping in Torbay

The National Rough Sleeper Strategy 2018 identifies addressing rough sleeping as a top government priority, with a target to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and eradicate it by 2027. Already a committed partner in the European End Street Homelessness Campaign, Torbay has identified ending rough sleeping as one of its top priorities.

Key Objectives:

- Support the outreach services currently funded via the government Rough Sleeper Initiative.
- Redesign of system to embed rapid rehousing model into existing services.
- Roll out a Housing First/Rapid Rehousing model of delivery:
 - A provision of accommodation and intensive support to homeless people with complex needs.
 - Move away from the use of temporary accommodation towards housing people into the community, along with the support they need.
 - Develop local capacity to deliver strength - based support that is trauma informed and moves with the person, not the accommodation
- Ensure people have access to community-based wellbeing support and activities essential to sustain accommodation.
- Working with the community and voluntary sector to explore and develop alternative ways of working, including alliance opportunities.
- We will change perceptions and expectations of homelessness services among members of the public through an effective communication plan, increasing the effectiveness of prevention through understanding the realities of the services available, including reducing stigma.
- Develop a clear voluntary sector referral pathway for vulnerable clients identified at risk
- We will increase supply of move on accommodation available to people who have slept rough.

Priority 2: Increase the prevention and early intervention offer for those vulnerable to homelessness

The best way to tackle homelessness is to prevent it and intervene as early as possible. Given the challenges we face around increasing homelessness it is critical that we continue to put homeless prevention at the heart of everything we do. We also know there are groups of people who are at a higher risk of becoming homeless. We will find new ways of both understanding and addressing the factors that can lead to homelessness, such as the ending of private tenancies, family/relationship breakdown and discharge from other institutions; as well as developing greater understanding of the impact of wider social issues such as Adverse Childhood Experiences, poverty and disadvantage, unemployment, poor health and wellbeing and lack of access to affordable, decent homes.

At the same time it is essential that the system looks at ways to reduce barriers for people seeking to engage with it, so that it becomes as easy as possible to receive the support they require.

It is also essential to acknowledge that more is needed to sustain tenancy beyond financial security, and that former behaviours and detrimental relationships could still result in repeat homelessness. This must include development of supportive social networks to build resilience, access to support for physical and mental wellbeing as well as a strong network of services.

Key Objectives:

- We will develop further preventative actions to reduce the number of households presenting to homelessness services in Torbay and identify simple measures to monitor progress.
- We will develop greater understanding of the 'triggers' that are causing tenancies to end, especially in the private rented sector; and why relationships and/or families are breaking down – to allow new opportunities for prevention to be identified and implemented.
- We will provide accessible services that have seamless pathway from prevention, to intervention and provide effective communication with people about how to avoid the risk of homelessness.
- Increase access to employment support for families and young people.
- We will roll out a programme into secondary schools and other educational forums encouraging youngsters to think of wider housing solutions, debunking the myths surrounding access to social housing, issues around parental exclusion and encouraging self-reliance.
- We will tackle the causes of homelessness by influencing local, national and regional policies, strategies and approaches, including through campaigning.
- Departmental approach to prevent homelessness before crisis presentation becomes imminent, with a particular focus around families who are engaged with Children Services.
- We will pay particular focus to sustaining tenancies through:
 - The redesign of discretionary funds to allow targeted support with streamlined access and ensure income maximisation through links with DWP
 - Development of relationships with private sector landlords and agencies
 - We will encourage self-resolution to housing crisis
- There will be a particular focus on the following:
 - **Young people / care leavers:** Ensure delivery of a range of semi-independent support and accommodation, supported lodgings for young people in care, care leavers and young homeless people as well as flexible outreach support for young homeless people aged 16-25yrs.
 - **Transitions:** Ensure a better, seamless experience for young people with housing needs who are moving into adult focused services.
 - **Dual diagnosis:** Develop a coherent multi agency approach that ensures the adequate, timely provision of integrated mental health and substance misuse care in response to the needs of those at risk of and currently homeless.
 - **Discharged from hospital, prison or other institutional settings:** Early identification, notification and referral to the Housing Options team prior to discharge for those who do

not have accommodation to return to or who find their existing accommodation is now inappropriate or unsafe.

- **Homeless families with children:** As part of the Multiple Complex Needs programme to address the drivers of poor outcomes for children and families in Torbay, identify and deliver supportive measures for vulnerable families and children to reduce destabilisation, disruption and stress.
- **Domestic abuse:** Deliver accommodation-based support that meets the diverse needs of victims of domestic abuse and their children.

Priority 3: Increase access to a range of affordable and suitable housing solutions

Housing is the foundation of any homelessness and rough sleeping strategy – access to affordable and suitable homes.

Torbay has high levels of private rented accommodation, as well as inadequate social housing provision in relation to need. Private rents in Torbay are often higher than the average income allows, and in most cases is much higher than the government will subsidise through universal credit or housing benefit. Furthermore, the quality some sectors of the housing stock is relatively poor.

Torbay's Housing Plan 2020-2025 will seek to address some of these issues by ensuring sufficient housing building targets to meet identified need and improve housing quality.

Housing solutions must still be made available for those requiring support as determined under the 2017 Homelessness Reduction Act. Temporary accommodation in particular is difficult to secure during peak tourist months.

Key Objectives:

- Respond to the demand for an increased range of affordable accommodation solutions for those in most housing need.
- Fundamental review of temporary accommodation to improve access to suitable, year-round, planned temporary accommodation.
- Forge strong relationships with local private landlords to unlock capacity in the private rented sector.
- Allows access to affordable and suitable housing.
- Commissioning of new framework of accommodation and support for young people.
- Use of interim management orders to improve poor quality accommodation.
- Encourage growth of professional private rental accommodation
- Explore development of local letting agency
- Review Devon home choice policy
- Work with registered providers to review private housing stock and its utilisation

Priority 4: Tackle the social, economic and health inequalities associated with homelessness

Tackling homelessness and rough sleeping also requires collective action across Torbay – not just for those services directly providing housing services. This strategy emphasizes the complex nature of the needs and problems faced by those for whom homelessness is a reality. The link between homelessness and inequalities is well documented with a higher incidence of health problems including substance misuse, and mental and physical ill health.

While having a safe home lies at the core of Torbay's efforts to tackle homelessness, this alone will not solve the problem. There is also an urgent need to increase the visibility of homelessness in strategic needs assessments and plans.

Key Objectives:

- Ensure that tackling the social, economic and health impact of homelessness is made the business of all local services.
- Invest in awareness raising and training that enables cross agency collaboration to recognise the risk of, or actual homelessness, and to take appropriate action in response.
- Adopt an inclusion health approach aimed at improving health outcomes for those at risk of or presenting as homeless.
- Provide financial inclusion advice and support for those at risk of or already homeless.
- Support and engage with national campaigns aimed at tackling the root causes of the housing emergency, as well as government policies that undermine local efforts to tackle homelessness.
- We will reduce the numbers in temporary accommodation in favour of more sustainable options.
- We will work with partners to improve the health and wellbeing of homeless people and rough sleepers and support people to build better lives.
- We will work with long term homeless people, building their resilience and capacity and supporting them to solve their homelessness and reduce repeat homelessness
- We will increase access to mental health support and improve advice and training for staff working with complex needs clients to create 'psychologically informed environments' within all homelessness services.
- We will actively involve clients with lived experience to shape our services.

7 Building a network of support

We will regularly meet with other organisations through the development of a 'Homelessness Strategy Steering Group' for the objectives within this strategy to be achieved.

Our aim would be that someone working or volunteering in professional or community-based services automatically considers whether issues raised by their clients or customers could result in them losing their home.

We will work with stakeholders to:

- Make sure that they are using the opportunities they have to identify people who may be at risk of homelessness
- Make sure that the formal process for agencies to refer people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness is fully understood and easy to use
- Involve other organisations in the identification and provision of opportunities to help people facing housing issues.
- Explore and generate ideas for potential projects and monitor potential sources of funding such as community funds and Government initiatives

Collaboration and Engagement

There has been a shift away from seeing people who are homeless as simply the recipient of a service, towards an acknowledgement that those with lived experience are often best placed to advise on what support and services will make a positive contribution to their lives. There are many benefits to encouraging active involvement in a service's design and delivery, including a more cost-effective service, better understanding and communication between services, and ultimately increased satisfaction. It is also an essential tool to ensure that the views of specific groups or communities of interest such as veterans are being considered within service planning and commissioning. It is essential that an agreed approach to engagement with service users is taken forward as part of this strategy.

8 Delivering the Strategy

Governance

We need to ensure that together with our partners we have the skills and structures in place for the delivery of this strategy's priorities, and to deliver the innovative agenda that will be required to tackle homelessness over the next five years.

All of Torbay Councils directorates are signed up to and committed to delivering the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, working with partners and within the council to ensure the priorities are delivered. The objectives in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy will be delivered using an action plan that identifies the main tasks needed to tackle and prevent homelessness in the next five years. A multi-agency approach group will monitor and evaluate the plan regularly.

The action plan will identify who is responsible for the completion of specific tasks, and indicate timescales and performance targets. The Homelessness Strategy Steering Group, will hold overall responsibility for the delivery of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. Commissioning proposals for remodelling investments in homelessness services and accommodation requirements will be submitted to the appropriate Boards. Buy in and support from such boards is important as while they may not have a formal responsibility for reducing homelessness, their members are often involved in the delivery of services which support people who are homeless, or which can contribute to the reduction of homelessness in an area.