

CABINET AGENDA

Monday, 20th May 2024 at 7.15pm

**Council Chamber, Braintree District Council, Causeway House,
Bocking End, Braintree, CM7 9HB**

THIS MEETING IS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Members of the public will be able to view and listen to this meeting via YouTube.
To access the meeting please use the link below:

<http://www.braintree.gov.uk/youtube>

Members of the Cabinet are requested to attend this meeting to transact the business set out in the Agenda.

Leader of the Council

Deputy Cabinet Member to the Leader

Councillor G Butland

Councillor R van Dulken

Transformation, Performance and Delivery

Finance, Resources and Performance

Deputy Cabinet Member

Councillor K Bowers

Councillor J Coleridge

Transformation, the Environment and

Customer Services

Councillor T Cunningham (Deputy Leader)

Deputy Cabinet Member

Councillor D Garrod

Connecting People, Places and Prosperity

Economic Growth and Infrastructure

Planning

Deputy Cabinet Member

Councillor F Ricci

Councillor G Spray

Councillor P Schwier

Supporting Communities

Housing, Health and Wellbeing

Deputy Cabinet Member

Stronger Communities

Deputy Cabinet Member

Councillor L Bowers-Flint

Councillor B Taylor

Councillor M Cunningham

Councillor C Dervish

Invitees: Councillors J Beavis, L Jefferis and J Pell are invited to attend as Group Leaders

Members unable to attend the meeting are requested to forward their apologies for absence to the Governance and Members Team on 01376 552525 or email governance@braintree.gov.uk by 3pm on the day of the meeting.

D GASCOYNE
Chief Executive

INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS – DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI), Other Pecuniary Interests (OPI), or Non-Pecuniary Interests (NPI).

Any Member with a DPI, OPI or NPI must declare the nature of their interest in accordance with the Code of Conduct. Members must not participate in any discussion of the matter in which they have declared a DPI or OPI or participate in any vote, or further vote, taken on the matter at the meeting. In addition, the Member must withdraw from the Chamber where the meeting considering the business is being held unless the Member has received a dispensation from the Monitoring Officer.

Public Question Time - Registration and Speaking

The Agenda allows for a period of up to 30 minutes for Public Question Time. Members of the public may ask questions or make a statement to the Cabinet on matters listed on the Agenda for this meeting.

All questions or statements should be concise and should be able to be heard within the 3 minutes allotted to each speaker.

Anyone wishing to ask a question or make a statement is requested to register their interest by completing the Public Question Time registration [online form](#) by **midday on the second working day** before the day of the meeting.

For example, if the meeting is on a Tuesday, the registration deadline is midday on Friday, (where there is a Bank Holiday Monday you will need to register by midday on the previous Thursday). The Council reserves the right to decline any requests to register to speak if they are received after this time.

When registering for Public Question Time please indicate whether you wish to attend the meeting 'in person', or to participate remotely. People who choose to join the meeting remotely will be provided with the relevant link and joining instructions for the meeting.

Please note that completion of the on-line form does not guarantee you a place to speak during Public Question Time. You will receive email notification from the Governance Service confirming whether your request is successful.

The Leader has discretion to extend the time allocated to registered speakers and to amend the order in which they may speak.

In the event that a registered speaker is unable to connect to the meeting, or if there are any technical issues, their question/statement may be read by a Council Officer.

Further information on Public Question Time is available on the [Council's website](#).

Health and Safety

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Documents

Agendas, Reports and Minutes may be accessed via www.braintree.gov.uk

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https://www.braintree.gov.uk/info/200136/access_to_information/376/privacy_policy

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Webcast and Audio Recording

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Comments and Suggestions

We welcome comments to make our services as efficient and effective as possible. If you have any suggestions regarding the meeting you have attended you may send these to governance@braintree.gov.uk

PUBLIC SESSION		Page
1	Apologies for Absence	
2	Declarations of Interest	
	To declare the existence and nature of any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, other Pecuniary Interest or Non-Pecuniary Interest relating to items on the agenda having regard to the Code of Conduct for Members and having taken appropriate advice where necessary before the meeting.	
3	Minutes of the Previous Meeting	
	To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 4th March 2024 (copy previously circulated).	
4	Public Question Time	
	Only Registered Speakers will be invited by the Chairman to speak during public question time. Please see the agenda notes for guidance.	
5	Award of Contract for Refuse & Recycling Sacks	5 - 8
6	Skatepark Refurbishment Project	9 - 12
7	Annual Plan 2024-25	13 - 24
8	Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 – 2029	25 - 94
9	Proposed Variation to the Braintree District Council Off Street Parking Places Order 2023	95 - 97
10	Public Spaces Protection Order – Braintree Town Centre	98 - 105
11	Exclusion of the Public and Press	
	To agree the exclusion of the public and press for the consideration of any Items for the reasons set out in Part 1 of Schedule 12(A) of the Local Government Act 1972.	
PRIVATE SESSION		Page
12	Braintree District Council Asset Considerations - Mayland House	

Report Title: Award of Contract for Refuse & Recycling Sacks	
Report to: Cabinet	
Date: 20th May 2024	For: Decision
Key Decision: Yes	Decision Planner Ref No: DP/2024/04
Report Presented by: Councillor Tom Cunningham, Cabinet Member for Transformation, the Environment and Customer Services	
Enquiries to: Esme McCambridge, Strategy & Business Support Manager esme.mccambridge@braintree.gov.uk	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report seeks approval to award a contract for the supply of plastic sacks.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To award a 12-month contract to Paramount Packaging for the 2024/25 supply of Refuse, Recycling and Street Cleansing Sacks, for a total contract value of £244,000.

3. Summary of Issues

- 3.1 Braintree District Council (the Council) supplies the residents of the district with clear sacks for the containment of their recyclable waste, in readiness for collection on their scheduled collection day. In addition, the Council provides a range of other sacks for use across the district as part of its day-to-day operations including black sacks for residents not on wheeled bins, commercial waste sacks for businesses, and sacks used by the Street Cleansing Service for litter and dog bin waste.
- 3.2 A procurement exercise was undertaken in collaboration with Castlepoint Borough Council (CPBC) for the requirement of several types of plastic refuse and recycling sacks in order to achieve economies of scale.
- 3.3 In considering the procurement, the Council looked to utilise the BDC Refuse Supplies Framework EPHF21-002 Lot 1. This is a framework that is available to the Council for the award of contracts for the supply of refuse sacks and is a framework that the Council has previously used for its annual awards of this nature.
- 3.4 The tender commenced in March 2024 for the annual supply of Refuse, Recycling and Street Cleansing Sacks for 2024/25. Prospective tenderers were required to submit prices against 7 Lots as follows: -

1. Purple Litter Sacks (Large) x 150,000

- 2. **Purple Litter Sacks (Small) x 150,000**
- 3. **Red Dog Sacks x 150,000**
- 4. **Clear Sacks x 6,000,000**
- 5. **Black Sacks x 350,000**
- 6. **Clear Commercial Sacks x 25,000**
- 7. **Blue Commercial Sacks x 25,000**

3.5 The deadline for bids was 4th April 2024. A total number of 7 suppliers returned prices in line with the tendering procedure. The Tender Evaluation process was in two parts: (1) Financial and (2) Quality, with a 60% and 40% weighting respectively. The Financial part was evaluated by the Procurement Team and the Quality element by Operations.

3.6 The overall combined scores for each of the tenders is shown below:

Bidder	Overall Score (Weighted)
Supplier 1 Paramount Packaging	100%
Supplier 2	94.67%
Supplier 3	83.57%
Supplier 4	81.82%
Supplier 5	79.75%
Supplier 6	60.30%
Supplier 7	44.53%

3.7. Following the evaluation, Paramount Packaging achieved the highest overall score proving that it is the Most Economically Advantageous Tender based on a combination of price and quality. It is therefore recommended that the Council award to this supplier.

4. Options

4.1 **Option 1:** The Council could choose not to award the contract to Paramount Packaging. However, the current supply of sacks will continue to diminish and it is anticipated that the supply will run out during 2024. As a result, the Council will no longer be able to provide residents with clear sacks for their recyclable waste. This will have a negative impact on recycling performance as the crews will not collect recyclable waste put out in other sacks and it may also increase levels of contamination in bulk recycling bins owing to incorrect sacks being used. It would also have a significant impact on delivery of the range of refuse, recycling and street cleansing services. This is not the recommended option.

4.2 **Option 2: (RECOMMENDED)** To award the contract to Paramount Packaging who ranked first and was the Most Economically Advantageous

Tender based on price and quality. This would preserve the Council's ability to deliver the service over the next 12 months.

5. Next Steps

5.1 Subject to approval, a contract award will take place on 3 June 2024.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 The total value of the tender is £244,000 which includes 7 different types of sacks, printing and delivery as set out in 3.4 above and is within the overall budget for sacks.

7. Legal Implications

7.1 In undertaking this procurement exercise, the Council has complied with the relevant statutory provisions, and its own contract procedure rules as set out in its Constitution. A formal contract will be signed, sealed, and awarded following approval.

8. Other Implications

8.1 None

9. Equality and Diversity Implications

9.1 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 creates the public sector equality duty which requires that when the Council makes decisions it must have regard to the need to:

- (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act
- (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

9.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender, and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).

9.3 The Equality Impact Assessment indicates that the proposals in this report will not have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic.

10. List of Appendices

10.1 None

11. Background Papers

11.1 Tender Documents

Report Title: Skatepark Refurbishment Project	
Report to: Cabinet	
Date: 20 th May 2024	For: Decision
Key Decision: Yes	Decision Planner Ref No: DP/2024/18
Report Presented by: Councillor Tom Cunningham, Cabinet Member for Transformation, the Environment and Customer Services and Deputy Leader	
Enquiries to: Jenny Beck, Project Manager – Strategic Investment jenny.beck@braintree.gov.uk	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To seek approval to vary the contract for the Skatepark Refurbishment Project.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To approve an additional budget of £24,999 to be met from S106 funding for the design, construction and refurbishment of 3 skate parks. This will provide a total budget of £506,132.
- 2.2 To approve an additional cost of £24,999 for enhancing the specification of the equipment to be installed at the skate park at Spa Road Witham and for the Council to issue a variation to the Contract with its supplier, Bendcrete for a revised Contract value of £483,324.

3. Summary of Issues

- 3.1 At its meeting on 18 December 2023, Cabinet approved the award of a Contract to Bendcrete Skateparks at a value of £458,325 for the design, construction and refurbishment of 3 skate parks at Spa Road Witham, Ramsey Road Halstead and Weavers Park Braintree.
- 3.2 Prior to construction commencing on site, it was agreed the final designs submitted by Bendcrete would be discussed with the various User Groups who the Council had engaged and consulted with as part of the overall refurbishment project. This was to influence and help shape the final design of the equipment at for each location, to ensure it met the needs of all the users. The feedback received about the designs at all 3 locations was very positive and the comments provided by the various User Groups was extremely valuable. In respect of the site at Spa Road Witham, after the requested changes made by the user groups were incorporated, it became apparent that it was lacking in terms of beginner and transitional equipment for young children.

- 3.3 It was requested by this User Group that consideration be given to incorporating a mini wheels' pump track in the final design (subject to affordability), to allow younger children to have an area to play that would help build their confidence before moving onto the larger equipment.
- 3.4 Following a conversation with the Council's S106 Officer additional funding (S106) can be made available to meet the cost of the additional works. Bendcrete incorporated the suggestion in the final design at an additional cost to the Contract of £24,999.
- 3.5 As Cabinet approved the award of the Contract value to Bendcrete, it is required to consider and approve a variation to the Contract value if it agrees to the additional equipment being installed at Spa Road Witham. It would also need to approve a corresponding increase in the budget for the project.
- 3.6 The recommendations set out in this report will help the Council to deliver the following Corporate Objectives:
- A sustainable environment and a great place to live, work and play.
- 3.7 The additional equipment at Spa Road Witham will be invaluable to users especially younger children who will be able to use the equipment at an earlier age without the risk of colliding into teens and adults using the main skatepark equipment.
- 3.8 The additional work at the Spa Road Witham site will be completed as part of the main works to save on construction costs.

4. Options

Option 1: Not to agree an increase in the budget or the additional cost of the works set out in 3.3. above.

- 4.1 Whilst this option is available it is not recommended as it would mean that the Spa Road Skatepark would not offer a provision for younger children to transition to the larger skatepark equipment. In addition, it may result in Witham Town Council requesting S106 funding and seeking permission from the Council to provide the additional equipment as a retro fit, which would not be ideal due to the need for contractual obligations between the Council and Witham Town Council. This is not the recommended option.

Option 2: To approve the additional budget of £24,999 to be met from S106 funding, together with a corresponding increase in the Contract awarded to Bendcrete

- 4.2 This is the **RECOMMENDED** option.
- 4.3 Option 2 is the preferred option as it will enable all the construction work at Spa Road Witham to take place at the same time. It will show the Council has

listened to the User Group and taken on board their feedback, particularly in respect of young children who will use the facilities.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Subject to approval of the recommendation set out in Section 2 above to agree a variation to the Contract with Bendcrete Skateparks incorporating the additional equipment.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 A Capital budget of £200,000 was approved in the February 2021 Budget report to Council. At its meeting on 18 December 2023, Cabinet approved the use of £281,133 S106 funding ringfenced for the Ramsey Road Park (planning application 14/01580/OUT), to provide a combined budget of £481,133 for the refurbishment of all 3 skate parks.
- 6.2 The additional cost of the equipment for Spa Road Witham set out in 3.3 above is £24,999. If approved this would increase the total budget for the work to £506,132 and a revised Contract value with Bendcrete of £483,324.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 The Council has complied with the provisions sets out in the Constitution, Procurement Procedure Rules and all relevant legislative provisions in the completion of this procurement exercise.
- 7.2 A variation in the value of the Contract with Bendcrete would be required to reflect the additional works undertaken.

8. Other Implications

- 8.1 None.

9. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 9.1 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 creates the public sector equality duty which requires that when the Council makes decisions it must have regard to the need to:
- (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act
 - (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
 - (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.
- 9.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual

orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).

9.3 The decision to award the tender has no adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic.

10. List of Appendices

10.1 None.

11. Background Papers

11.1 Report and minutes from meeting of Cabinet on 18th December 2023

11.2 Concept Design including 'miniwheels'.

Report Title: Annual Plan 2024/25	
Report to: Cabinet	
Date: 20 th May 2024	For: Decision
Key Decision: Yes	Decision Planner Ref No: DP/2024/03
Report Presented by: Councillor Graham Butland, Leader of the Council	
Enquiries to: Tracey Headford, People and Performance Manager tracey.headford@braintree.gov.uk	

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 The Annual Plan 2024/25 proposes the Council's actions and performance measures to support the first year of delivering the Corporate Strategy 2024 – 2028. The actions and performance measures are aligned to each corporate strategy theme as follows:

- Communities
- Prosperity
- Environment

1.2 The Annual Plan 2024/25 includes actions to deliver against the Council's Fit for the Future programme and a section to enable reporting out on the progress made against the Corporate Peer Review action plan.

1.3 The Plan also provides the performance framework for managing the delivery of the actions and priorities by regularly reviewing the activity and achievements against it and reporting on the progress on a quarterly basis to Cabinet.

2. Recommendations

2.1 To approve the Annual Plan 2024/25.

2.2 To agree the Council's key actions and performance measures for 2024/25.

3. Summary of Issues

3.1 The Annual Plan sets out the delivery ambitions of the Council. The public will be able to see how the Council intends to deliver services and can be held to account for its performance against the priorities of the Corporate Strategy 2024 – 2028.

4. Options

Option 1 – Do nothing

- 4.1 This option entails maintaining the status quo and allocating resources and finances towards facilitating the routine, day to day operations of the Council.
- 4.2 The attention would not be placed on meeting the objectives outlined in the new Corporate Strategy that was approved by Cabinet and Full Council in March 2024, nor on providing updates on the progress made.
- 4.3 Failing to actively pursue new initiatives and take proactive action to meet the councils corporate objective will result in the Council having to reactively respond to demand on services and may lead to inefficiencies and decreased effectiveness in meeting the needs of residents, communities and businesses.
- 4.4 This is not a recommended course of action.

Option 2 – Agree the Annual Plan 2024/25

- 4.5 It has been recognised that support to residents, communities and businesses is at an all-time high and the Council is committed to addressing the underlying challenges, such as the cost-of-living crisis, to ensure that everyone has access to the necessary resources and support.
- 4.6 The council wants to take a proactive approach in meeting some of the most complex issues facing our district, by working with communities, business and partners. The Annual Plan highlights various activities and initiatives being pursued.
- 4.7 By agreeing the Annual Plan 2024/25 it will show the Council's commitment to help our communities thrive, our people prosper and for a better and greener district.
- 4.8 Option 2 is the recommended option.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 The projects in the Annual Plan have been or will be considered as part of the annual budget setting process. Budgets were approved in February 2024.
- 5.2 Each project will have its own budget which will be monitored as part of the project management process by the project manager and sponsor. Budget issues will also be reviewed as part of the quarterly reporting process.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 There are no identified legal implications arising from the approval of the Annual Plan. As part of the project management process for each project, there will be an assessment of any legal implications.

7. Other Implications

- 7.1 Any other implications to the Council, residents and businesses will be detailed as part of the business case as it is developed or the project management process for each project.

8. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 8.1 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 creates the public sector equality duty which requires that when the Council makes decisions it must have regard to the need to:
- (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act
 - (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
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- 8.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).
- 8.3 The Equality Impact Assessment indicates that the proposals in this report will not have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic.

9. List of Appendices

- 9.1 Annual Plan 2024/25.

10. Background Papers

- 10.1 Corporate Strategy 2024-2028



Annual Plan 2024/25



Foreword

Braintree is truly a fantastic district. It is a privilege to serve our residents and businesses and we are committed to deliver on our vision to create a district of equal opportunity for all our communities.

This plan aligns to the council's priorities as part of our Corporate Strategy 2024-2028, setting out key activities to deliver in 2024/25.

We are entering into a year against a backdrop of the toughest financial climate that local government has ever faced, with unprecedented cost pressures from inflation, increased demand and the need to confront difficult decisions. It is also a time for ambitious and steadfast determination to deliver the very best services for the people of the Braintree district.

With supporting residents who need us most at an all-time high, over the next year we want to help address the underlying challenges of the cost-of-living crisis by providing targeted assistance to residents so they can easily access food and essential goods and enhancing health and wellbeing support for young people.

Despite these challenges, we will invest more money in improving our services – providing funding to improve assets in Halstead, progress the Witham Community Centre, upgrade our play areas and skateparks and delivering a new community garden to support people with multiple and complex needs.

Housing remains one of the most complex challenges local authorities deal with, but we will work with partners to increase the availability of affordable homes, as well as more community involvement in local planning policies to guide sustainable development across the district.

We will forge ahead on developing our business support services alongside partners to support economic growth including green and sustainable solutions.

The impact of climate change on our environment becomes ever more evident. Having declared a climate emergency, we'll continue to deliver initiatives to help residents reduce their carbon emissions, do more for nature and make ourselves and our buildings more carbon neutral too.

To be a council which is as ready as it can be to meet the challenges ahead, we are committed to our 'Fit for the Future' transformation programme to look at our services and ensure we are working with people, partners, and places in the most efficient, effective, and modern way to support our roadmap to financial resilience. It's not about doing less, but about doing things differently and better, both for now and for the long-term.

We have seen the benefits of the council working alongside partners, agencies, voluntary groups, businesses, faith groups, individuals and communities to do the very best that we can together for all those who live and work here, and this will continue to underpin our activity for the coming year to help our communities thrive and our people prosper.

We have faced significant challenges in the past, and we will face them in the coming year. Whether that is looking after our health and wellbeing, strengthening our local economy or protecting and enhancing our environment, our focus overall remains to deliver value for money, putting Braintree district residents at the heart of all that we do and sowing the seeds of future growth for a better, greener, and healthier district.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Graham Butland'.

Councillor Graham Butland
Leader of
Braintree District Council



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dan Gascoyne'.

Dan Gascoyne
Chief Executive



Communities

To create a district of opportunity – a place where our **communities can thrive**, our people prosper and our environment is cherished for all to enjoy.

PRIORITY 1

Improve the health, wellbeing and quality of life for individuals and families and reduce health inequalities, focusing on prevention and early intervention.

Title: Working with the Mid Essex Alliance, develop a programme of local activities targeted towards addressing the priorities outlined in the Thriving Places Index.

Outcome: Future projects and programmes informed to drive better wellbeing and equality.

Neighbourhood Teams are shaped and influenced using evidence from the Thriving Places Index.

End date: March 2025

Title: Continue to support residents and communities impacted by the cost-of-living crisis through initiatives raised by the £1m New Homes Bonus.

Outcome: Targeted assistance provided, enabling residents to easily access food and essential goods.

Additional support reaching those most in need to help address the underlying challenges of the cost-of-living crisis. Young people can access physical and emotional health and wellbeing support.

End date: March 2025

Title: Subject to a successful bid for funding from the Football Foundation, build the new 3G Pitch at Witham Sports Ground.

Outcome: Optimal use of space transformed into a high-quality, low maintenance all-weather surface pitch ideal for playing a diverse range of sports all year round.

End date: March 2025

Title: In partnership with Healthwatch Essex, host a Fellas Fair event in the district.

Outcome: Raise awareness of men's health and wellbeing and provide relevant information on the specific needs and challenges faced by men from all walks of life.

End date: March 2025

PRIORITY 2

Provide affordable, high quality and safe homes that meet the needs of our residents.

Title: Deliver the Home Upgrade grant phase 2 for people living in cold homes or struggling with winter fuel bills.

Outcome: Grants are made accessible to a wide range of eligible households supporting those who are most in need of energy saving upgrades, enabling less energy usage, a reduction in carbon footprint and lower energy bills.

End date: March 2025

Title: Introduce a landlord incentive scheme

Outcome: Support and incentives provided to landlords who can offer affordable rented accommodation for local people in need of a home.

Support provided to tenants to help them to maintain their tenancy.

End date: March 2025

PRIORITY 3

Reduce social isolation and loneliness and support communities to build positive social networks and connections.

Title: Launch round 2 of the Halstead Community Fund.

Outcome: Development and improvement of assets that positively impact local communities in Halstead.

End date: December 2024

Title: Continue to work with partners to deliver various activities and initiatives supporting people experiencing loneliness or social isolation.

Outcome: Providing opportunities for individuals to connect with each other.

Implementation of targeted interventions to address loneliness and social isolation.

End date: March 2025

Title: Award contract and start to build Witham Community Centre.

Outcome: Contract awarded for the design and build of the community centre and timeline for completion established.

End date: March 2025

Title: Provide a Community Garden through funding from the Changing Futures Programme.

Outcome: Increased opportunities for community engagement and social connections while offering therapeutic gardening activities to support people with multiple and complex needs.

End date: March 2025

Title: Support and expand community-led walking activities to 10 in the district.

Outcome: Reduce social isolation and encourage people of all ages including those with health and mobility problems and those recovering from illness to walk for their health and enhance their wellbeing.

End date: March 2025

PRIORITY 4

Develop safer and more resilient communities, empowering residents to take ownership of local projects and initiatives.

Title: Through the safer streets funding, prevent violence against women and girls in public, neighbourhood crime and anti-social behaviour in Halstead.

Outcome: Deliver practical support and change for women and girls across communities within Halstead.

Investment in transformative crime prevention initiatives.

Change in attitude and behaviours, lowering crime rates.

End date: September 2025

Title: Continue to administer the Councillor Community Grant Scheme.

Outcome: Distribution of funds across the district to non-profit organisations for community projects and initiatives.

End date: March 2025

Title: Oversee the coordination of the Community Action Safety Plan to increase awareness of child exploitation, domestic abuse, fraud and cybercrime.

Outcome: Distribution of funds across the district to non-profit organisations for community projects and initiatives.

End date: March 2025

Title: Continue to support local investment in communities through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (year 3).

Outcome: Funding provided for community activities and initiatives to support a wide range of interventions building pride in place and improving life chances.

End date: March 2025



Prosperity

To create a district of opportunity – a place where our communities can thrive, **our people prosper** and our environment is cherished for all to enjoy.

PRIORITY

1

Ensure district growth is sustainable and accessible with strong connectivity and infrastructure.

Title: Deliver physical improvements to Halstead and Witham Town Centres.

Outcome: Providing enhanced urban environments with diverse community appeal through improved signage, wayfinding, and street furniture.

End date: July 2024

Title: Work with communities to implement Neighbourhood Plans in Steeple Bumpstead, Hatfield Peverel and Earls Colne.

Outcome: Enabling communities to play a role in shaping their areas.

Neighbourhood Plans used in the determination of planning applications.

End date: March 2025

Title: Revise the Local Plan in line with recent changes to the National Planning Policy Framework.

Outcome: To set a refreshed framework for sustainable development across the district until 2041.

End date: June 2025

Title: Develop an affordable housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

Outcome: Support planning policies by providing the context of when and how affordable housing can be delivered across the district.

End date: December 2024

Title: Develop a design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

Outcome: Support planning policies by providing detailed guidance to ensure the future development of the district is of the highest design standards.

End date: June 2025

PRIORITY

2

Attract and support business growth, providing high quality employment opportunities in high growth sectors and industries.

Title: Develop the Councils inward investment activity in association with the North Essex Economic Board (NEEB).

Outcome: Attract new businesses and grow existing businesses.

Bring new and better jobs into the district.

End date: March 2025

Title: Create an additional meeting area and multi-media space at the Plaza

Outcome: Increased capacity at The Plaza to support businesses.

End date: September 2024

Title: Provide planning permission for the remaining plots at Horizon 120

Outcome: Land available for sale for potential development opportunities.

End date: October 2024

Title: Confirm the viability of the Council delivering the enterprise site at Witham

Outcome: Decision reached regarding the Council delivering the project

End date: December 2024

PRIORITY

3

Provide tailored business support and access to funding to help businesses thrive and innovate.

Title: In association with the North Essex Economic Board, provide business support services focused on enhancing digital skills, financial management and business growth.

Outcome: Businesses are supported to grow and innovate.

End date: March 2025

Title: Through the Shared Prosperity Fund, deliver a Green Business Expo.

Outcome: Showcasing green solutions to boost business growth and become carbon neutral.

Funding accessed to implement green initiatives.

End date: June 2024

Title: Through the Shared Prosperity Fund, deliver a Digital Business Expo.

Outcome: Showcasing digital solutions to boost business growth and improve efficiencies.

Funding accessed to implement digital initiatives.

End date: October 2024

PRIORITY

4

Develop skills that are attractive to employers and support residents to access opportunities to improve their economic wellbeing.

Title: Through the Shared Prosperity Fund, deliver a green skills programme.

Outcome: Supporting people to gain qualifications and employment in green skills that are needed in new and existing sectors.

End date: March 2025

Title: Organise and deliver a jobs fair in the district.

Outcome: People are connected to prospective employers to explore new career opportunities.

End date: October 2024



Environment

To create a district of opportunity – a place where our communities can thrive, our people prosper and **our environment is cherished** for all to enjoy.

PRIORITY

1

Protect and enhance our built and natural environments across the district, providing good access to open spaces and increasing biodiversity.

Title: Enhance the play areas at Meadowside in Braintree and Oxford Meadow in Sible Hedingham.

Outcome: Play areas fully refurbished incorporating inclusive play equipment that improves play value for individuals of all ages.

End date: March 2025

Title: Develop a renewable energy Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

Outcome: Detailed guidance on the range of renewable technologies accepted by the Council including how to calculate the renewable energy requirement for future developments.

End date: December 2024

Title: Upgrade the skateparks at Spa Road in Witham and Weavers Park in Braintree.

Outcome: Skateparks fully refurbished providing a safe space for skateboarders and others to ride.

End date: October 2024

Title: Revise the Councils Tree Strategy.

Outcome: Manage and maintain the Councils own tree stock.

Secure new landscaping through the planning process.

End date: March 2025

PRIORITY

2

Continue to deliver a cohesive and integrated response to climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Title: Develop a local Air Quality Strategy.

Outcome: Compliance with the latest air quality standards and regulations. The strategy will contribute to a healthier and more sustainable environment.

End date: March 2025

Title: Procure 14 Electric Light Commercial Vehicles (LCV's).

Outcome: Decarbonisation of the Councils fleet in line with the Councils commitment to climate change.

Improved air quality across the district.

End date: September 2024

Title: Install solar panels at Witham Leisure Centre.

Outcome: Reduction in carbon footprint. Longer term savings on energy costs.

End date: March 2025

Title: Take an active part in establishing a Climate and Environment Partnership and work programme across the North Essex Councils.

Outcome: Commitment to work together.

Increased resilience to work on the main climate change challenges affecting North Essex Councils.

End date: March 2025

PRIORITY

3

Support residents and businesses to reduce their carbon footprint and be more resilient to climate related impacts.

Title: Allocate funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to support at least ten Community Infrastructure initiatives in relation to decarbonisation.

Outcome: Community infrastructure projects deliver a 5% reduction in carbon emissions contributing to a reduction in the districts overall carbon emissions.

End date: April 2025

Title: Deliver a campaign to encourage motorists around schools to switch off their engines when stationary outside schools.

Outcome: Motorists are more aware of the impact of vehicle idling.

Reduction in air pollution and carbon emissions.

End date: March 2025

PRIORITY

4

Improve the way that we manage waste and encourage residents and businesses to reduce, reuse and recycle more.

Title: Collaborate with other Essex Authorities to establish and adopt a new Waste Strategy for Essex.

Outcome: Tackling key challenges and promoting a sustainable and environmentally friendly future for the region.

End date: July 2024

Title: Work with other authorities, including Essex County Council, to develop and deliver waste minimisation and recycling initiatives that deliver the on the requirements of Waste Reforms and Essex Waste Strategy.

Outcome: Influence and change attitudes and behaviours to reduce waste, reuse and recycle.

End date: March 2026

Title: Develop a waste Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

Outcome: Support planning policies by providing detailed guidance on the storage and management of recyclables and waste and the implementation of high-quality on-site waste management systems.

End date: December 2024

Title: Deliver a behaviour change campaign to increase recycling, reduce waste and encourage re-use.

Outcome: Residents and businesses reduce the waste they produce, reuse items and recycle more.

End date: March 2025



Fit for the Future

Priorities:

- Using the opportunities that new technology offers us to improve services, remove demand and reduce costs.
- Working more closely with our partner organisations in Essex and beyond to share resources, assets and information to deliver better outcomes for our residents and businesses.
- Becoming an organisation that can flex and be responsive to changes as the volatility in our world continues.
- Finding new ways of delivering which allows us to meet the needs of our residents and businesses while continuing to be financially resilient as demand increases due to demographical and other changes.
- Understanding and putting plans into place for the skills our workforce will need in the future.
- Making sure that we continue to be an employer of choice, offering fulfilling and rewarding careers for our people.

Actions that will be undertaken in year:

- Mobilisation of programme team and development of programme planning.
- Development of stretching but achievable cashable savings to be added to the MTFS showing the flight path to financial resilience.
- Agree approach and timetabling of reviews of current services and functions to optimise service delivery and use of resources.
- Development of business cases for options for a shared back office with Colchester City Council and Epping Forest District Council.
- Scope and agree parameters for Organisational Design workstream.
- Evaluate the level of maturity and effectiveness of the Councils data management practices to identify areas for improvement and enhance our data-driven decision-making capabilities.

- Carry out workforce planning to assess gaps and interventions required to ensure we have the right people, with the right skills, in the right places, at the right time to fulfil our strategic objectives.
- Develop a comprehensive Asset Management Strategy that focuses on maximising the value of property and realising the highest return on investment.
- Refresh Causeway House into a modern workspace that promotes agile and flexible working, enhances collaboration and creates opportunities for generating income.
- Consider ongoing operational asset requirements and opportunities to share assets with partners to improve efficiencies, service delivery and service user experience.



Corporate Peer Challenge

Following on from the Corporate Peer Challenge that took place in October 2023, an action plan was agreed at Cabinet in March 2024. The following themes will be addressed throughout 2024/25 and reported on more widely in the quarterly reports.

Action: Clearly develop and communicate the Councils vision supported by clear internal and external-facing leadership.

Outcome: Successful campaign delivered to promote the priorities of the Corporate Strategy 2024-2028 and actions being taken to deliver them.

Vision embedded with staff, residents, communities and businesses.

Action: Maximise the council's leading role as a valued local and regional public sector strategic partner with others.

Outcome: Key player in regional planning network meetings.

Help shape the integrated care approach to health and wellbeing.

Lead the North Essex Economic Board to drive forward economic growth.

District Strategic Assessment undertaken to help shape the Community Safety Partnership Action/Delivery plan.

Influence the Community and Voluntary sector commissioning process through active collaboration.

Impact on the communities close to the Large Site Asylum Centre at Wethersfield offset.

Through the Essex Resilience Forum, effectively respond to issued which impact the district.

Action: Establish the new 'corporate priorities' with an ambitious delivery plan with a golden thread through Medium Term Financial Strategy, strategies, processes and prioritisation. Support this by an evidence-based performance management programme.

Outcome: New Annual Plan themes embedded across the organisation.

Performance Management Framework developed and improved performance management process implemented.

Corporate priorities embedded into organisational templates.

Action: Encourage innovation within the context of a mature approach to risk management.

Outcome: Risk appetite aligned with Corporate Strategy ambitions.

Risk Management training delivered to members and key officers.

Innovation built into service design.

Action: Develop a well-resourced and SMARTer Transformation programme that clearly identifies the roles of senior leaders to deliver corporate priorities and seeks to innovate and balance the budget, supported by an effective change management strategy.

Outcome: Governance and reporting structures agreed.

Fit for the Future Team developed.

Scope and approach to transformation programme agreed.

Members fully understand and support the approach to transformation.

Approach and timetable for service reviews and organisation design work agreed.

Financial targets developed.

Action: Create a workforce and organisational development strategy that tackles issues around capacity, skills gaps, succession planning, health and wellbeing and retention.

Outcome: Values and Behaviours reviewed and embedded in the organisation.

Organisational strategy developed.

Approach to workforce planning agreed.

Review of organisational design agreed.

Wellbeing day held for staff.

Recruitment and retention package improved.

Onboarding process improved.

Action: Maximise the use of council assets to be clear on their purpose – regeneration, social or commercial to maximise income through capital investments.

Outcome: Property and Asset Strategy Group established.

Asset Management Strategy and Action Plan developed.

Review of Operational Asset requirements completed.

Measuring success

KPI	Target
Number of affordable homes delivered	250
Participation levels across our sport centres	784,458
Number of homelessness cases prevented	Data only
Percentage of major planning applications decided on time	60%
Percentage of minor planning applications decided on time	70%
Percentage of other planning applications decided on time	70%
Percentage of planning applications overturned on appeal	10%
Number of new startup businesses	Data only
Number of businesses accessing business support	Data only
Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting	50%
Kilograms of residual household waste collected per household	400 kgs
Percentage of recycling contamination	15%
Percentage of accessible non-hazardous fly tips on public land cleared within 24 hours of being reported	100%
Percentage of Disabled Facilities Grants approved within timescale	80%
Percentage of calls resolved at first point of contact in the customer service centre	65%
Percentage of invoices paid within 30 days	98.5%
Number of people transacting with the Council online	Data only
Time taken to process housing benefit/council tax benefit new claims	16 days
Time taken to process housing benefit claim changes	3 days
Percentage of stage 1 complaints dealt with in timescale	90%
Collection for Council Tax	97.5%
Collection for Business Rates	98%

Comments and Feedback

We always welcome comments, suggestions and feedback (critical or otherwise) on our plans and improvements and in the way that we write our documents and communicate them.

- You can go online and make a comment at www.braintree.gov.uk/comment
- You can e-mail our Customer Service Centre at csc@braintree.gov.uk.
- You can drop written comments off at our main office - Causeway House, Braintree
- You can telephone our Customer Service Centre on 01376 552525.
- You can speak to your local Councillor who will be able to pass your comments back if you wish. Contact details for your Councillor can be found on our website: www.braintree.gov.uk



Report Title: Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 – 2029	
Report to: Cabinet	
Date: 20 th May 2024	For: Decision
Key Decision: Yes	Decision Planner Ref No: DP/2024/10
Report Presented by: Councillor Lynette Bowers-Flint, Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Wellbeing	
Enquiries to: Caroline Elias-Stephenson, Head of Housing and Community caroline.elias-stephenson@braintree.gov.uk and Carly Jones, Strategic Business Support Manager carly.jones@braintree.gov.uk	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The 2002 Homelessness Act requires local housing authorities in England to publish a homelessness strategy at least every five years.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To adopt the Braintree District Council Homeless and Rough Sleeping Strategy, as set out in Appendix A.

3. Summary of Issues

- 3.1 Braintree District Council (the Council) is required under the Homelessness Act 2002 to publish a homelessness strategy at least every five years. The current homelessness strategy covers the period 2018 – 2023. Therefore, the Council needs to consider approving a revised Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 – 2029 which will ensure that Council is fulfilling its duties in the prevention of and responding, to homelessness within the district.
- 3.2 The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 - 2029 (the Strategy) retains a clear focus upon early intervention to prevent homelessness; or if prevention is not possible, to end homelessness at the earliest opportunity. The Strategy commits the Council to putting in place the advice, support and tools for residents who are either at risk of or who are homeless to ensure everyone has the help they need, and that no one in Braintree District is facing homelessness alone.
- 3.3 Nationally, 1 in 208 households are homeless. Throughout September 2023, the Council accommodated or already had living in temporary accommodation 65 households, which included 75 adults and 97 children. With more households 'at risk' of homelessness, the aim of this Strategy is to provide advice and support both directly and through the community, so help is

available when first needed. Therefore, leading to less households being homeless and reducing the cost of homelessness to the district.

- 3.4 Research undertaken from national and local data indicates that households presenting as homeless in the district have more complex needs than previous years (Appendix B). With more pressure on local housing, the Strategy is designed to support households facing homelessness at earlier stage to help reduce homelessness and rough sleeping in the district. Factors which impact households include recovering from Covid-19, the cost-of-living crises and pressure on local housing market. Not having a place to call home impacts on mental wellbeing, it affects children's development and opportunities and places households under financial and physical pressures.
- 3.5 The Strategy is centred around 4 key themes that have been recognised as the most pressing drivers of homelessness and rough sleeping in the District and sets out to describe how they can be addressed:
- 1) To prevent homelessness whenever possible
 - 2) Facilitate the delivery of suitable temporary accommodation
 - 3) Increase access to suitable accommodation
 - 4) To prevent and break the cycle of rough sleeping
- 3.6 An up-to-date Strategy, which provides a strategic framework that reflects the current market conditions and operating climate is essential for the Council to be able to respond effectively to increasing homelessness in the District.
- 3.7 The recommendations set out in this report will help the Council to deliver the following Corporate Objectives:
- A sustainable environment and a great place to live, work and play;
 - Residents live well in healthy and resilient communities where residents feel supported;
 - Delivering better outcomes for residents and businesses and reducing costs to taxpayers.

4. Consultation

- 4.1 There is a strong emphasis from all respondents that preventing homelessness at the earliest opportunity by delivering early intervention must be a priority, (but there was a recognition that to be able to offer an early intervention service, teams needed to know more about mental health, housing advice and housing legislation / law).
- 4.2 To assist in the finalisation of the Strategy, the Council undertook a public consultation, in line with best practice, to seek input into the Strategy. The public consultation took place between 5th February 2024 – 1st April 2024. Appendix C provides an overview of who completed the survey. From conducting research into both the general public's opinions as well as those working and/or living in the homelessness and rough sleeping sector, it was

clear that there is support for this strategy in particular the emphasis on early intervention

4.3 The results from the public survey rated the following priorities above 80% as important or very important.

- Establish suitable temporary accommodation for people with support needs
- Continue to work with partners to supply suitable temporary accommodation for eligible households to move into
- Understand the needs of those presenting as homeless
- Support household to access affordable and sustainable housing options which are suitable for their needs

The highest priorities for rough sleeping are that:

- No-one should be discharged from hospital to the streets
- Young people leaving care will receive the support they need to secure and maintain suitable accommodation
- No-one who has served in the UK Armed Forces should face the need to sleep rough

4.4 A Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy Workshop was held with partners working within the homeless and rough sleeping sector across Braintree and Essex.

4.5 Focus groups were conducted with individuals from the sector and those with firsthand experience to ensure that the strategy is informed by those it aims to benefit most. Participants included representatives from Peabody Outreach Service, Braintree Foyer, the Mental Health Navigator for the Rough Sleeper Initiative, and Digby's Court.

4.6 The themes that were throughout the focus groups and stakeholder consultation are:

- Providing affordable and sustainable housing was a priority from all respondents from the public, focus groups and partners.
- Mental health was identified as a prominent theme, emphasising the importance of increased access to mental health services and enhanced training for frontline staff.
- There should be an emphasis on early intervention and supporting people as early as possible with a range of support which suits their needs.
- Provide a range of suitable temporary accommodation that includes access to necessary support services can greatly improve people's chances of eventually moving into long-term, stable housing.

- 4.7 The feedback from the focus groups, public and stakeholders have been prioritised in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Plan.
- 4.8 This strategy has received backing from Essex County Council (ECC), who provided constructive feedback that is incorporated into the final version of the strategy. They are in full support of the creation of a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy document for Braintree. ECC appreciates the proactive nature of the strategy, which aims to proactively review, guide, and emphasise the links between various homelessness-related policies and services in the District.
- 4.9 ECC state that they support our focus on the delivery of suitable Temporary Accommodation with a multifaceted approach that requires understanding individual needs, strong partnerships, and the provision of supportive services. ECC believe it is a strategy that not only addresses the immediate need for a home but also works towards the longer-term goal of enabling individuals to achieve stability and self-sufficiency. By prioritising this approach BDC can make significant strides in solving homelessness, creating a stronger, more resilient community for all residents. This aligns with the general feeling from both the public and focus groups who support the creation and delivery of the new strategy, so the council and partners can work proactively to address all the issues surrounding homelessness.
- 4.10 Four focus groups were undertaken with service users and staff in supported accommodation in the Braintree District. Appendix C provides an overview of the responses.
- 4.11 In developing this Strategy, the Council worked closely with partners in the homelessness sector. Members of The Homelessness Prevention Partnership (HPP) and Housing Options Team (HOT) had sight of the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and were invited to discuss and comment throughout. The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Stakeholders' Event took place on 9th November 2023 with 35 partners in attendance
- 4.12 The Strategy was considered by the Corporate Policy Development Committee (CPDC) at their meeting on 30th November 2023. The Committee were supportive of the Council revising the Strategy and taking it to public consultation.
- 4.13 Finally, during the consultation period, a Members Development Evening took place on 6th March 2024 and there was focus on the Strategy., to help inform members of the Strategy and its priorities. Feedback received on the approach have been incorporated into the final Strategy as appropriate.

5. Options

Option 1 approve the homelessness and rough sleeping strategy

- 5.1 Option 1 is recommended as not having an up-to-date strategy will make the Council non-compliant with legislation and would place the authority at risk of

Government action, which would potentially have an adverse impact on any future funding

Option 2 Do not approve the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

- 5.2 This would be against the requirements as set out in the Homelessness Act 2002, which requires that all local housing authorities in England publish a homelessness strategy at least every five years. The current strategy covered the period up until 2023, and therefore the Council would not have in place a strategy covering the relevant period.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1 If the Council approve the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 – 2029, it will work to implement a delivery plan to deliver the Strategy and its outcomes

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 The priorities set out in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023 - 2025 are designed to be delivered within existing budgets across the Housing Service and make use of the Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG) and Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI). Should additional funding be required this will be raised through the normal budget process.
- 7.2 If the Council fails to prevent homelessness there is a risk of further costs to temporary accommodation budgets.

8. Legal Implications

- 8.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 requires all local housing authorities in England to publish a homelessness strategy every five years. The strategy is compliant with current homelessness legislation.

9. Other Implications

- 9.1 This section should contain any other implications that are relevant to the decision being sought. This would include any climate control issues, Safeguarding, Customer impacts, and risks not identified elsewhere in the report.

10. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 10.1 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 creates the public sector equality duty which requires that when the Council makes decisions it must have regard to the need to:
- (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act

- (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

- 10.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).
- 10.3 The Equality Impact Assessment indicates that the proposals in this report will not have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic.

11. List of Appendices

- 11.1 Appendix A Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy
- 11.2 Appendix B Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Evidence
- 11.3 Appendix C Summary of consultation

12. Background Papers

- 12.1 EQIA



2024
2029

Braintree District Council

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy



Foreword

We recognise that homelessness is complex, and everyone’s experience of homelessness is different. To be able to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping and prevent it from happening in the first place requires a joint approach with stakeholder and community engagement, we cannot work in isolation.

I am proud of the work that is undertaken with our partners to work with and support people facing homelessness. The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 -2029 seeks to bring together partners and outlines how we intend to work collaboratively to prevent households becoming homeless and reduce rough sleeping.

Not having a place to call home impacts people’s physical and mental wellbeing, it affects children’s development and future opportunities and places households under extreme financial and physical pressures. It’s imperative that people get help when they most need it, that’s why the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 - 2029 has an emphasis on early intervention and prevention.

There are many challenges that people face when trying to find a home and more people require temporary accommodation than in previous years. Key to supporting the delivery of this strategy is a complete review of homelessness provision.

This Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy sets a clear vision to prevent and end homelessness in Braintree District over the next five years. A home needs to be affordable, suitable and provide a settled base from which people can ultimately thrive. Our aim is to offer support at an early stage and make it easier for people to find and keep a home.

We look forward to delivering this work with our partners and seeing the positive impact this will have on our residents and communities.



Cllr Bowers-Flint,
Cabinet member for Housing,
Health & Wellbeing

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Executive Summary

The aim of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy is to prevent homelessness at an early stage and, where this is not possible, to support homeless households and those in housing need to secure suitable affordable housing.

The data and research gathered from the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping evidence document provides valuable insights into the local homelessness situation in the district, enabling us to comprehend the extent of the issue and, crucially, the specific needs of each household. This knowledge empowers us to offer early intervention and preventative services within the housing sector. By identifying households at risk of homelessness, we can intervene proactively and address their needs in a timely manner.

The aim of this strategy is to work with our partners through shared aims and aspirations to deliver the following strategic priorities.

- 1** Work with partners to prevent homelessness by intervening at the earliest opportunity.
- 2** Facilitate the delivery of suitable temporary accommodation for eligible households.
- 3** Improve access to appropriate accommodation.
- 4** Continue to work with partners to prevent and break the cycle of rough sleeping.

Introduction:

People can lose their accommodation and become homeless for a range of reasons. Homelessness is complex, many people live in insecure and unstable housing which can be in poor conditions. The most visible form of homelessness is rough sleeping where people are sleeping outside, on the streets and in tents.

A refresh of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018 - 2023 is required to ensure that the council and our partners are doing everything possible to prevent and respond to homelessness in the district.

The pressure on local authorities to find accommodation for homeless families has increased dramatically in recent years. Anyone can become homeless, the main underlying cause of homelessness is lack of access to stable, affordable and decent homes. There are a range of factors that can increase the risk of losing a home and be a barrier in being unable to find another. These include limited or low income, unemployment, poor physical and mental health, alcohol and substance misuse, relationship breakdown, or perhaps a combinations of these.

Local Authorities are legally required to have a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy in place and they must be updated every 5 years. While there is no legal requirement for a Housing Strategy, it is best practice to have one in place due to the link between housing, homelessness and rough sleeping.

Healthy Housing Strategy and Evidence 2023 - 2028 promotes healthy, sustainable communities by raising the standard of existing homes and enabling provision of quality new ones; resulting in suitable, affordable housing that meets the needs of our current and future residents and enables them to live healthy lives and supporting everyone to reach their full potential.

The Local Plan outlines the districts strategic aim of developing housing. As Braintree District Council does not possess any social housing stock, collaborating with registered providers in our district is crucial.

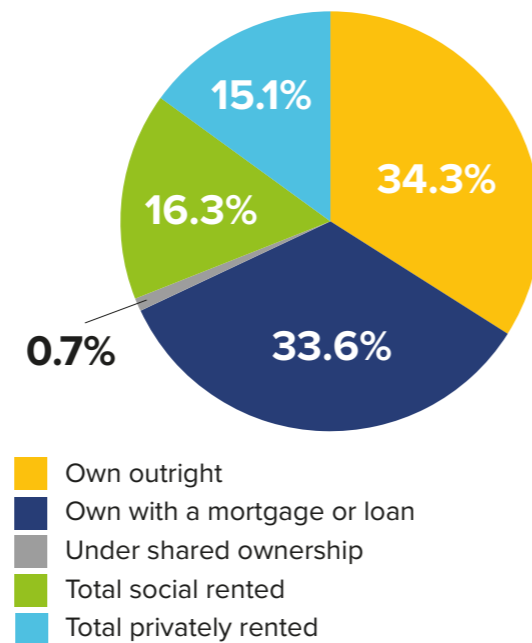
Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 - 2029 focusses on supporting people who may be homeless, or at risk of homelessness in the future, by offering advice and support when they need it the most. Early intervention and working together to prevent homelessness happening in the first place is vital to help improve our understanding of the underlying reasons for homelessness, we will use this understanding to help inform service design, planning and operation.

About Braintree District

Braintree District Council Housing Data shows:

- In June 2023 there are **69,186 properties in the district**
- **1/3 of all properties** in the district have a mortgage or loan
- Nearly **10,000 properties** are let within the private rented sector
- Over **10,000 properties** are social housing lets
- In 2022 – 2023 Braintree district let **380 social rents and 188 affordable rents**.
- As of June 2023, there are **2387** applicants on the council housing register.
- In 2022 - 2023, **1179** households presented as homeless.
- For households approaching as homeless, the most frequent age range of the main applicant is between **25 -34 years old**.
- The highest rate of household's composition presenting as homeless are single males.
- Between 2021 and 2022, the percentage of households owed a homeless duty, who have a record of mental health issues, **stood at 32%**. This figure is comparatively higher than the national average for England, which was **recorded at 25%**.
- **31%** of households who present as homeless in the Braintree District do so due to their accommodation in the private rented sector coming to an end.

Figure 1: Housing Tenure in Braintree District (Census 2021)



Successes

Over the last 5 years Braintree District Council has worked incredibly hard with our partners to achieve the following:

- **Received the 'Working in Partnership' award** alongside Rough Sleeping Initiative partners in the 2022 Essex Housing Awards for collaborative efforts during the pandemic. Additionally, achieved the second place for the 'Covid 19 Recovery' award.
- **Collaborated with partners** including Essex County Council, NACRO and Peabody to establish a pathway for rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping. The pathway provides accommodation to help support and develop independent living skills to facilitate those individuals to sustain their own accommodation moving forward. The pathway consists of 6 units of accommodation with shared facilities and on site support.
- **The next stage on The Pathway is due to come on stream winter 2023.** This provides the opportunity for residents to move from higher support into 3 self-contained units with light touch support, before moving on to live independently.
- **Introduction of the Essex prisoner release protocol:** The purpose of the protocol is to reduce the risk of offenders becoming homeless upon release, consequently reducing the risk of re-offending.
- **Agreeing an Essex-wide Hospital discharge protocol:** The aim is to identify at an early stage any housing-related issues which may prove a barrier to discharge: reducing the risk of delayed discharge and improving outcomes for patients.
- **Duty to refer:** partners can alert the Housing Options Team easily about a customer at risk of homelessness by using the 'duty to refer' portal on the BDC website.
- **Housing team dealing with homelessness hold regular briefing sessions** to share knowledge with partners on the legislation and function of the housing allocations policy.
- **Rough Sleeper Initiative funding secured March 2019:** partnership between Essex County Council, Chelmsford CC, Braintree DC, Epping DC, Maldon DC and Churches Homeless Emergency Support Scheme (CHESS). The partnership has subsequently expanded to include Brentwood, Castle Point, Rochford, Tendring and Uttlesford District Councils. We are now the largest RSI partnership in the country.
- **Horizon Project** is delivered by Pheonix Future. The project secured funding to establish a facility offering on-site support and accommodation in the district for individuals experiencing homelessness or vulnerable to homelessness.
- **1325 affordable properties were completed between 2018 - 2023** The number of newly constructed affordable homes completed in recent years has made a significant contribution to addressing the housing demand in the district.

Challenges

- There has been confirmation that LHA will be returning to the 30th percentile of local rents from April 2024 after it was frozen across the country at 2018 - 2019 rate. We recognise the ongoing impact of the freeze on the rising local market rents with many now becoming increasingly unaffordable for households relying on housing benefits or the housing element of Universal Credit to cover their rent.
- The freeze of Temporary Accommodation (TA) subsidies at 2011 levels. As rental prices have continued to rise, the static subsidy has not kept pace with the increasing rental costs, leading to increasing budgetary pressures.
- The benefit cap limits how much most working age people can get from benefits. A property would possibly become unaffordable where a 'Benefit Cap' has been applied.
- The recent rise in mortgage rates may pose challenges for individuals looking to purchase a property. As a result, competition for properties in the private rented sector (PRS) will continue to rise. Landlords in the PRS may face additional pressure to either raise rental prices or exit the market altogether.
- Evidence shows that there is an increasing demand for larger homes (3 bedrooms plus) which are not readily available. The demand is from a variety of cohorts including those as a result of immigration and asylum, legislative changes, and the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 as examples. They have all resulted in a stretch of resources across housing services.
- There are some barriers for individuals with additional and complex needs accessing supported and temporary accommodation in the district.
- There is a limited financial incentive or guarantees to support households to secure housing in the private rented sector.
- There are limited options for move on support from supported accommodation into independent living.
- Delivery of new affordable homes may decline in the current market.
- The affordable rental rates for new housing association homes can reach up to 80% of the market rents, making them higher than social rents.

Covid and Everyone In

On Thursday 26 March 2020, during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, the government launched its 'Everyone In' campaign. This required local authorities to take urgent action to house rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping in order to protect public health and stop wider transmission of COVID-19.

Braintree District Council accommodated 33 individuals in response to this campaign.

BDC supported rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping during the Covid-19 pandemic, not only in providing accommodation to some of our most vulnerable citizens but also in working closely with ECC and others to provide the support needed for some of the county's most vulnerable citizens to be safe and to move forward with their lives.

Positive longer term accommodation options were secured for the vast majority of those who were accommodated.

National and Local Influences:

Links to other Strategies and Frameworks

Under the Homelessness Act 2002, all housing authorities must have in place a homelessness strategy which is renewed at least every 5 years.

There are many strategies, policies, and frameworks both nationally and across Braintree District Council that the Housing Strategies operates alongside: these can be found at Strategy and policy documents – Braintree District Council.

- A **'Levelling Up'** agenda stimulating economic activity, investment in infrastructure and promoting community activity
- **The National Planning Policy Framework**, revised 20 July 2021 sets out the government's planning policy for England and how they will be applied
- **A new Fire Safety Act and an emergency Building Safety bill** which aims to make provisions about safety and standards of buildings
- **A fairer private rented sector** This white paper sets out plans to fundamentally reform the private rented sector and level up housing quality in this country.
- **A Housing White Paper 'Fixing our Broken Housing Market'** published by the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government in February 2017 setting out the government's plans to reform the housing market and boost the supply of new homes in England
- **The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017** ensures that all homeless people will be able to receive advice and assistance from their council, councils must try to prevent people becoming homeless in the first place.
- **Health and Social Care Act 2012** each local authority has a duty to take steps as it considers appropriate for improving the health of the people in its area. This includes people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness.
- **Homes England Strategic Plan 2018-2023** ensuring affordable and sustainable homes are built in areas of greatest need.
- **English Housing Survey Private Rented Sector 2020-21** is a national survey of property owners and letting agents who own and/or manage privately rented properties in England

- **The Climate Change Act 2008** is the basis for the UK's approach to tackling and responding to climate change
- **Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016** introduced Universal Credit and made amendments to jobseeker's allowance, employment and support allowance, income support, tax credits, industrial injuries benefit, housing benefit and the social fund
- **Everyone In: how to end homelessness in Great Britain 2018**
- **Social Housing White Paper 2020.** Charter for Social Housing Residents. The charter sets out seven commitments that residents should expect from their property owner
- **The Future Home Standards 2021** This consultation set out the government's plans for a new green Future Homes Standard and sought views on changes to building regulations in England to improve energy efficiency and cut carbon emissions in new build homes
- **Coronavirus Act 2020** Introduced to provide guidance on the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on the economy, housing, homelessness, and the welfare system
- **Domestic Abuse Act 2021** designed to promote awareness of domestic abuse; protect and support victims and their families; transform the justice process to prioritise victim safety and provide an effective response to perpetrators; and to drive consistency and better performance in the response to domestic abuse across all local areas, agencies and sectors.
- **The Renters (Reform) Bill**, which recently started its progress through Parliament, may also, when introduced, result in further pressures as it is anticipated this may be another cause of landlords exiting the market and will also make it easier for landlords to gain possession in some circumstances.
- **Localism Act 2011** came into force in November 2012 and supports the improvement of local housing options. The Act contained some key provisions relevant to homelessness including the power to discharge the full homelessness duty with an offer of private rented accommodation.

Local Strategies and Policies

- Corporate Strategy 2020 – 2024
- Healthy Housing Strategy 2023 – 2028
- Climate Change Strategy 2021 – 2023
- Economic Growth Strategy 2023 – 2028
- Economic Development Prospectus 2013 – 2026
- Digital Strategy 2022 – 2026
- Local Plan 2013 – 2033
- Marketing & Communications Strategy 2021 – 2024
- Annual Plan 2023 – 2024
- Live Well Strategy 2024 – 2028
- Gateway to Homeschoice Allocations Policy July 2022
- Essex County Council's Housing Strategy 2021 - 2025
- Essex Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2022 – 2026

Partnerships

Braintree District Council has established several significant partnership meetings. These meetings provide a platform for discussing cases through a collaborative forum involving multiple agencies. The aim is to share information and tackle concerns effectively. This approach enables a range of services to intervene and provide support to individuals who are currently homeless or at risk of homelessness. The aim is to prevent homelessness by taking appropriate measures at an early stage.

- **Community Safety Hub**
- **Joint Referral Panel**
- **Domestic Abuse Sub Group**
- **Tenancy Sustainment Sub Group**
- **Disability Working Group**

We are working on a number of joint initiatives with Essex County Council around homelessness and rough sleeping which include:

- **Essex Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI)**
- **Next Step Accommodation Programme (NSAP)**
- **Peabody Floating Support Service**
- **Essex Partners Temporary Accommodation Delivery Plan**

- **Rough Sleeper Drug and Alcohol Outreach Service (DASS)**
- **Essex Prisoner Release Housing Protocol**
- **Draft Hospital Discharge Protocol**

Additionally, there are other multi agency meetings which provide an opportunity for the council and partners to discuss national, regional and local influences and trends that may impact the work that is being delivered.

- **Homelessness Prevention Partnership**
- **Costing of Living Partnership**

There has also been the development of specialist roles across the service.

- **Domestic Abuse Specialist**
- **Mental Health Navigator**
- **Private Rented Sector & Empty Homes Officer**
- **Tenancy Sustainment Officer**
- **Cost of Living Officer**
- **Ukraine Resettlement Officer**
- **Health and Wellbeing Manager**
- **Community Support and Employment Officer**



The Importance of Preventing Homelessness

The government defines ‘Homelessness prevention’ as providing people with the ways and means to address their housing and other needs to avoid homelessness.

Homelessness is not just a housing issue; by focusing on prevention, we can address the root causes of homelessness, such as unemployment, and mental health issues, before they escalate into crisis situations.

The conversations around early intervention is well developed and documented, but current prevention efforts often rely on individuals approaching local authorities to seek support.

This has resulted in a weighting towards homeless support, rather than early intervention. In partnership with others, we recognise the need to re-balance with a stronger focus on early intervention around homelessness.

BDC is working closely with Essex County Council (ECC) to support people at risk of homelessness and rough sleeping. An example of this partnership work include the ECC commissioned Floating Support Service, provided by Peabody, which supported 431 Braintree households at risk of homelessness in quarter 3 of 2023-2024. This service helps people avoid homelessness and supports people who are going through a crisis. The partnership between BDC, ECC and Peabody will continue to make sure that this service is focused on the Braintree households most in need and that they can get the personalised support needed to prevent them losing their homes.

Our research has informed us that cohorts most affected by the cost-of-living crisis include single person households, lone parents with dependents, and people in later life.

Benefits of early intervention and taking a whole systems approach

- Protects vulnerable residents from becoming homeless, this can include the elderly, the young, those experiencing mental health, substance misuse, physical disabilities and those leaving institutions.
- Promote health and wellbeing as those experiencing homelessness have a higher rate of poor short and long term physical and mental health conditions.
- Preventing homelessness has a positive impact on children’s wellbeing and life chances as it supports families to live in stable secure accommodation. This is supported by evidence from the Braintree District Councils Health and Wellbeing which highlights the importance of giving every child the best start in life.
- Promotes stability and helps people be able to continue to work and studying.
- Provides the opportunity to address causes of homelessness and help make sustainable changes.
- Prevention services are cost effective as they cost less than providing emergency services and temporary accommodation.
- Creates healthier connected communities and maintains social support and networks.
- Helps end rough sleeping and homelessness.
- Ensures that necessary support measures are in place to prevent situations from escalating into crises.
- Reduces the demand for emergency accommodation and temporary housing solutions, which are often more expensive and less stable for individuals and families.

Our Priorities

Priority 1

Work with partners to prevent homelessness by intervening at the earliest opportunity.

- 1** Support more households to remain in their home.
- 2** Where this is not possible, help households find a new home as quickly as possible.
- 3** Build knowledge within the community so that support and advice can be offered at the earliest opportunity.
- 4** Reduce risk of households facing homelessness by influencing wider issues in relation to vulnerability to homelessness and the local housing market.

Our ambition is to work with partners to offer advice and support to individuals and families at risk of homelessness at an early stage. In order to accomplish this, it is crucial for us to gain a comprehensive understanding of the factors leading to homelessness in our district.

By using a range of national and local data sources and collaborating with partners, we aim to establish a shared vision for preventing homelessness.

Many households are ‘at risk’ of homelessness, they may be threatened with eviction or living in insecure tenancies, this is where households live with the worry that their tenancy may come to an end, many live in poor housing conditions or must leave their accommodation due to range of reasons. There are also households who experience ‘hidden homelessness’, they are not rough sleeping, but they don’t have a long term settled place to stay. The reason people present as homeless varies, no two situations are the same.

National and local data shows us that cohorts most affected by the cost-of-living crisis include single person households, lone parents with dependents, and people in later life. Working with people at the earliest possible opportunity is key to preventing homelessness. Understanding our residents is key. In 2022 – 2023, 64% of households

who present at the foodbank in Braintree Districts is due to low income, 11% is due to benefit changes or delays.

Between 2022 and 2023, the primary factor for households experiencing homelessness while residing in privately rented sector was due to the landlord intending to sell the property.

From 2018 to 2022, the primary cause for households experiencing homelessness as a result of social rented tenancy was rent arrears due to tenants facing challenges managing their finances or making payments due to the shortfall between their benefits and rent costs.

With the widening disparity between the rental market, local housing allowance, and wages, an increasing number of households face the risk of homelessness. This is especially concerning as it includes individuals who already have low incomes and minimal savings, coupled with higher rates of debt, substance misuse, poor physical and mental health, and relationship breakdowns. Consequently, the ability to secure alternative housing promptly becomes progressively more challenging.

Working in partnership to promote and deliver initiatives around finances is crucial. Whether this is employment and skills training to enhance job stability, providing guidance on income maximisation, offering financial assistance and guarantees to help secure housing in the private rental market; or practical support to help form be completed for grants and benefits. The key is knowing what is available in the community and ensuring it is offered at the first sign its required.

Fostering an environment where information and resources are readily accessible, community members can identify and address the early signs of housing instability.

Educational programs can equip individuals with the tools to offer support and advice, creating a network of early intervention. This proactive approach not only empowers those at risk but also strengthens the community's resilience against the complex issue of homelessness. Through collaboration and shared understanding, communities can create a safety net that catches those at risk before they fall into homelessness, ensuring that support is not just available, but preemptive and effective.

Priority 2

Facilitate the delivery of suitable temporary accommodation for eligible households.

- 1 Understand the needs of those presenting as homeless.
- 2 Continue to work with partners to supply suitable temporary accommodation for eligible households to move into.
- 3 Establish suitable temporary accommodation for people with support needs.

Each individual or family facing homelessness has unique circumstances and challenges, which means that a one-size-fits-all approach is not sufficient. Tailoring Temporary Accommodation solutions to meet these diverse needs is essential for ensuring that the support provided is both appropriate and effective.

The number of households in temporary accommodation has steadily increased over the past five years, especially since Covid-19, the cost-of-living crisis, higher mortgage

interest rates and the increased inflation rate.

In Braintree District, a household could be placed in a variety of temporary accommodation, this includes the use of Bed and Breakfast (B&B's), a hostel, a hotel, a refuge or a private or a housing association property. This could be in or outside of the district.

Local authorities are facing mounting pressures on finding suitable temporary accommodation. This has led to a growing number of households being placed in B&Bs and nightly let accommodation. There is a growing demand to secure such accommodation outside of the local authorities' own boundaries. While this is occasionally necessary for safety concerns, it can unfortunately lead to households becoming separated from their support networks and experiencing isolation.

People experiencing homelessness are presenting with increasing levels of additional support needs and these can be exacerbated by the experiences of homelessness. Providing accommodation which offers support is critical, but it may not be available. This strategy will include a review of our homelessness provisions in the district.

Providing accommodation that includes access to necessary support services can greatly improve people's chances of eventually moving into long-term, stable housing.

The data captured in Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Evidence document 2024 - 2029 provides detailed insights and understanding of the underlying reasons for homelessness. We will work with our partners and use this information to help shape and inform service design, service delivery and planning over the next 5 years.

ECC have established Essex Leaders & Chief Executives (ELCE), Essex Partners, North Essex Councils, Essex Housing Officers Group (EHOG), Essex Homelessness Officers Group (EHG) advocating for the sharing of intelligence and development of innovative solutions to the current high demand and low supply of Temporary Accommodation.

Priority 3

Improve access to appropriate accommodation.

- 1** Review move-on arrangements with all supported housing providers.
- 2** Support household to access affordable and sustainable housing options which are suitable for their needs.
- 3** Undertake service reviews through co-production (lived experience).

The establishment of clear pathways from supported housing is a critical component of any homelessness and rough sleeping strategy. Such pathways ensure that residents have a structured and supportive journey towards and into independent living. Moreover, as residents transition to independence, supported housing units become available for others in need, thereby optimising the use of limited resources.

Developing and maintaining robust partnerships with providers who manage supported accommodation is crucial. The Joint Referral Panel (JRP) has successfully placed a significant number of single households in the district.

The JRP provides a gateway for referrals for people with a local connection, to supported (lower-level needs) accommodation schemes within the Braintree District.

The aim of the JRP is to ensure that every application made to a supported housing scheme is assessed for eligibility and suitability and provide a forum for all agencies to share appropriate information in the consideration of an application.

The JRP ensures that successful applicants are offered the most appropriate service according to their support need and reduces

the number of people moving from one service to another following placement breakdown.

With high demand for housing, which is in short supply, there is a need to expand housing options available to those who are homeless, those at risk of homelessness and also those who are in supported schemes and ready to move on. We want to improve access to a range of tenures.

Refining move-on and allocation policies is essential for ensuring a seamless transition from supported accommodation, including ECC commissioned provision and that of other providers.

As part of the Healthy Housing Strategy 2023 – 2028, one objective is to improve engagement and work in collaboration with landlords, letting agencies, and other private owners. Further work needs to be undertaken to make the private rented sector a viable and sustainable housing options. We need to strengthen and encourage take-up of suitable accommodation in the private rented sector.

Currently, we are reviewing our financial initiatives to assist households in obtaining housing in the private rented sector. This includes support for individuals and families who may be at risk of losing their private sector tenancy.

Using data and intelligence to make recommendations and evidence led decision on homelessness and rough sleeping is key. But co-production and actively engaging and listening to those working on the front line and those who have experienced homelessness is crucial. This is to learn what can be done better and it provides insight to what is happening right now. When designing and reviewing services that meet people’s needs, there needs to be input from those who have experience.

This ensures that the services provided are user-centred, as they are informed by the firsthand insights of those who have navigated the challenges of homelessness. This approach fosters services that are more responsive to the actual needs and circumstances of the homeless population.

Priority 4

Continue to work with partners to prevent and break the cycle of rough sleeping.

We will continue to review our policies and work with partners to meet the ambition set out in DLUHC’s Ending Rough Sleeping for Good.

- 1 No-one should leave prison homeless or to sleep rough.
- 2 Young people leaving care will receive the support they need to secure and maintain suitable accommodation.
- 3 No-one should be discharged from hospital to the streets.
- 4 No-one who has served in the UK Armed Forces should face the need to sleep rough.
- 5 Review the impact of the new asylum dispersal system on homelessness and rough sleeping.

It is recognised that there is a significant correlation between homelessness and poor health. Many individuals facing homelessness also have various additional needs such as managing mental health issues, substance abuse, or physical disabilities that make them more vulnerable to sleeping on the streets. Access to a range of services, including healthcare and mental health support, can help prevent the worsening of conditions that often contribute to homelessness. Providing housing with access to necessary support services can significantly increase their chances of eventually transitioning into long-term, stable housing.

Our objective is to cultivate strong partnerships with a variety of organizations in order to support people in a crisis and also effectively address the underlying causes of homelessness and rough sleeping. Through our partnerships that includes outreach work, the expertise of mental health nurses and the provision of and emergency accommodation options, this all helps provide support to reach our ambition to eradicate rough sleeping altogether.

In 2022, the Government published their long awaited updated rough sleeping strategy: ‘Ending rough sleeping for good.’ In this strategy, the Government have for the first-time defined a vision for ending rough sleeping, which is that it is **prevented wherever possible, and where it does occur it is rare, brief and non-recurrent.**

Housing is critical to the prevention of mental health problems and the promotion of recovery. The Government's 'Ending Rough Sleeping for Good' Strategy sets the ambition that no one is released from a public institution as homeless. Braintree District with our partners have a series of agreements and policies in place which include the development of the Essex Prisoner Release Housing Protocol, as well as the ongoing governance of this protocol. The Community Accommodation Service Tier 3 (CAS3), provides temporary accommodation for up to 84 nights for homeless prison leavers and those moving on from Approved Premises (CAS1) or the Bail Accommodation and Support Service (CAS2), and assistance to help them move into settled accommodation.

This strategy highlights the importance of continuous evaluation and adaptation in policymaking to ensure that the most vulnerable populations are protected and supported.

The collaboration between BDC and ECC has been crucial in addressing the accommodation needs of care leavers, transitioning from the foster care system to living independently. Accommodating both young people and care leavers is difficult at the best of times, let alone in the current housing market. Further work will be undertaken through this

strategy to support young people navigate into and out of supported accommodation.

Vulnerable veterans across the country will have access to Op FORTITUDE, a new dedicated referral pathway for homeless veterans, including those sleeping on the streets.

Collaboration and sharing best practices with our partnerships is crucial to be able to address the complex issues of rough sleeping. BDC is part of ECC led wider partnership work via Next Step Accommodation Programme (NSAP) and the Drug and Alcohol Outreach Work of the DASS team.

Monitoring the Strategy

The Homelessness strategy will be delivered through the Homeless Prevention Partnership (HPP). This meeting takes place quarterly with our partners in the district who are working with those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Our partners include:

Peabody
Chess
NHS
DWP
NACRO
First Stop
Hope House
Pheonix Future
Sanctuary
Eastlight Homes
Essex County Council

Salvation Army Housing Association

The HPP will lead on the plan which will meet the priorities set out within this strategy.

The strategy will be reviewed regularly to take into account national and local legislative changes as well as ensuring the strategies effectiveness.

Consultation and Feedback

Several consultations were held to engage with the public and stakeholders to facilitate the development of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

A comprehensive public consultation was developed to give everyone with an interest in the district the opportunity to contribute to the review. Throughout the consultation period there were opportunities for residents and interested parties from across the public and private sectors to express their views on the strategy via an online survey, face to face discussion, and email feedback. An online survey was available for the full consultation period which took place from 5th February 2024 to 1st April 2024.

A Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy Workshop was held with partners working within the homeless and rough sleeping sector across Braintree and Essex.

Focus groups were conducted with individuals from the sector and those with firsthand experience to ensure that the strategy is informed by those it aims to benefit most. Participants included representatives from Peabody Outreach Service, Braintree Foyer, the Mental Health Navigator for the Rough Sleeper Initiative, and Digby's Court.

The themes that were throughout the consultation are:

- Providing affordable and sustainable housing was a priority from all respondents from the public, focus groups and partners.
- There is support for this strategy and the 4 priorities, particularly the emphasis on early intervention.
- Mental health was identified as a prominent theme, emphasising the importance of increased access to mental health services and enhanced training for frontline staff. Partners highlighted that further knowledge of housing advice and mental health would be beneficial for them to be able to provide holistic early intervention services.

This strategy has received support from Essex County Council (ECC), who provided constructive feedback that is incorporated into the final version of the strategy. They are in full support of the creation of a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy document for Braintree. ECC appreciates the proactive nature of the strategy, which aims to proactively review, guide, and

emphasise the links between various homelessness-related policies and services in the district. ECC believe it is a strategy that not only addresses the immediate need for a home but also works towards the longer-term goal of enabling individuals to achieve stability and self-sufficiency. By prioritising this approach BDC can make significant strides in solving homelessness, creating a stronger, more resilient community for all residents.





2024
2029

Braintree District Council

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

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Introduction

Braintree District Council is revising the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018 –2023.

This evidence led document provides an in-depth analysis of the trends, drivers, challenges, and opportunities impacting homelessness and rough sleeping in the Braintree District.

Defining Homelessness

Many households are ‘at risk’ of homelessness, they may be threatened with eviction or living in insecure tenancies, this is where households live with the worry that their tenancy may come to an end, may live in poor housing conditions or must leave their accommodation due to range of reasons. There are also households who experience ‘hidden homelessness’; they are not rough sleeping, but they don’t have a long term settled place to stay.

This Government reports that they have made the unprecedented commitment to end rough sleeping. For the first time, the government has provided a clear and defined vision for ending rough sleeping¹, **which is that it is prevented wherever possible, and where it does occur it is rare, brief and non-recurrent.**

Scene Setting

To effectively tackle homelessness and end rough sleeping, Braintree District Council will continue to analyse local, regional and national data and influences and undertake research to establish high quality correlations, trends and insights of our current and future resident and housing needs in our district.



Braintree District is home to **155,200** residents.

Source: Census 2021



There are **69,186** properties in the district as of 30 June 2023

Source: BDC Council Tax

According to the Census 2021, the Housing Tenure in Braintree District is:

9,825 15.1% Private Rent
10,593 16.3% Social Rent
22,262 34.3% Owned Outright
22,303 34.3% Owned with mortgage or loan including shared ownership

Source: Census 2021

Employment

Data from the annual population survey shows the following employment data for the Braintree Districtⁱⁱ

- Between April 2021 – March 2022 the employment rate in the Braintree District (85.8%) was much higher than the UK (75.1%) and Essex (79.2%) rates.
- 85.8% is the highest employment rate Braintree has seen since at least 2004.
- Employment rates are consistently much higher than UK and Essex rates and higher than many regions nearby including Chelmsford, Colchester, Cambridge, and Epping.

National and Local Influences:

National impacts on homelessness:

- Rising cost of housing.** Rent levels are influenced by market dynamics and are not subject to any form of price control. However, it is important to acknowledge the growing disparity between rental costs and the local housing allowance which has led to a greater number of households now facing a heightened risk of homelessness. This situation arises from a combination of factors, including low-income individuals with limited or no savings, rising unemployment rates, overwhelming debt, poor physical and mental health, as well as relationship breakdowns. Consequently, the challenge of securing alternative housing options in a timely manner grows increasingly complex.
- Local Housing Allowance (LHA).** LHA rate is the maximum amount of housing benefit which can be claimed to help tenants pay their rent. When first introduced in 2008, the rate was calculated to cover rent for the cheapest 50% of the housing market in a household's local area, known as 'Broad Rental Market Area'. Since 2011, the rate has been reduced to cover only the bottom 30% of the local housing market, reducing the pool of properties available to those on low incomes.
- Benefit Cap.** The benefit cap sets limits on the total amount of benefit a household can receive. As the cost of living continues to rise, the benefit cap is presenting increasing challenges for people attempting to transition out of homelessness.
- Universal Credit (UC).** UC was introduced in 2013 to streamline benefits. Many claimants who previously had Housing Benefit paid directly to their landlord, are now responsible for paying rent from a monthly budget under Universal Credit. With the cost of living, increase in rents, many households are falling into arrears, raising concerns about eviction and homelessness. Claimants need to have a bank account and be able to use a computer or smartphone. As the DWP is shutting more job centres, it is making it harder for some of the most vulnerable groups to access benefits.
- Increased interest rates.** Due to the increased rise in interest rates, landlords are leaving the market, thereby adding additional pressure on the private rented sector.
- Affordable rents.** (which are higher than social rents) are usually charged for all new social housing. Some housing providers also 'convert' properties from social rent to affordable rent when they become vacant. This raises money to invest in new affordable housing.
- The Renters' (Reform) Bill** represents the fulfilment of the Government's 2019 manifesto pledge to eliminate section 21 'no fault' evictions. This legislation will bring about substantial transformation in the private rented sector. The bill aims to provide tenants with the confidence to address problematic landlords, secure in the knowledge that their housing will not be jeopardised. However, it is worth considering that it might also lead to an increase in landlords exiting the market prior to its implementation.

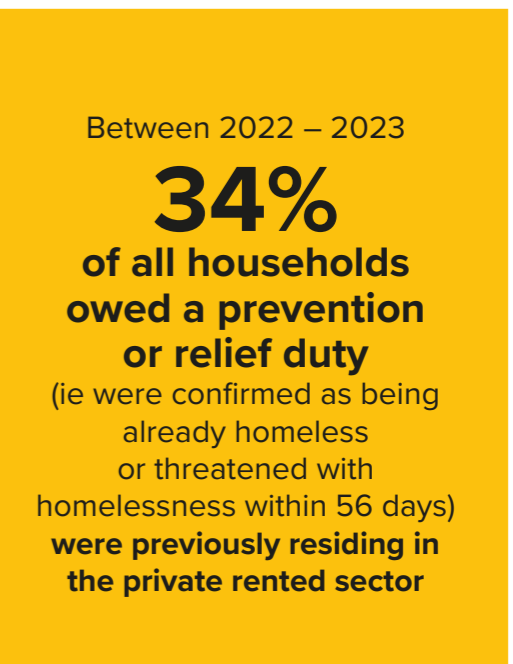
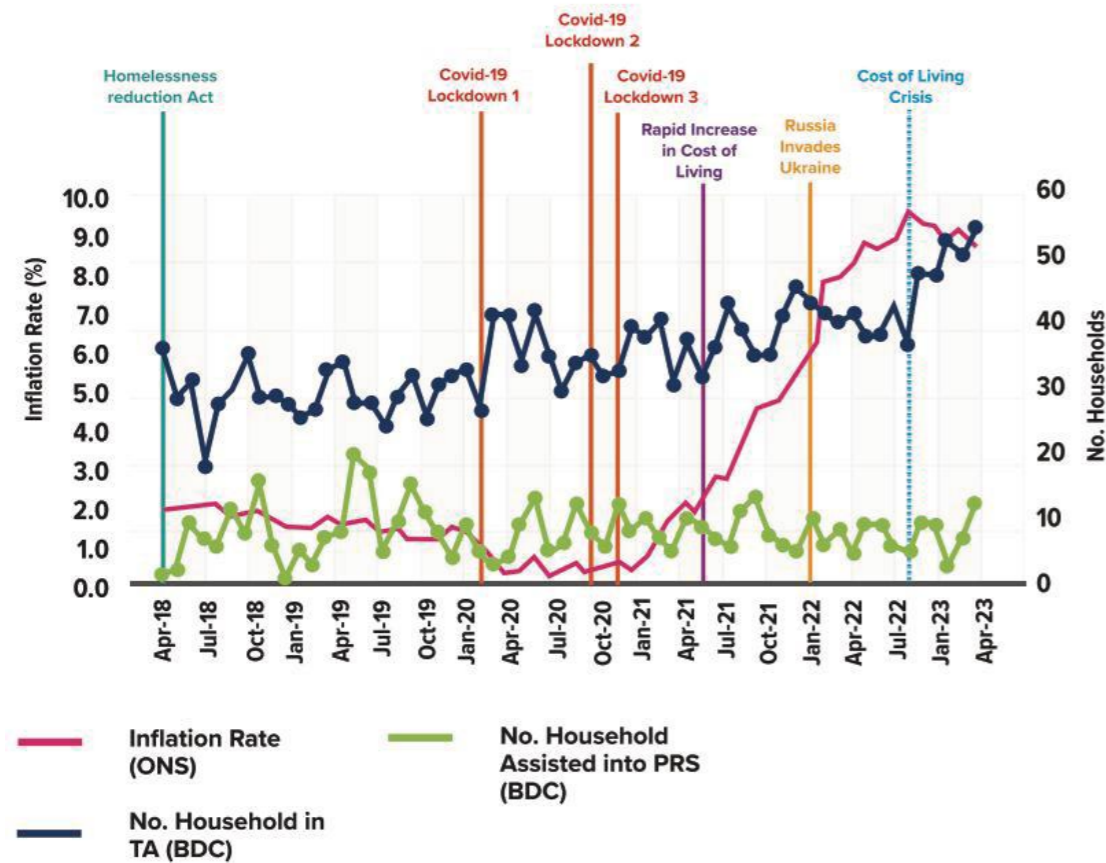


Figure 1: National influences, number of households in Braintree District in temporary accommodation and the private rented sector at the end of each month



Sources: BDC - Households on TA and PRS ONS, Cost of living latest insights - Inflation Rate

Figure 18 captures national influences and factors which affect homelessness between April 2018 – March 2023.

The data shows a steady flow of households entering the private rented sector over the last 5 years.

The number of households in temporary accommodation has steadily increased over the past five years, especially since the cost-of-living crisis and inflation rise.

Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA)

Part 7 of the Housing Act (1996) sets out the definition of homelessness, and the duties that local authorities owe to applicants who are accepted as being homeless or threatened with homelessness.

In 2018 the Government published its Rough Sleeping Strategy delivery plan which stated that all local authorities must update their homelessness strategies and rename them as homelessness and rough sleeping strategies. The Strategies must be made available online and submitted to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

The Homelessness Reduction Act (2017) made significant changes to the Housing Act (1996) and placed a number of new duties upon local authorities.

Local Authorities have a duty to work with all households for 56 days to try to prevent homelessness, including the production of:

- a detailed Personal Assessment; and
- a Personal Housing Plan (PHP) which must be kept under review

There is a duty to work with **all** households for a further 56 days to try to relieve homelessness irrespective of priority need. Households can approach any Local Authority, the duty is to help secure accommodation that has reasonable prospects of being available for at least 6 months.

A homeless application is triggered at a threat of losing accommodation within 56 days (previously 28 days)

Stage 1 – The application and assessment of the test of eligibility and whether the applicant is homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days

Stage 2 – The prevention stage – to take reasonable steps to help the applicant from losing accommodation.

Stage 3 – The relief of homelessness stage – to take reasonable steps to help the applicant find somewhere else to live.

Stage 4 – The final main duty owed for those in priority need and not intentionally homeless.

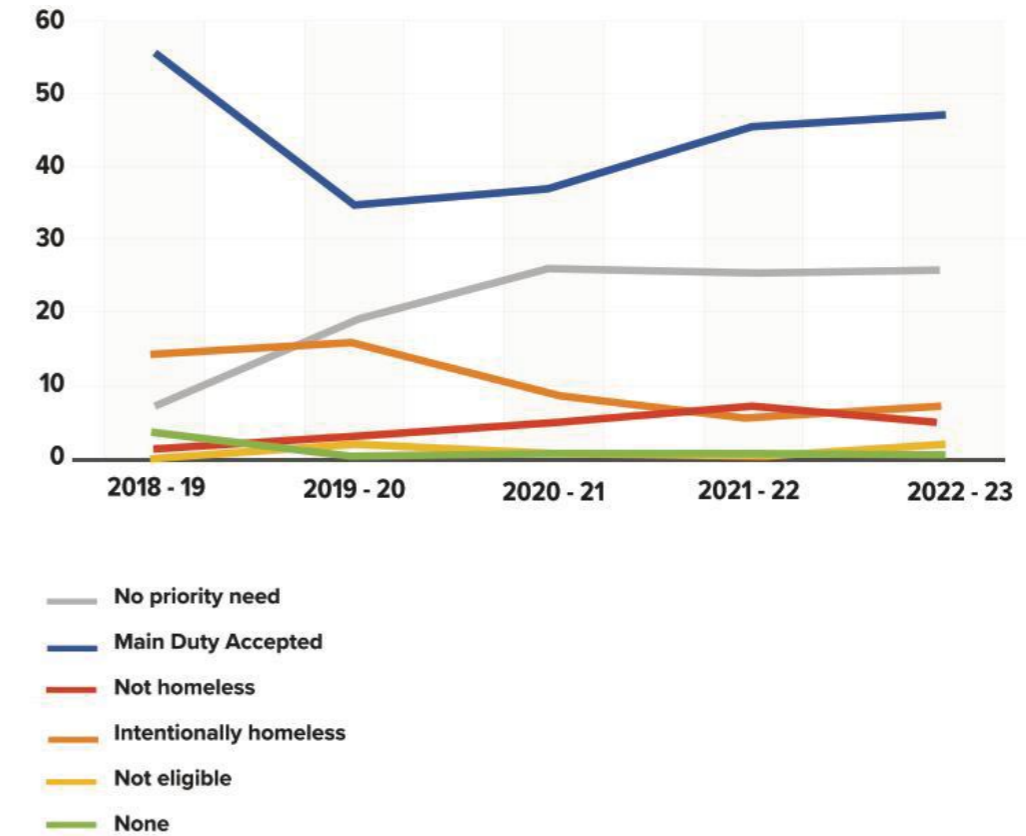
In Braintree District Council, the Housing Operations Team operate a Triage model through Housing options advice which is in place to prevent homelessness. A Triage Officer makes an initial assessment to anyone who approaches the local authority who is or may become homeless and is eligible for assistance. At this point, essential information is obtained to make an initial assessment. The officer will assess whether they can work to resolve the issue with the household. Advice and support are offered which may include mediating with family, liaising with the landlord and referring to agencies for support.

Figure 2: Number of homelessness approaches to Braintree District Council each year

Year	Total
2018-19	1423
2019-20	1497
2020-21	1222
2021-22	1221
2022-23	1179
Total	6542

Source: BDC Housing Data

Figure 3: Main Duty Outcomes 2018 - 2023



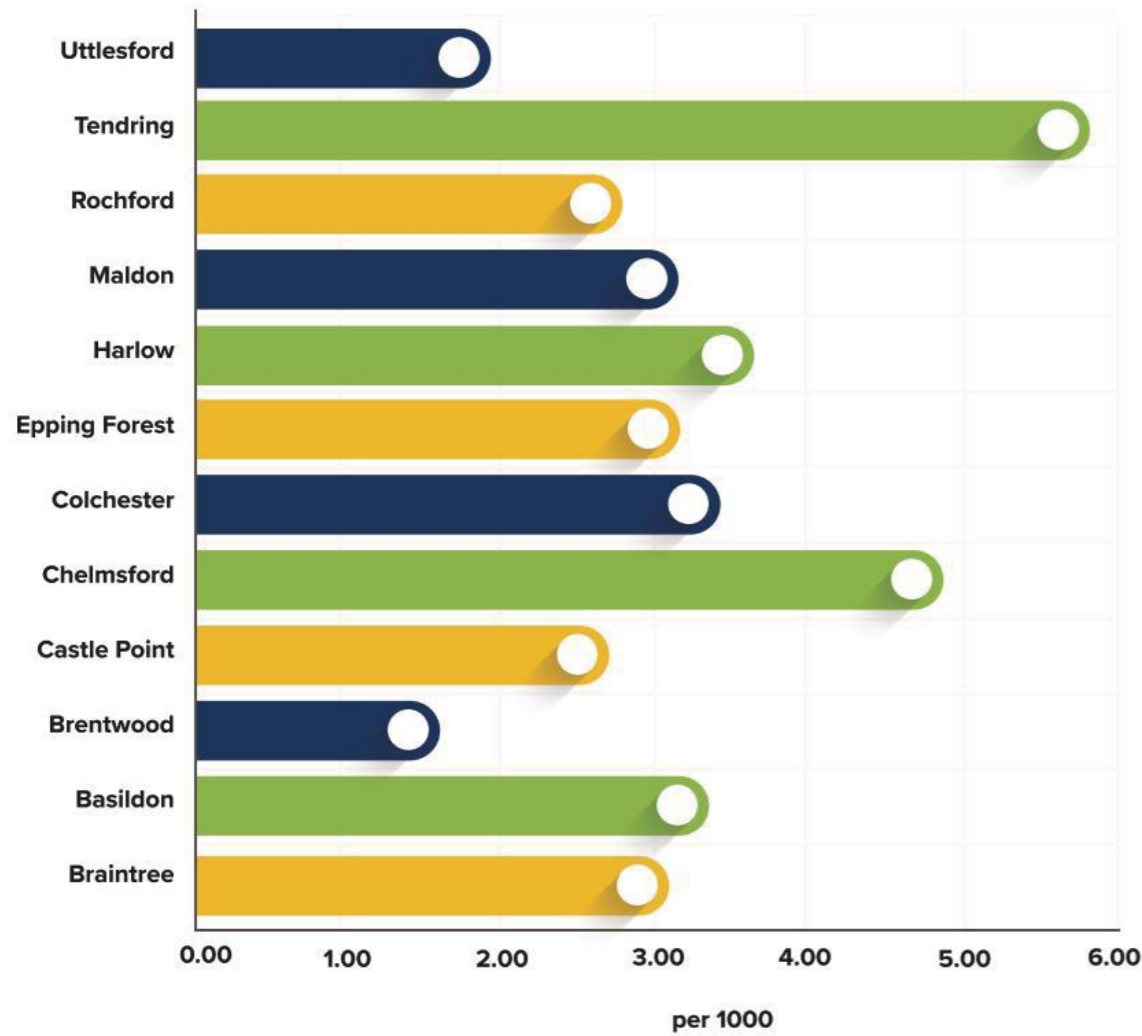
Source: BDC 2023

The number of 'main duty accepted' outcomes have continued to increase since 2019 – 2020. The number of 'intentionally homeless' outcomes decreased between 2019-20 and 2021-22 as a result of court action and evictions being delayed due to the pandemic. This indicates that although there are less homeless approaches to the council each year, there are more households being owed the main duty.

When financial circumstances put accommodation at risk, Braintree District Council offers support to residents by assisting them in

applying for financial aid through discretionary housing payments, help complete benefit checks, guide them towards potential grants and help with income maximisation, which could include a referral to an employment officer. Additionally, loans for rents in advance and/or deposits can be offered. However, all loan applications will undergo evaluation for affordability, suitability of the accommodation, and risk, and final decisions will be made by a Housing Options Team Manager at their discretion.

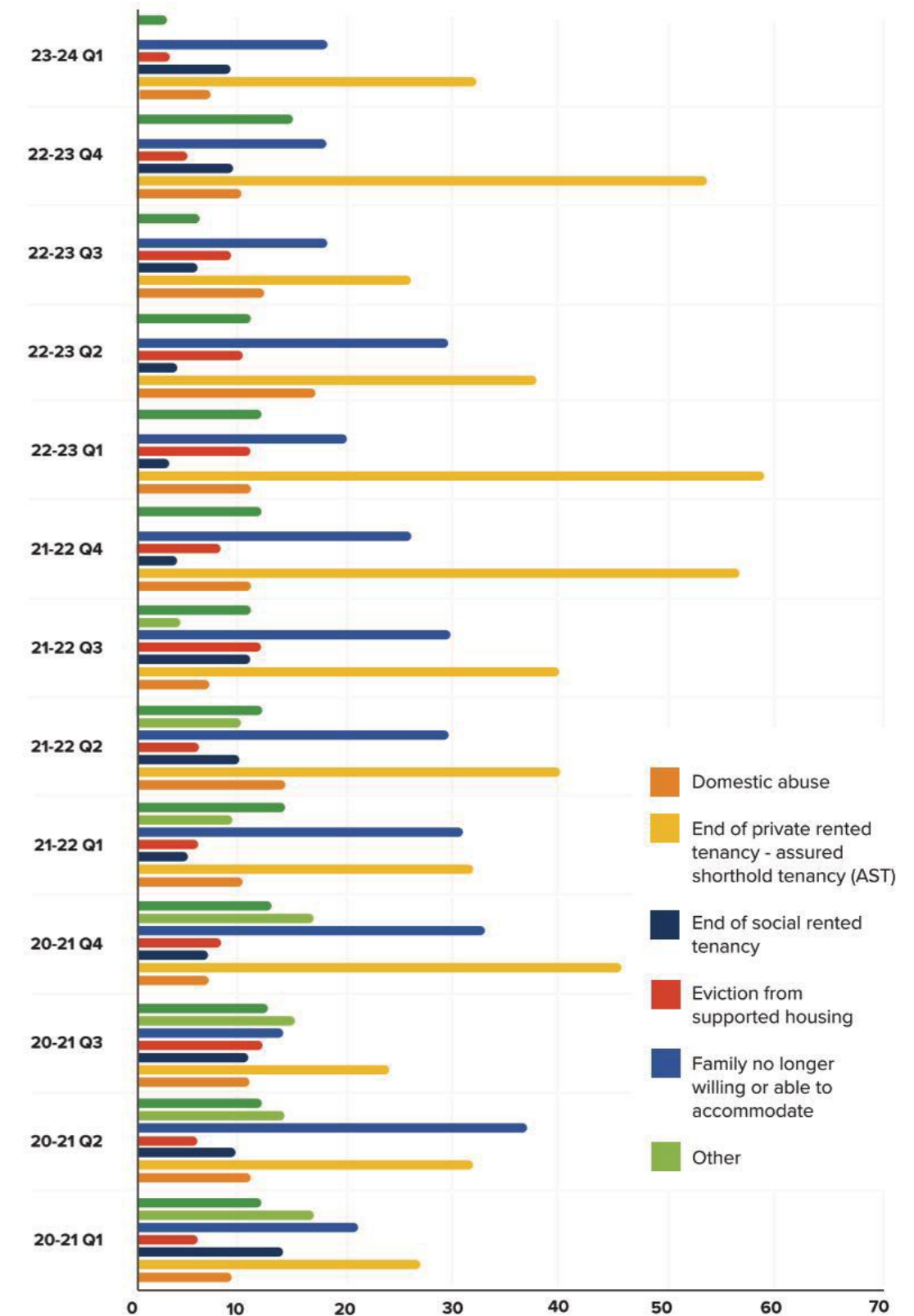
Figure 4: The total number of households assessed and owed a homelessness duty across Essex



Source DLUHC 2021 -2022

Maldon, Epping Forest and Braintree have similar numbers of homelessness per 1,000.

Figure 5: The main reason for the loss of settled accommodation when households present as homeless in the Braintree District

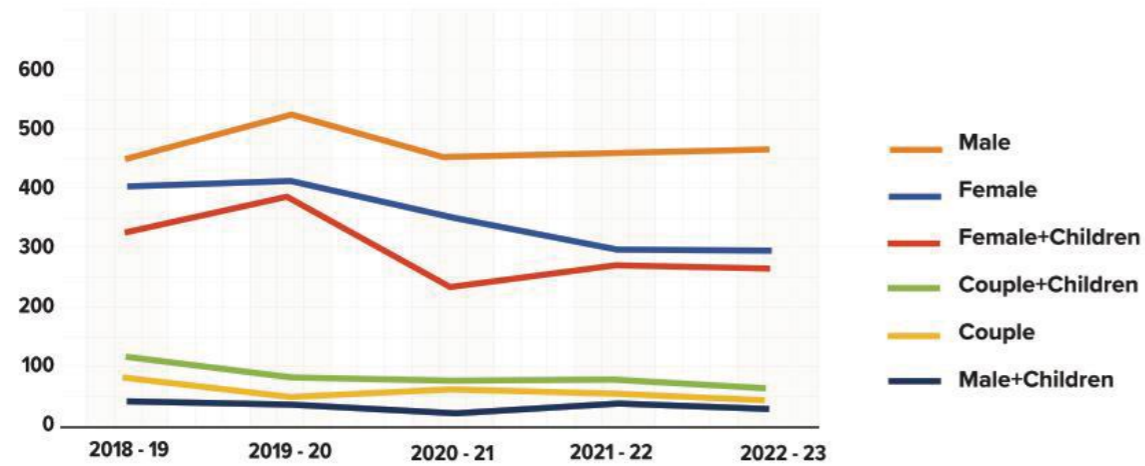


Source: BDC data

End of AST and social rented are the main reason for loss of settled accommodation.

Nationally, Government statistics show the number of households evicted by bailiffs due to a Section 21 eviction, which allows a tenant to be evicted without a landlord giving a reason, has surged 116 per cent in a year. End of private tenancy is consistently the main reason that households lose their tenancy in Braintree.

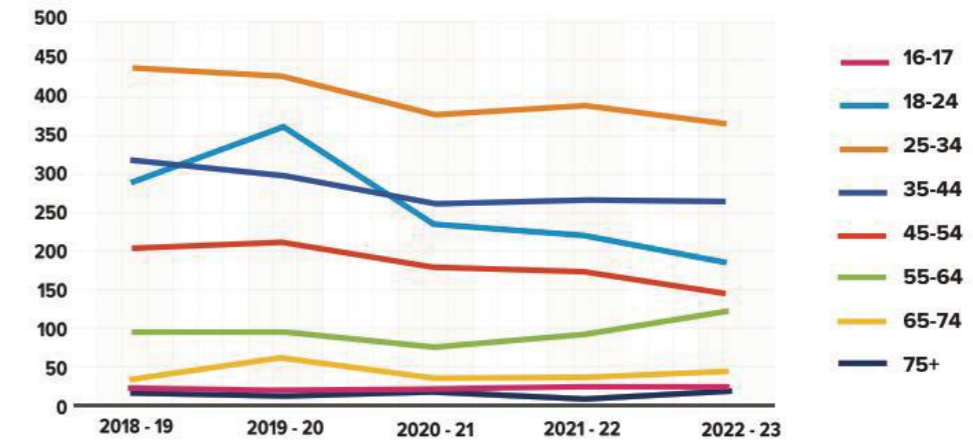
Figure 6: Number of approaches by household composition.



Single males are consistently the highest household to present as homeless.

Single females presenting as homeless has reduced over the last 5 years. Studies that have been undertaken on female homelessness indicate that women face unique challenges in experiencing homelessness compared to men. In several instances, female homelessness tends to remain concealed, primarily for safety concerns.

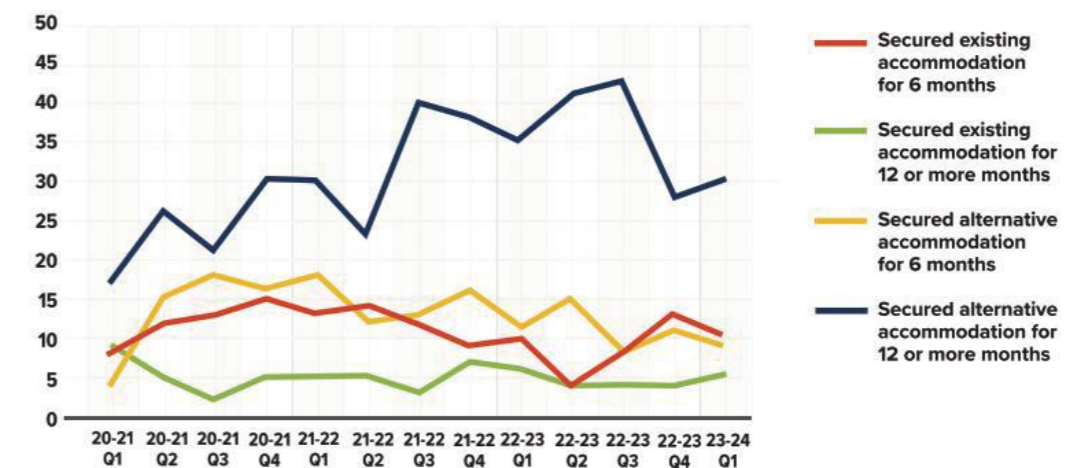
Figure 7: Number of approaches by age band



Source: BDC, 2023

When the number of approaches are analysed by age groups, during 2018-19 to 2022-23, the 55-64 age group increased, with the largest relative increase being for the 65-74 age group. The other age groups saw a reduction in the number of approaches with the largest fall in the 18-24 age group.

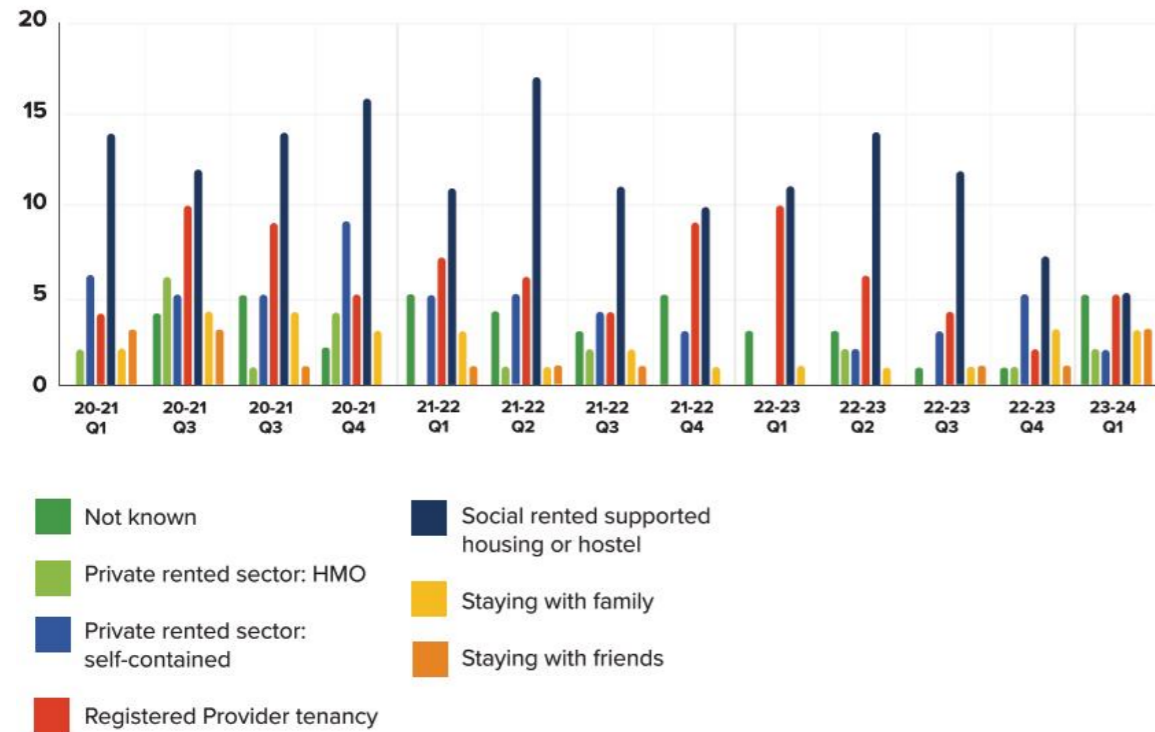
Figure 8: The top 4 reasons the prevention duty ended



Source: BDC, 2023

The most common type of accommodation outcome was registered provider (also known as social housing) and the private rented sector.

Figure 9: The top 7 accommodation outcomes following relief activity



Source: BDC, 2023

Social rented supported housing or hostels are experiencing a decline as the main accommodation outcome. At the beginning of 2023-2024, the number of social rented supported housing or hostels decreased significantly compared to the past three years. Conversely, the number of individuals staying with friends has increased, reaching similar levels observed during the Covid lockdown, surpassing the figures of the previous two years.

The number of those ‘Staying with friends’ is higher than the previous two years and is now similar to levels during the Covid lockdown.

Preventing Homelessness

Why is it important to prevent homelessness?

There are multiple reasons why it is imperative that joint work is undertaken at the appropriate stage to reduce homelessness. Focusing on people ‘at-risk’ of homelessness provides the opportunity to intervene at an early stage^{iiiiiv}

- **Wellbeing:** Homelessness is linked to poor physical and mental health outcomes for all members of the household. The stress that goes with losing a home is immense, exposure to homelessness damages physical and mental health. Preventing homelessness means preventing distress and trauma.
- **Human Cost:** There are multiple costs to the person being made homeless, losing belongings or paying for storage. Having to move away from support, family, work or school can lead to a breakdown of social and support networks.
- **More effective use of our efforts and resources.** It is easier to prevent someone from experiencing homelessness, than it is to get somebody out of homelessness

- **Financial Cost:** The cost of temporary accommodation and emergency service is considerable, this money could be used to prevent households from becoming homeless and lead to cost savings in the future.
- **Protecting the vulnerable:** For individuals who are young or those who have preexisting physical or mental health challenges, experiencing homelessness can contribute to heightened health concerns and greater vulnerability to instances of violence.
- **Reduce crime and anti-social behaviour:** Some people experiencing homelessness can be associated with criminal activity, anti-social behaviour and substance mis-use which has an impact on the wider community.

There are many homeless prevention models used across a variety of services. Most local authorities work in all stages of prevention. Homelessness is an extremely complex issue, to work towards ending homelessness is working in a co-ordinated, systemic, evidence led approach.

Cost of Living

The cost-of-living crisis has made it increasingly difficult for low-income households to keep up with their outgoings. Many households are reliant on benefits, have one parent employed or parents in either low paid jobs or zero hour contracts. This instability is exacerbated by multiple debts and rising costs of food, rent, bills and petrol.

4.3 million children live in poverty in the UK which equates to 3 in 10 children^v.

A longitudinal study by UCL researchers shows that children born into the poorest fifth of families in the UK are 12 times more likely to experience a raft of poor health and educational outcomes by the age of 17 compared to more affluent peers^{vi}.

Moving house frequently can occur because of the family experiencing financial difficulties. Families living within the private rented sector can move up to four times more than families living in owned properties^{vii}. There is an association between moving more frequently and poor self-rated health.

A report by Essex County Council on Tax Vulnerability Index concludes that Cohorts most affected by the cost-of-living crisis include single person households, lone parents with dependents, and people in later life.

Deprivation

In 2015 Braintree District ranked 194 out of 317 local authorities^{viii}, and in 2019 the rank was 203 indicating an above average position. However, the district has some contrasts, with the three most deprived wards being in the 20% most deprived areas in the country and two of the three least deprived wards being in the 10% least deprived wards in the country:

Most deprived wards

1. Bocking South
2. Braintree Central & Beckers Green
3. Halstead Trinity and Bocking North (joint 3rd)^{ix}

Least deprived wards

1. Great Notley and Black Notley
2. Bumpstead
3. Kelvedon and Feering^x

Food Poverty

In the 2021-22 period in the UK, there was a significant increase of 37% in the total number of food parcels distributed by foodbanks across the UK. Children accounted for 38% of the individuals who received these parcels.

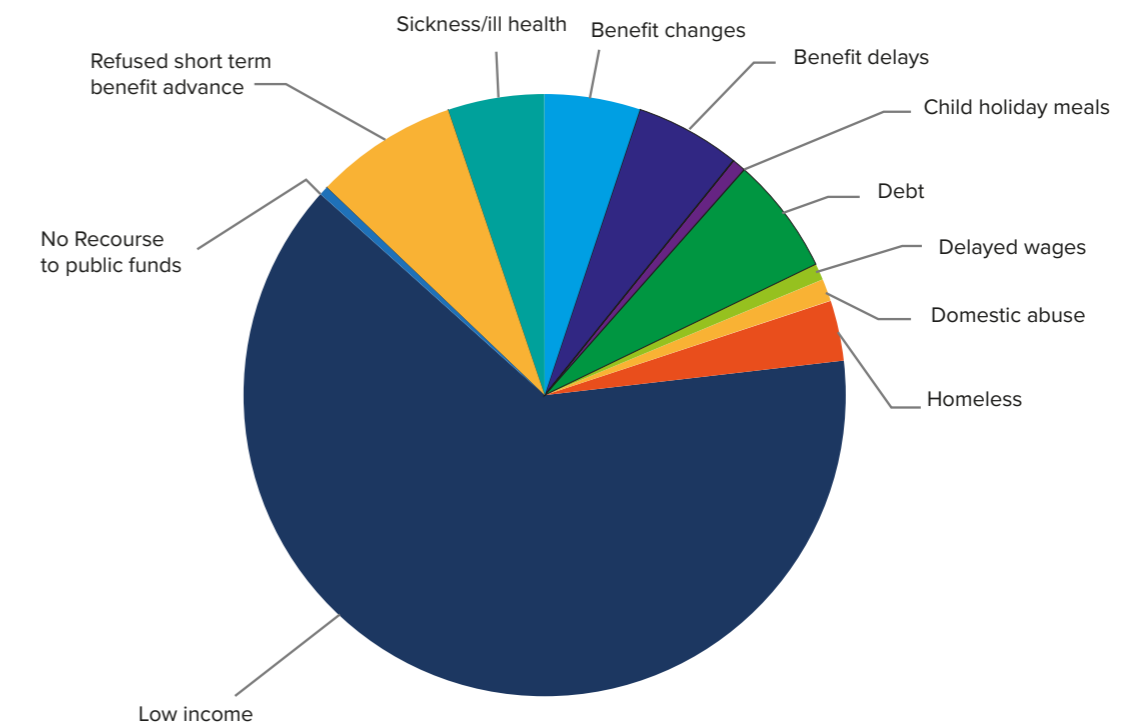
Braintree Food Bank

In the Braintree district, the increase in the total number of distributed parcels was even higher at 66%, making it the largest increase in at least the past five years. Furthermore, the proportion of children receiving food parcels in the Braintree district exceeds the national average, comprising 45% of the total individuals supported.

The top three areas in Braintree using foodbanks are Braintree Central & Beckers Green (15.4%), Bocking South (10.8%) and Braintree South (8.2%)

64% of households who present at the foodbank in Braintree Districts (remove s) is due to low income, 11% is due to benefit changes or delays. New claimants for Universal Credit must wait five weeks for their first payment, (add comma) potentially compounding existing problems with debt and rent arrears, as many claimants do not have savings to support them during this waiting time.

Figure 10: Reasons household present at Braintree Foodbanks in 2022 – 2023



Fuel Poverty

‘Fuel poverty relates to households that must spend a high proportion of their household income to keep their home at a reasonable temperature’^x

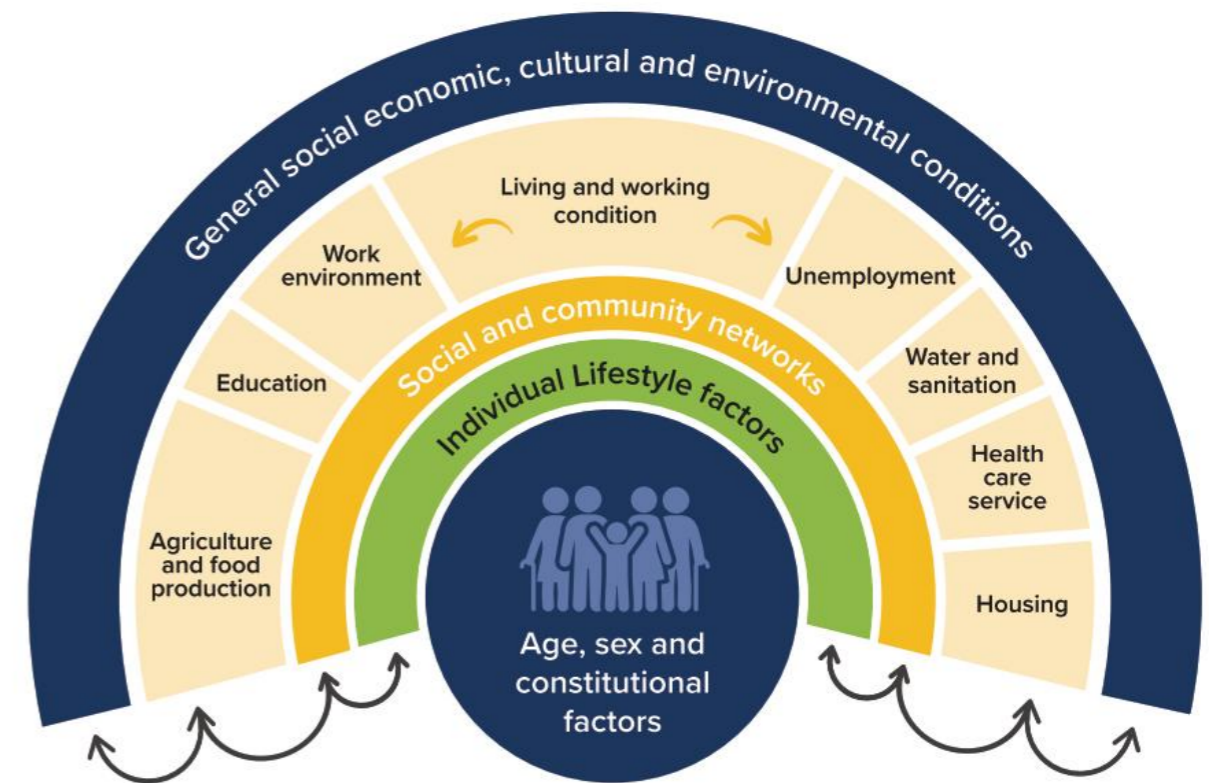
Across all households in Essex, 12% of residents are pushed below the poverty line due to the cost of heating their home. In Braintree District, this is higher than the Essex average, with approximately 13% of residents impacted by fuel poverty related to the costs of running their home.

In Braintree district there are 16,180 households (or 25% of households) on non-mains gas. Non-mains gas users pay the highest bills in Essex, and they have experienced the highest proportional increases in their bills so far.



Health and Homelessness

Figure 11: Wider Social Determinants of Health



The independent Marmot Review (2010) said housing is a ‘Social determinant of health’. The wider determinants of health are a diverse range of social, economic and environmental factors which influence people’s mental and physical health^{xi}.

Health and homelessness are interlinked. Feeling secure in your home provides you with stability. Longer tenancies, secure, settled,

and affordable housing help to embed communities, build a sense of belonging, reduce isolation, and improve wellbeing.

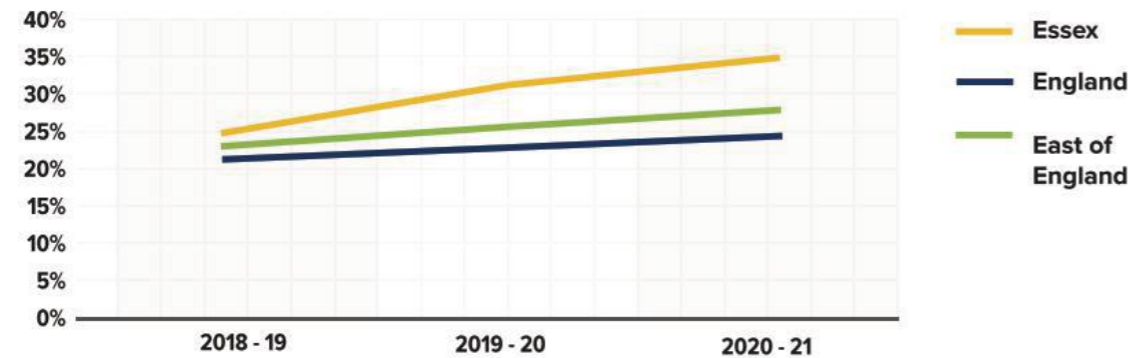
Being threatened with homelessness is a stressful experience, linked to psychological distress and depression. Fear of becoming homeless, can also result in ill health or exacerbate existing health conditions.

In his report Health Equity in England: The Marmot Review 10 Years On (2020) Sir Michael Marmot states that: Poor-quality housing harms health and evidence shows that exposure to poor housing conditions (including damp, cold, mould, noise) is strongly associated with poor health, both physical and mental. The longer the exposure to poor conditions, including cold, the greater the impact on mental and physical health'. The report goes on to say 'In terms of mental health impacts, living in non-decent, cold or overcrowded

housing and in unaffordable housing has been associated with increased stress and a reduction in a sense of empowerment and control over one's life and with depression and anxiety'.

Research has shown considerable disparities in the physical and mental health of individuals who have experienced homelessness when compared to the general population.

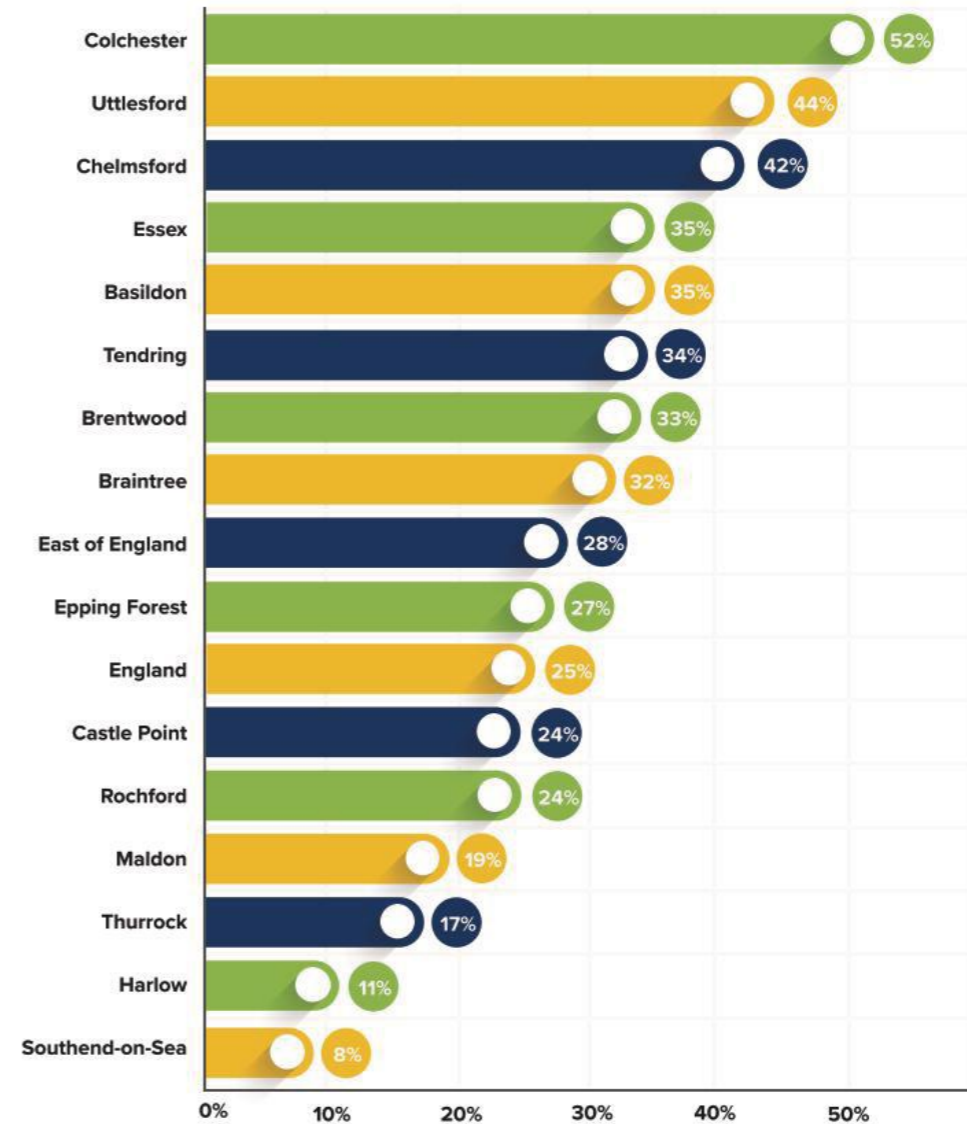
Figure 12: The % of households regionally and nationally owed a homelessness duty with a history of mental illness



Source: MGCLG Statutory homelessness detailed local authority level tables

Figure 11 illustrates an upward trend in the number of households encountering homelessness and experiencing mental illness. It is worth noting that mental health issues are more common among individuals without a stable housing situation compared to the general population.

Figure 13: The % of households owed a homelessness duty who have a history of mental illness.



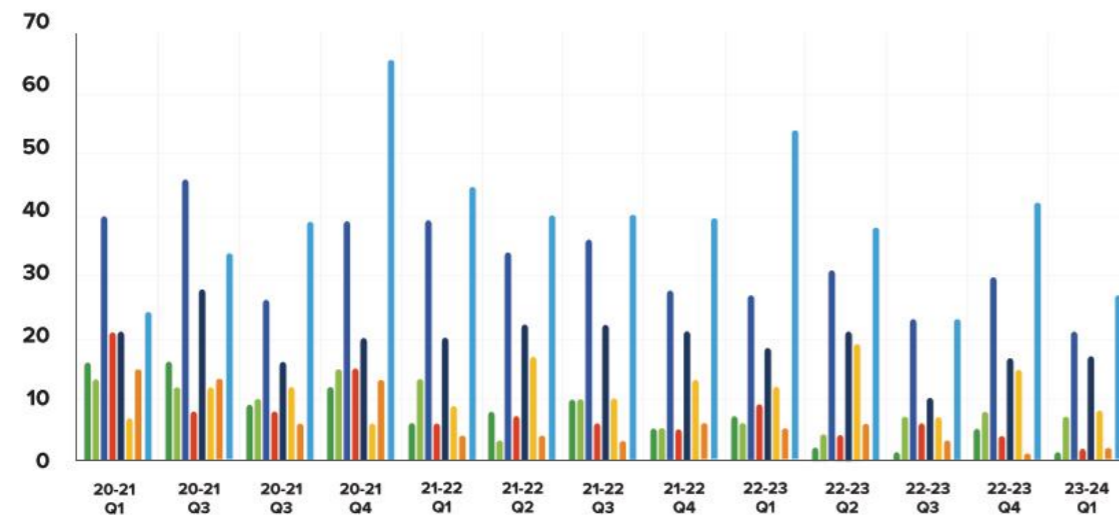
Source: MTVH (2021) Final Evaluation of the Essex Mental Health Tenancy Sustainment Pilot Project See Physical Environment JSNA Topic for information on housing and housing affordability

Definition: Households owed a homelessness duty with history of mental health issues as a proportion of all households owed a duty

Specifically, in the year 2020-2021, Essex observed that approximately 35% of households owed a homeless duty had a background of mental health challenges. Similarly, in the Braintree district, this percentage

stood at 32%. Both these values exceed the average for England, which was recorded at 25%.

Figure 14: Support needs for those with an Assessed Need of ‘Already homeless - Relief Duty owed’ or ‘Threatened with homelessness - Prevention Duty owed’.



- History of repeat homelessness
- Young person aged 18-25 year requiring support to manage independently
- History of mental health problems
- Offending history
- Physical ill health and disability
- At risk of/has experienced domestic abuse
- Drug dependency needs
- No support needs

Source Housing Operations Data

The highest numbers have consistently been ‘History of mental health problems’, ‘Physical ill health and disability’ and ‘No support needs’.

The ‘History of mental health problems’ need peaked in 2019-20 Q2, but whilst still showing significant numbers, is steadily reducing.

Domestic Abuse

The Domestic Abuse (DA) Act, which was signed into law in April 2021 places a duty on local authorities in England to provide support to victims of domestic abuse and their children.

in their own homes through adding safety measure to the property, this is to increase safety and prevent further occurrences. In 2021 – 2022, Braintree District Council received 23 referrals, and a further 12 referrals between 2022 – 2023. In July 2022, Housing Services recruited a Specialist Domestic Abuse Officer, this role co-ordinates the Sanctuary Scheme referrals and provides specialist advice to staff and survivors of Domestic Abuse.

The Domestic Abuse Act has expanded the eligibility criteria for priority need for homelessness assistance to include single individuals or households with non-dependent children who have been forced to leave their homes due to fleeing domestic abuse. As a result of this legislation, adjustments have been made to the sub-regional Allocations Policy and procedure.

These changes ensure that BDC, takes all necessary measures to provide priority assistance to eligible homeless victims of domestic abuse. This includes providing temporary accommodation while actively seeking a direct let, rather than simply granting a band A award, and allowing them to remain in their current tenancy, which may still pose a risk to their safety.

A Sanctuary Scheme is a collaborative initiative involving multiple agencies. The purpose is to support households who have experienced domestic abuse to be able to continue living

National statistics on Domestic Abuse

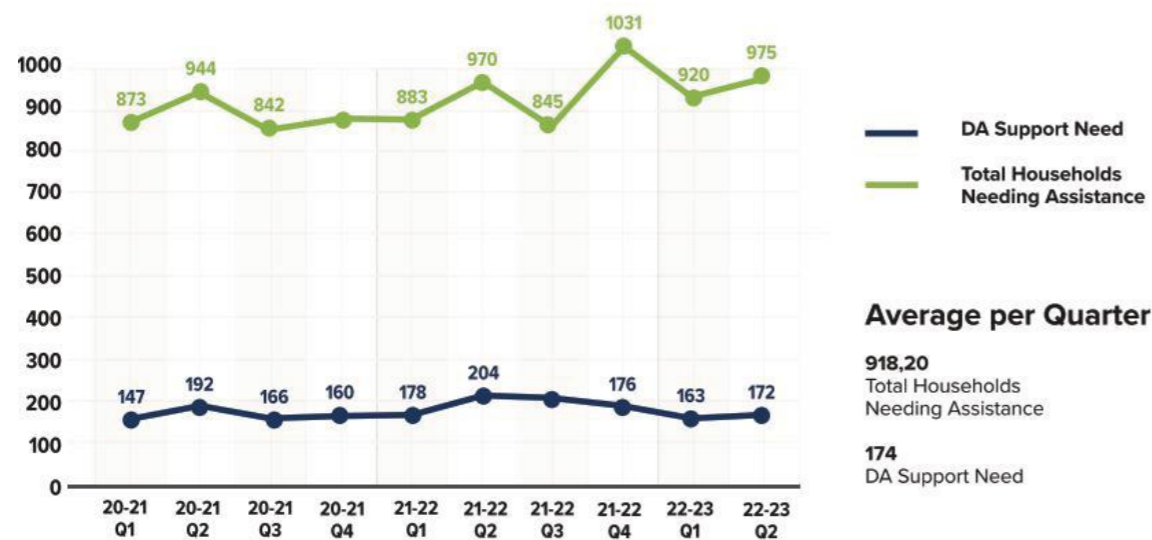
Mental Health Foundation shows that there has been an increase in homeless approaches to the local authorities for those seeking assistance due to DA in Southend, Essex and Thurrock. These figures related only to official reports of violence

- According to Office of National Statistic 2014 xv, 1.2 million women and 700,000 men experience domestic violence each year ^{xvi}
- According to a government report, the estimated social and economic cost for victims of domestic abuse in England and Wales for the year ending March 2017 is approximately £66 billion. On average, the cost to respond to these incidents per victim is £34,015, and in cases of domestic homicide, the cost can reach up to £2.2 million.

- Research^{xviii} suggests that women experiencing domestic abuse are more likely to experience mental health problems. In contrast, women with mental health problems are more likely to be domestically abused, with 30-60% of women with mental health problems have experienced domestic violence.
- Exposure to domestic violence has a significant impact on children’s mental health. Many studies have found strong links between poorer educational outcomes and higher levels of mental health problems.^{xix}

Between 2018 – 2023, in Braintree District, there have been a total of 256 domestic abuse related reasons for loss of settled home.

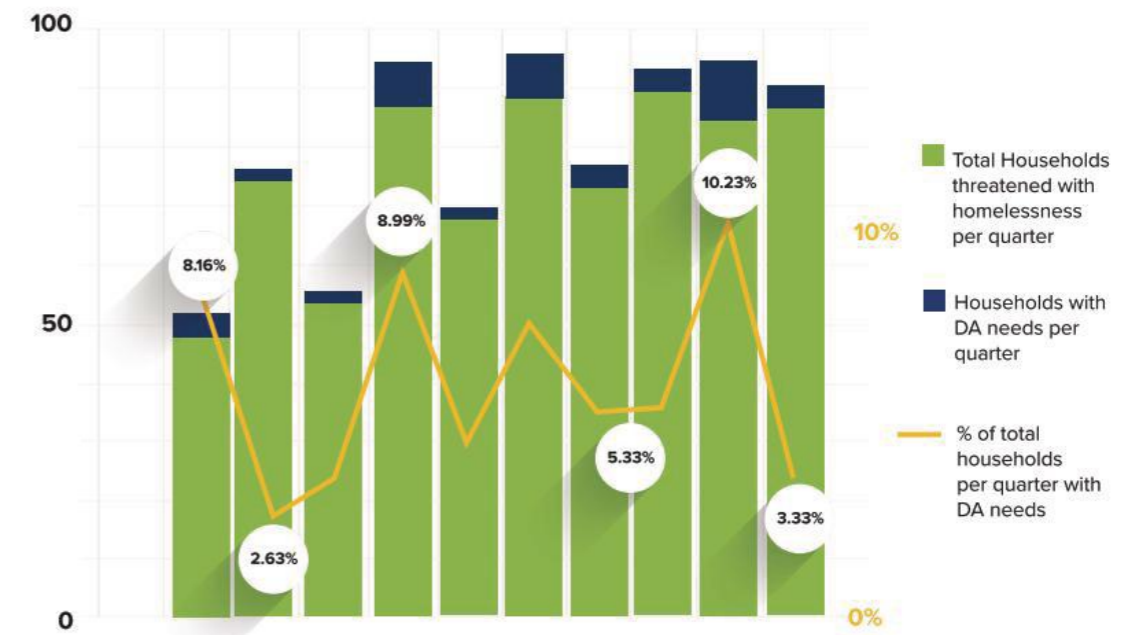
Figure 15: DA Support Need and Total Households Needing Assistance by Number



Data from Southend, Essex & Thurrock Domestic Abuse Board SETDAB from 2023 shows the following trends in households threatened with homelessness and who are homeless experiencing DA compared with households who are not experiencing DA^{xx}.

Source Southend, Essex & Thurrock Domestic Abuse Board SETDAB 2023

Figure 16: Increase % where homelessness is prevented or reviewed



Source: SETDAB Southend, Essex & Thurrock Domestic Abuse Behaviours 2023

Figure 17: Increase % where homelessness is prevented or reviewed (homeless households)



Source: SETDAB Southend, Essex & Thurrock Domestic Abuse Behaviours 2023

Impact of homelessness on children

The latest government data shows there are 125,760 homeless children living in temporary accommodation with their families in England today – a 67% rise in 10 years^{xxi}. A family becoming homeless means a stable environment is not provided for a child to be able to grow up safely and securely in order to thrive^{xxii}.

Shelter undertook the largest survey on experiences of more than 800 homeless families with 1,600 children^{xxiii}. Shelter's report exposes the devastating impact this constant disruption is having on families lives, including on their children's education and ability to work.

- This research found that more than a quarter of households (27%) were moved into temporary accommodation more than an hour away from where they used to live.
- Families living in temporary accommodation are often required to move numerous times at short notice.
- Over a fifth (22%) of homeless children have to move school multiple times as a result of living in temporary accommodation
- Over half (52%) of homeless children of school age have missed days of school as a result of living in temporary accommodation, of these, over a

third (37%) have missed more than a month of school. Almost half (47%) of families with school age children have been forced to move schools as a result of living in temporary accommodation.

- 6 in 10 (62%) households were given less than 48 hours' notice when they were last moved between temporary accommodation placements.
- 1 in 10 (11%) said they have had to stop working altogether as a result of living in temporary accommodation.

A report from Action for Children reports that family breakdown is the main reason for young people presenting as homeless. A high percentage of young people report anxiety and depression around their housing^{xxiv}

During the pandemic, 18 – 24-year-olds were the only age group who saw an increase in statutory homelessness^{xxv}. This is due to the increase on family breakdowns during the pandemic and that staying with friends and families was no longer an option.

In his report **Health Equity in England: The Marmot Review 10 Years On (2020)** Sir Michael Marmot states that: 'Children living in overcrowded homes are more likely to be stressed, anxious and

depressed, have poorer physical health, attain less well at school and have a greater risk of behavioural problems than those in uncrowded homes.

The collaboration between BDC and ECC has been crucial in addressing the accommodation needs of care leavers, transitioning from the foster care system to living independently. This partnership ensures a cohesive approach to providing stable housing, which is a fundamental component for these young citizens to thrive. Stable accommodation serves as a platform for care leavers to pursue education, employment, and personal development opportunities. This joint effort in developing an Essex wide care Leavers housing protocol promoting consistency in care standards,

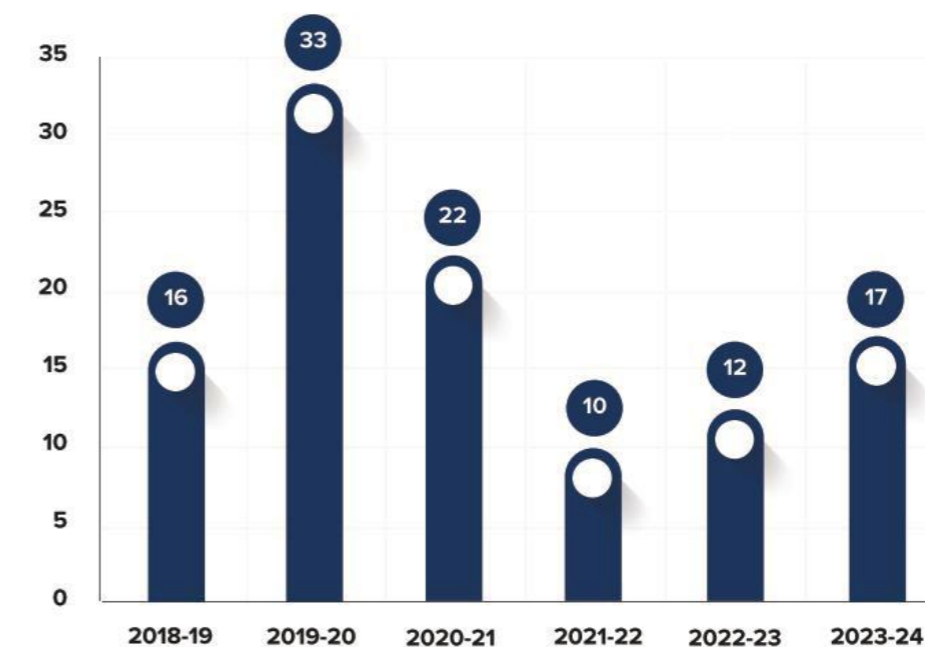
ensuring that care leavers receive the individual support they need. Furthermore, it has allowed for the development of long-term strategies that address systemic issues, rather than temporary fixes that do not tackle the root causes of housing instability.

Care Leavers

Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) shows that 26% of the homeless population in England had spent time in care.

Often looked after children are placed out of area, which means minimal or no support network. 1/3 of care leavers become homeless in the first 2 years immediately after they leave care^{xxvi}.

Figure 18: Number of care leavers who have approached at homeless to Braintree District Council.



Source Braintree District Council 2023

Private Rented Sector (PRS)

Around 4.4 million households live the private rented sector in England, alongside 340,000 in Scotland and just over 200,000 in Wales. In Braintree District, 10,593 properties are privately rented, 16.3% of all properties in the district.

Rent in privately rented properties in the UK has reached its highest level on record and shows no signs of decreasing in the near future. The private rented sector is currently the most expensive housing option compared to other tenures. According to Rightmove, rents outside of London increased by nearly 10% in 2022. The Office for National Statistics also reported a 4.8% increase in private rental prices paid by UK tenants in the year leading up to February 2023.

Renting a private property may not be feasible for everyone due to high demand and limited availability. Prospective tenants relying on universal credit and limited by LHA rates face additional challenges. Additionally, letting and estate

agents often impose administration fees, increasing the overall costs of relocating.

Properties in the private rented sector are more often in poor conditions. According to the English Housing Survey (EHS), approximately 23% of homes within the private rented sector did not meet the Decent Home Standard in 2021, totalling roughly 1 million homes. In comparison, only 13% of owner-occupied homes and 10% of social-rented homes shared similar conditions ^{xxviii}.

Many tenants experience significant concerns and anxiety regarding eviction, often due to a lack of awareness about their legal rights. Recent government data reveals a substantial 116% increase in the number of households being evicted by bailiffs under Section 21, a provision that enables landlords to evict tenants without providing a specific reason. Nationally, between January and March 2023, a total of 2,252 households in England had their homes repossessed through Section 21 notices, more than double the figure of 1,045 in 2022. To help address this issue, the government has introduced the Housing Loss Prevention Advice Service, an initiative offering free legal advice to individuals facing eviction or repossession. This service was launched in August 2023.

This bill will empower renters to challenge poor landlords without fear of losing their home. The Renters' (Reform) Bill represents a significant transformation for the private rented sector, marking the fulfilment of the Government's 2019 manifesto pledge to eliminate section 21 'no fault' evictions ^{xxxi}. This legislation will provide renters with the ability to address issues with landlords who are not meeting their obligations, while ensuring that they are not at risk of losing their homes.

The new Bill also protects over two million landlords, making it easier for them to recover properties when they need to for example, if they want to sell their property, move in a close family member, or when tenants wilfully do not pay rent. Notice periods will also be reduced where tenants have been irresponsible such as breaching their tenancy agreement or causing damage to the property. There are concerns that when the bill is introduced, it may result in landlords exiting the market.

Main reason for loss of assured shorthold tenancy

In Braintree District in 2022-23 the main reason for loss of assured shorthold tenancy:

The Government’s statistical tables for England for the period October – December 2022 show that end of private rented Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST) was the most common reason for households being owed a prevention duty, accounting for 11,790 or 37.1% of households^{xxxii}.

- 1 **Landlord wishing to sell the property – 43%**
- 2 **Other – 20%**
- 3 **Landlord wishing to re-let the property – 9%**

Top 3 reasons for loss of assured shorthold tenancy over 5-year period

Top Reasons	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
1	Landlord wishing to sell or re-let the property	Landlord wishing to sell or re-let the property	Landlord wishing to sell or re-let the property	Landlord wishing to sell the property	Landlord wishing to sell the property
2	Other	Other	Other	Landlord wishing to sell or re-let the property	Other
3	Rent arrears due to tenant difficulty budgeting or tenant making other payment(s) or due to shortfall between benefit and rent	Rent arrears due to change in personal circumstances	Rent arrears due to change in personal circumstances	Other	Landlord wishing to re-let the property

Source: BDC, 2023

Various research shows that households with children in the private rented sector are more likely to have moved home multiple times^{xxxiii} and children in poverty are more likely to have experienced multiple housing moves. Moving more frequently is associated with poorer long term health outcomes for both adults and children. One explanation for this relationship is that moving involves interruptions in social, educational and economic opportunities.

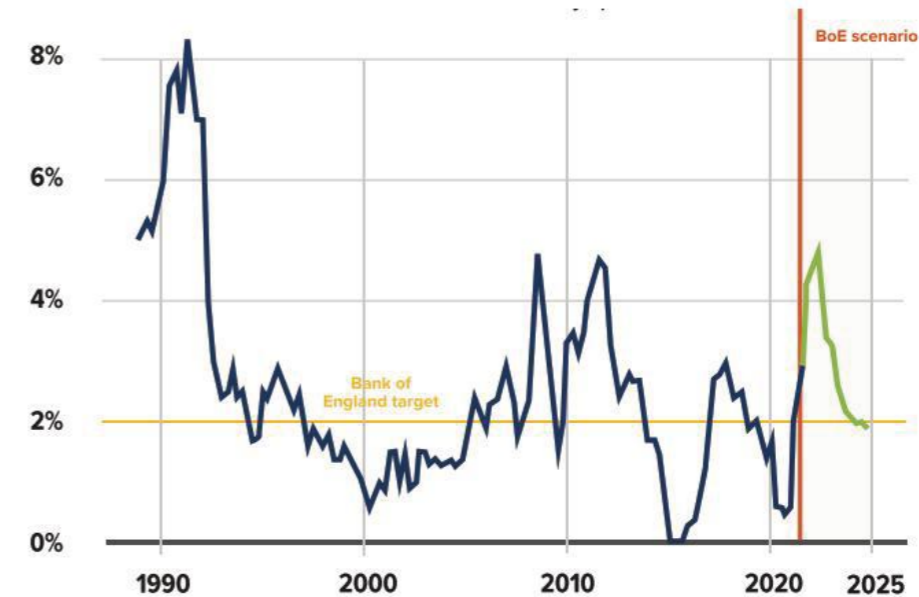
Homeowners

Mortgages

Currently, interest rates are at their highest level since 2008, which has resulted in a period of uncertainty for individuals seeking a mortgage, including those with variable rate mortgages or those looking to renew their existing mortgage.

In Essex there are an estimated 37,000 households with an outstanding mortgage exceeding £250,000. According to the Census 2021, there are 22,303 properties, which equates to 34% of properties in Braintree District which are owned with a mortgage or loan.

Figure 19: Office of National Statistics Inflation Prediction



Source: Bank of England, Office of National Statistics

Inflation is expected to peak at 5% by April 2023 consumer price index by quarter

Social Housing

According to the Census 2021, 9,825 properties in Braintree District are social rents, that equates to 15.1% of all properties within the district.

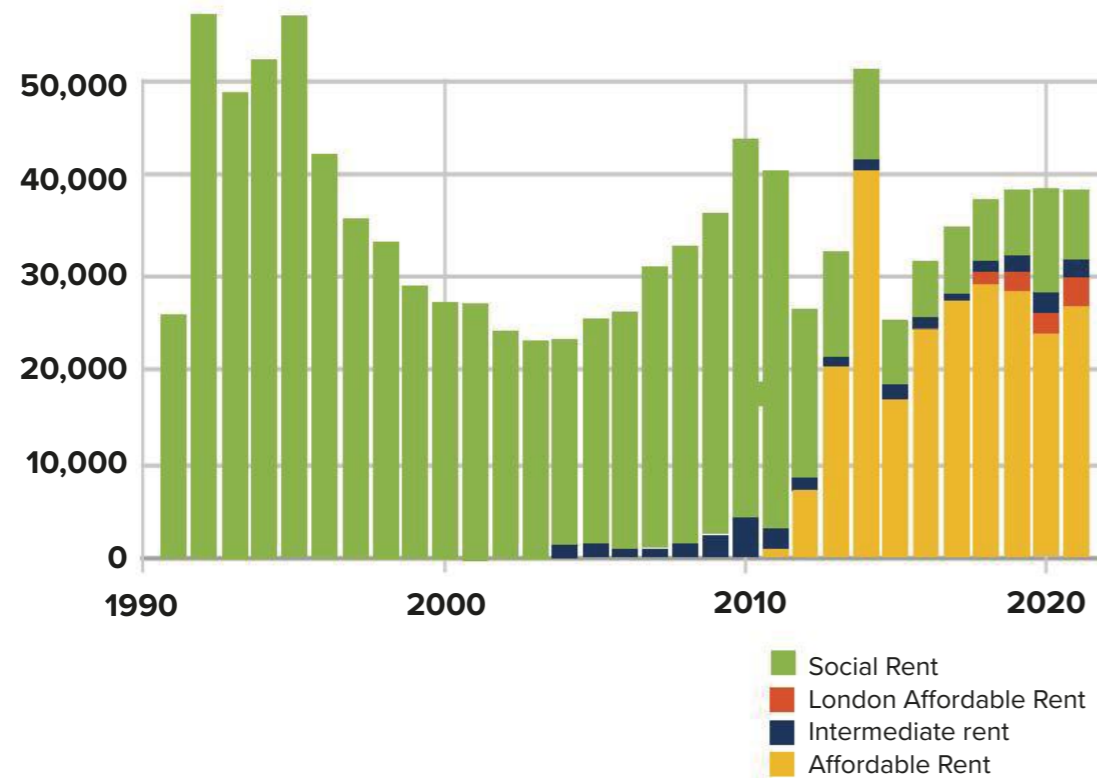
There are several forms of affordable housing options in the district. Social housing can be let at social or affordable rent levels.

Social Rent: Historically this is known as council or housing association homes where households are prioritised on their needs. Rent is generally the most affordable, as rent is based on a formula using local income and property values.

Affordable rent: Higher rents can be charged in these properties which can be up to 80% of local market rents. Affordable rents are usually charged for all new social housing.

A report by the BBC shows the reduction in social rents to affordable rents across England.

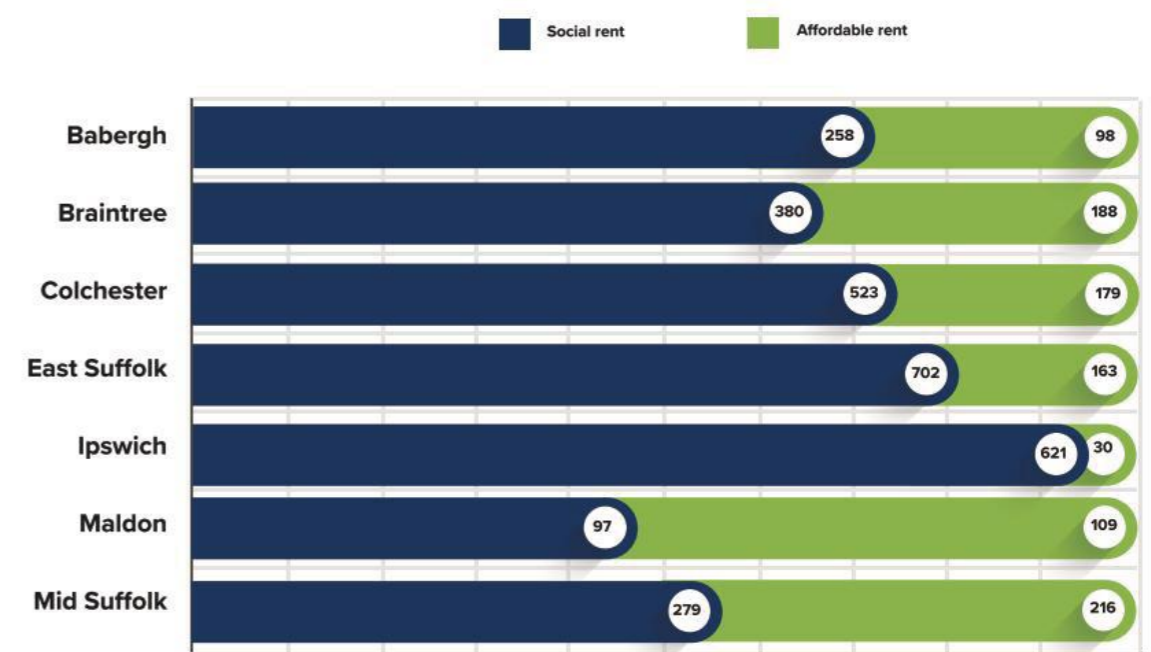
Figure 20: Social Rent being replaced by Affordable Rent



Source: New affordable housing for rent in England, 1991-2022

As shown in fig 22 in 2022 – 2023 in Braintree district a third of properties let were affordable rent. Braintree district let 380 social rents and 188 affordable rents.

Figure 21: Total number of properties let in each Local Authority in 2022-23 split by type of rent



Source Gateway to Homechoice Annual Report 2022 – 23

Gateway to Homechoice

Braintree District Council is a local government authority that does not own any housing properties. Instead, these properties were transferred to Greenfields Community Housing (now called Eastlight Community Homes) in 2007. Braintree Council seeks to support the build of affordable housing through The Local Plan.

The Gateway to Homechoice is a system that allows individuals to choose from available social housing properties. These properties are advertised in the Local Authority areas of Babergh, Braintree, Colchester, East Suffolk, Ipswich, Maldon, and Mid Suffolk. The scheme provides a single access point for customers to apply to the housing register of any Local Authority and be considered for available properties in any of the participating areas.

Gateway to Homechoice facilitates household mobility, enabling households to register with the district in which they currently reside or desire to reside if they are from outside the scheme’s designated area. After registration, households can submit ‘bids’ for housing options across the seven local authority areas.

In the 2022-2023 period, Gateway to Homechoice facilitated the relocation of 61 households into the Braintree district, while 40 households moved outwards. Braintree ranks among the top three districts where inward cross-boundary movement exceeds outward movement by a significant margin of one-third.

In 2022 – 2023 in Braintree District, there were 2254 active applicants on the register waiting for social housing, and 568 households were housed.

Figure 22: ‘Active Applicants’ data by Band as of 1st April 2023

Number of households	Banding
78	A
308	B
326	C
90	D
1435	E

Source Braintree District Council 2023

About ‘Bands’

When someone applies for housing, the urgency of their application is assessed in line with the Allocations Policy. Applications are placed in ‘Bands’ from A to F, depending on the level of need. The main categories of need for each band are summarised below.

Band	Main categories of need
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical medical/welfare award • Downsizing from 3 bedroom or larger social housing property • Nominations from supported housing providers with agreed move-on arrangements
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serious medical/welfare award • Downsizing from 2 bed social housing property • Any homeless duty cases and some cases where homelessness can be prevented • Overcrowding in social or private rented housing
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderate medical/welfare award • ‘Prevention’ or ‘Relief’ homeless applicants • Homeless households not in ‘priority need’ • People sharing facilities with other households or lacking facilities
D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants whose needs have been assessed as having a higher need but whose application has been given reduced preference. Examples include people with no local connection and households with a poor tenancy history (e.g. arrears, current or previous eviction action)
E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People with no immediate need to move
F	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants registering for schemes where qualification is based on an assessment on care needs (such as ‘Extra Care’ or ‘Very sheltered’ housing schemes).

2022-23 Evictions from social rented tenancy in Braintree District

The following reasons are the main reasons why households are evicted from their social rented properties:

1. Other – 43%
2. Rent arrears due to tenant difficulty budgeting or tenant making other payment(s) or due to shortfall between benefit and rent – 24%
3. Breach of tenancy, not related to rent arrears – 14%

Source BDC data

Top 3 reasons for loss of assured social rented tenancy over 5-year period

Top Reasons	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
1	Rent arrears due to tenant difficulty budgeting or tenant making other payment(s) or due to shortfall between benefit and rent	Rent arrears due to tenant difficulty budgeting or tenant making other payment(s) or due to shortfall between benefit and rent	Rent arrears due to tenant difficulty budgeting or tenant making other payment(s) or due to shortfall between benefit and rent	Rent arrears due to tenant difficulty budgeting or tenant making other payment(s) or due to shortfall between benefit and rent	Other
2	Rent arrears due to change in personal circumstances	Rent arrears due to change in personal circumstances	Rent arrears due to change in personal circumstances	Tenant Abandoned property	Rent arrears due to tenant difficulty budgeting or tenant making other payment(s) or due to shortfall between benefit and rent
3	Rent arrears following changes in benefit	Other	Breach of tenancy, not related to rent arrears	Breach of tenancy, not related to rent arrears	Breach of tenancy, not related to rent arrears

Source Braintree District Council 2023

Rough sleeping

There is a difference between homelessness and rough sleeping. While a rough sleeper is defined as ‘someone who sleeps on the streets because they have no home’. Homelessness incorporates those who have no permanent home, this includes people living in temporary accommodation, shelters, living short term with friends and families also called ‘sofa surfing’.

This Government has made the unprecedented commitment to end rough sleeping. They have reportedly developed, for the first time, a clear and defined vision for ending rough sleeping, which is that it is prevented wherever possible, and where it does occur it is rare, brief and non-recurrent.

A new ‘prevention first’ approach that means people are better prevented from sleeping rough in the first place. The aims are:

- No-one is released from a public institution to the streets through the following commitments
- No-one should leave prison homeless or to sleep rough
- Young people leaving care will receive the support they need to secure and maintain suitable accommodation
- No-one should be discharged from hospital to the streets
- No-one who has served in the UK Armed Forces should face the need to sleep rough

- Review the impact of the new asylum dispersal system on homelessness and rough sleeping

Research indicates that women are disproportionately affected by “hidden” homelessness compared to men. According to the official rough sleeping count in England in 2021, women accounted for approximately 13% of individuals found sleeping rough.

BDC’s partnership work with ECC over the last few years has played a pivotal role in addressing the complex issue of rough sleeping in Braintree and beyond. Through a multifaceted approach that includes outreach work, the expertise of mental health nurses, and the provision of emergency accommodation options, BDC has been instrumental in supporting individuals on their arduous journey from the streets into sustained accommodation. This journey is not just about providing a roof over one’s head but also about reintegration into society, where the previously homeless can find their place and purpose again

Figure 23: Number of people sleeping rough on a single night in Braintree

Years	Number of rough sleepers
2018-19	5
2019-20	5
2020-21	0
2021-22	5
2022-23	3

Due to the size and the rural nature of the district, determining the exact number of individuals rough sleeping is challenging. The annual estimate of rough sleepers will be conducted on a night in late October to November. A collaborative meeting is conducted with partners to ascertain the accurate count of individuals experiencing rough sleeping within the district. This count is vital for verification purposes with Homeless Link.

Streetlink

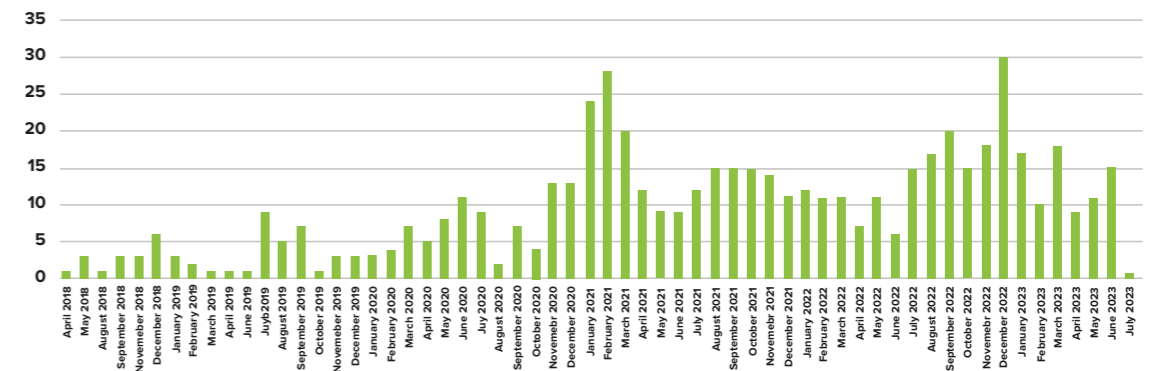
Streetlink is a nationwide service that allows individuals to report sightings of individuals aged 18 and above who are experiencing homelessness. Once a report is made, Streetlink contacts the person reportedly sleeping rough in order to provide them with the necessary assistance^{xxxiv}. It's important to note that due to the nature of the referral system, it is possible for multiple contacts to be made regarding the same individual.

In March 2023, the rate of people sleeping rough on one night in Braintree per 100,000 was 3.9. In the East of England, the rate was 3.4 and London it was 8.2^{xxxv}.

Compared with the general population:^{xxxvi}

- Individuals experiencing homelessness are significantly more prone to common mental health conditions, with psychosis being disproportionately prevalent at rates up to 15 times higher.
- Approximately 45% of homeless individuals have received a formal diagnosis of a mental health disorder, which escalates even further to 80% among those sleeping rough.
- Homeless individuals face an alarming over 9-fold increase in the likelihood of engaging in suicidal behaviour.
- People who are currently without housing face barriers when it comes to accessing healthcare services, including mental health support.

- It is alarming to note that the average age of death for individuals experiencing homelessness is significantly lower than the national average, with men averaging 46 years old and women averaging 42 years old, compared to the national average of 79 years old for males and 82.9 years old for females^{xxxvii}.
- Reports indicate that those who sleep on the streets often endure intimidation, threats, verbal abuse, and harassment, which are unfortunately common experiences. Additionally, they are at a higher risk of facing sexual assaults and acts of violence, including being targeted with thrown objects or physically assaulted.



Temporary Accommodation

Braintree district uses several forms of accommodation as temporary accommodation. This can include nightly lets, B&B's and hotels, hostel and housing association properties both within and outside the district.

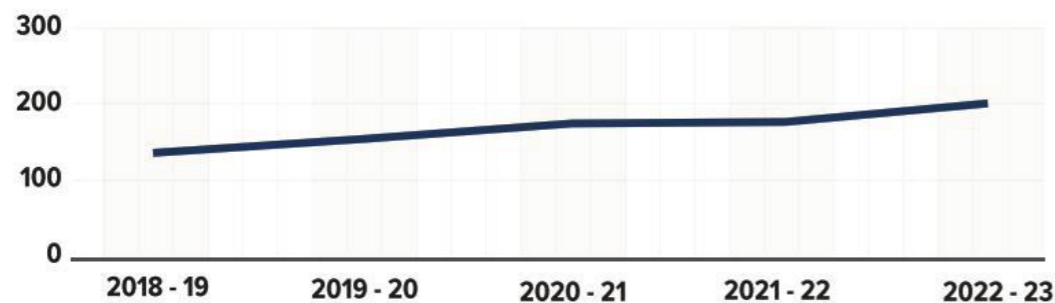
The cost of temporary accommodation is subject to variation based on factors such as its size and location. Additionally, the financial situation of the applicant, including their employment status, savings etc, can also impact the rent. In certain instances, the price of the accommodation may surpass the Housing Benefit allocation, resulting in a substantial deficiency that the local authority will cover.

For individuals experiencing homelessness, being located outside of the district, and residing in bed and breakfast accommodations can often incur higher costs. This is

because there are often no cooking facilities available, and households may be situated far from necessary support networks. Additionally, children may be distanced from their schools, adults further from work, friends and family and are requiring more frequent reliance on public transportation.

In certain situations where local temporary accommodation availability is limited, placements outside of the district may be utilised. This may be deemed necessary for certain cases for safety purposes. However, it should be noted that there are specific criteria in place for accessing some temporary accommodation within the district. It is possible that cases involving serious criminal offenses, severe mental health issues, and substance misuse may not be accommodated.

Figure 24: Number of Temporary Placements per year



Source Braintree District Council 2023

The number of Temporary Placements has been increasing over the six-year period.

Figure 25: Placements out of District

Year	In	Out	% Out
2018-19	131	4	3.0%
2019-20	141	12	7.8%
2020-21	157	16	9.2%
2021-22	147	29	16.5%
2022-23	170	30	15.0%
2023-24	60	21	25.9%

Source Braintree District Council October 2023

There has been a gradual increase in the number of temporary placements outside Braintree district. The 21 placements in the first six months of the current year, may indicate an even greater surge.

Under S208 Discharge of functions, a local authority can offer a temporary accommodation placement outside of where the homelessness application was made. If accommodation is available for the occupation of the applicant outside their district, the Local Authority (LA) shall notify the local housing authority in whose district the accommodation is located within 14 days. Local Authorities acknowledge they are not always completed and that there may be occasional delays

in sending these notifications due to heightened work demands. S208 will not be issued for short-term placements that last only a week or two. This implies that each Local Authority is not fully aware of the exact number of households residing in temporary accommodation within their borough or district.

Braintree Homeless Prevention Partnership

In order to address homelessness effectively, a collaborative approach is necessary. Braintree District Council diligently engages with our partners in various multi-agency meetings involving governmental, voluntary, and community organizations. These meetings include:

Joint Referral Panel (JRP): Provides a gateway for referral to supported (lower-level needs) accommodation schemes within the Braintree District for those with a local connection.

The aim of the JRP is to ensure that every application made to a supported housing scheme is assessed for eligibility and suitability and provide a forum for all agencies to share appropriate information in the consideration of an application.

The JRP ensures that successful applicants are offered the most appropriate service according to their support need and reduces the number of people moving from one service to another following placement breakdown.

Community Safety Hub: Multi-agency working is essential in the prevention of crime and disorder. The Braintree District Community Safety Hub aims to maximise the benefits of collaborative working with partners, develop better information sharing and closer working practices and

tackle key issues identified in the CSP Action Plan, the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner's (PFCC) Police and Crime Plan, and from emerging crime trends and patterns.

Housing Support: This multi-agency forum was set up for information sharing and decision-making for complex cases. For example, where a person has previously been identified as vulnerable and has caused anti-social behaviour to others, and where contact has been made with the local authority for homelessness advice or an application made to the housing register.

Domestic Abuse (DA): The DA Sub-Group is for domestic abuse cases where the individual has contacted the Local Authority for homelessness advice, or an application made to the housing register. The multi-agency partnership will discuss each case and will establish the level of risk. The partners evaluate appropriate measures and interventions to manage risk and they explore the role of statutory homelessness functions and the housing allocation scheme.

Homeless Prevention Partnership (HPP): The HPP is a partnership meeting which provides an opportunity for all services working within the homelessness sector to share good practice, promote their service, discuss funding, trends and

highlight any concerns they may have. The HPP will work together to deliver the Action Plan which from the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. Individual cases are not discussed here.

Disability Working Group: The purpose of this group is to enable suitable housing for people with physical disabilities who are currently living in unsuitable accommodation. Cases are discussed with Registered Providers, Occupational Therapist, Environmental Health and The Local Authority. Options are explored and recommendations are made to whether specific adaptations can be made to the property to allow the household to remain living safely.

Cost of Living: The partnership was established to respond to and support the effects of the National Cost of Living Crisis on Braintree District Residents. The meeting is open to all organisations in Braintree District who would like to know more or share good practice of what your service is delivering to tackle the Cost of Living and support residents in the district.

Glossary

Affordable Housing: Housing provided to meet the needs of people on low income. As defined in the National Planning Policy Framework, the term includes homes for social rent, affordable rent and shared ownership.

Affordable Rent: Homes available to rent from a registered provider at a cost below 80% of the average, local market rent for a given area.

Homelessness: This describes the situation of an individual, family or community without stable, safe, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it. It is often the result of what is known as systemic or societal barriers, including a lack of affordable and appropriate housing, the individual/household's financial, mental, cognitive, behavioural or physical challenges, and/or racism and discrimination.

Housing Association: Independent, not-for-profit organisation providing affordable housing.

Local Housing Allowance (LHA): Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates are used to calculate Housing Benefit for tenants renting from private landlords.

Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates are decided by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) using information provided by the Valuation Office Agency (VOA).

LHA rates are based on private market rents being paid by tenants in a Broad Rental Market Area (BRMA). This is the area within which a person might reasonably be expected to live.

Market Rent This refers to private sector rent levels. The rent levels used in this document are sourced from the GLA Rents map and use Valuation Office Agency data. Registered Providers will calculate market rent based on the RICS guidance "Market Rent: a guide for providers of Affordable Rented housing".

Social Rent: This is set using a formula that considers local earnings and house prices.

Registered Social Landlords: Government funded not-for-profit organisations that provide affordable housing. They include housing associations, trusts and cooperatives.

Rough Sleeping: For the purposes of conducting rough sleeping street counts and evidence based estimates, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) defines people who sleep rough as:

1. People sleeping, about to bed down (sitting on/in or standing next to their bedding) or actually bedded down in the open air (such as on the street, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments).

2. People in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations, or "bashes" which are makeshift shelters often comprised of cardboard boxes).

Social Housing Providers: Provider of subsidised social housing below market rent, including the council and other registered providers such as housing associations.

Social Rents: are kept low through state subsidy, to approximately a third of market levels. The social housing sector is currently governed by a strictly defined system of rent control to ensure that rents are kept affordable.

Temporary Accommodation (TA): is for households who are being assessed by Braintree District Council as to whether they have a duty to house them. In BDC TA comprises of B&B, hostel, refuge, private or housing association properties. This could be in or outside of the district.

Wider Determinants of Health: Wider determinants, also known as social determinants, are a diverse range of social, economic and environmental factors which impact on people's health.

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Braintree
District Council

**BRAINTREE DISTRICT
COUNCIL
HOMELESSNESS &
ROUGH SLEEPING
STRATEGY 2024 - 2029**

CONSULTATION: ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

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INTRODUCTION

This summarises the results of the consultation of Braintree District Council Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029 which took place between 5th February 2024 to 1st April 2024.

It outlines:

- The consultation methodology
- Extent to which respondents agreed with the proposed approach to meeting each of the priorities
- General themes and issues arising from the consultation
- How the results have been and will be used to influence the Strategy itself and implementation of the Strategy
- Profile of respondents
- Feedback from focus groups with service providers and users with lived experience

Appendix 1 – The survey

Appendix 2 – Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy evidence document

Appendix 3 – Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

We hosted a stakeholder engagement workshop prior to starting the public consultation, where we shared the strategy and evidence document with various stakeholders and partners for them to share their initial views on homelessness & rough sleeping, and help shape the first draft of the strategy and evidence document before it went out for consultation.

Attendees and representatives:

- Braintree District Council
- Provide
- Eastlight Community Homes
- Essex County Council
- CFS
- Health Watch Essex
- Peabody
- Phoenix Futures
- Nacro
- CHESS Homeless
- First Stop Centre
- Salvation Army/New Directions
- Braintree Foyer
- Mental Health Navigator, Rough Sleepers Initiative
- Hope House Essex
- Anglia Care Trust
- NHS
- Rethink

CONSULTATION

The consultation ran for 10 weeks, from 5th February 2024 to 1st April 2024. The draft strategy and evidence document were published on the Braintree District Council website with the survey.

Throughout the consultation period there was an invitation for interested parties from across the public and private sectors, as well as from the general public to express their views about the strategy.

Public consultation was advertised through:

- 1) A local press release
- 2) Social media – LinkedIn, Facebook & Twitter
- 3) Braintree website
- 4) Discussion at various partnership forums
- 5) A copy of the strategy was available at Causeway House

The strategy, evidence document and survey were sent to key partners which included;

- 1) All attendees of the stakeholder workshop
- 2) Parish Clerks
- 3) Resident Newsletter recipients
- 4) Parish Newsletter recipients
- 5) Homelessness sector organisations
- 6) Faith Groups
- 7) Housing, Communities and Leisure team at BDC
- 8) Wider staff at BDC

Face to face focus groups took place with the following;

- 1) Peabody Outreach Service
- 2) Rough Sleeping Initiative
- 3) Braintree Foyer
- 4) Digby's Court Temporary Accommodation

Essex County Council provided comprehensive feedback to the consultation with recommendations.

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

INTERNAL COMMS

- The consultation was mentioned in The Buzz Braintree DC staff newsletter on 14th February and 13th March 2024.

EXTERNAL COMMS

Media coverage

- One media release was issued during the consultation period on 6th February.
- This resulted in 1 piece of positive local and regional media coverage via In Your Area. However, the strategy has previously been picked up after being mentioned in a Council meeting.

Social media

	Reach	Engagement	Amount of posts
Facebook	17,305	83	7
Twitter/X	146	0	1
Instagram	757	48	2
LinkedIn	1493	108	2
Nextdoor	2869	3	1
Total	22,228	196	12

Date	Platform	Impressions	Engagement	Likes	Comments	Shares	Link Clicks
05/02/2024	Facebook	3,279	7	-	1	5	4
08/02/2024	Instagram	415	2	2	-	-	-
08/02/2024	Facebook	1,729	12	-	12	-	-
12/02/2024	Facebook	3,058	20	2	15	2	-
06/03/2024	Facebook	1,568	4	3	1	-	-
12/03/2024	Facebook	2,177	25	1	24	-	1
21/03/2024	Facebook	622	3	2	-	1	-
25/03/2024	Facebook	4,872	12	5	4	3	-
16/02/2024	LinkedIn	883	82	16	1	-	65
06/02/2024	LinkedIn	610	26	11	-	3	12
25/03/2024	Twitter	146	-	-	-	-	-
21/02/2024	Nextdoor	2,869	3	1	2	-	-
21/02/2024	Instagram	342	46	-	-	-	-
	Total	22,570	242	43	60	14	82

 Braintree District Council
 Published by Stacey Cosens · 12 February ·  

Our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 24-29 is currently open for public consultation. We'd love to hear your views, particularly if you have experienced or faced the risk of homelessness yourself. It should only take 5 minutes of your time.



Website

- The main landing page for the consultation received over 500 views during the consultation period

E-newsletters

	Open rate	Click rate	Amount of mentions	Total website clicks
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Latest news newsletter	47% average <i>(higher than UK average)</i>	5% average <i>(same as UK average)</i>	3	305
The Buzz (Internal newsletter)	50% average <i>(higher than UK average)</i>	17% average <i>(above UK average)</i>	2	6
Parish/town council newsletter	66% <i>(higher than UK average)</i>	9% <i>(higher than UK average)</i>	1	0
Total			6	311

Parish and town councils

- All parish/town councils were emailed on 25th March via the Parish newsletter.

Lessons learnt / summary of comms activity

- There was a good number of responses for a strategy consultation
- There were a lot of negative comments both in the survey and on social media posts about immigration and pressure on housing. It seemed an opportunity to vent about this as well as support for homeless people or military veterans.

Comms specific lessons learnt

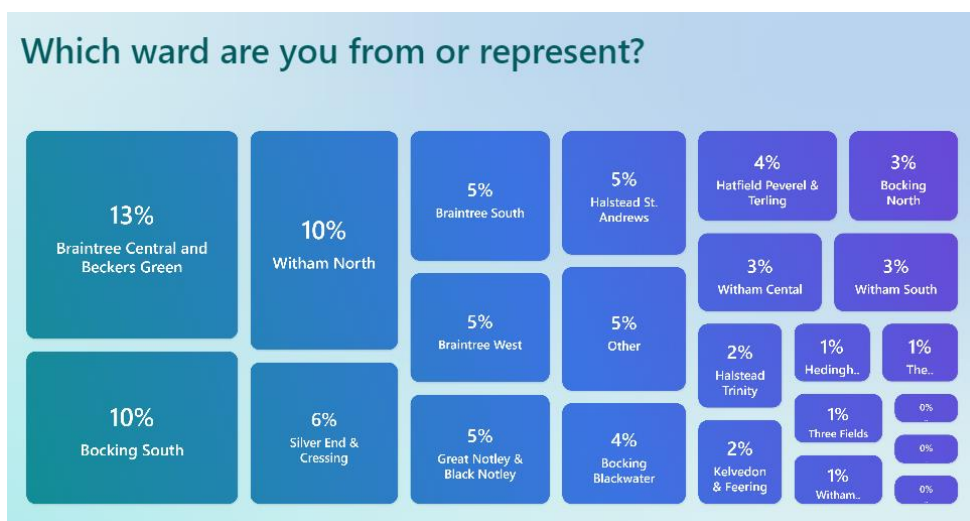
- We received a good amount of interaction on our Instagram story, asking if people thought homeless was an issue in the district. This seems a good way to get people involved.

PUBLIC SURVEY RESULTS

- A total of 118 responses were received
- Received responses from residents, staff members, Parish clerks, community group representatives and H&RS sector workers.



- 87.1% of respondents are members of the public
- 2.6% are either community group representatives or work in the H&RS sector
- 4.7% are BDC staff
- 5.6% are 'Other', where some respondents have written that they are Parish clerks or Parish councillors



- Most represented wards: Braintree Central & Beckers Green, Witham North and Bocking South
- 85% of all wards represented
- Wards with no representation: Bumpstead, Stour Valley North, Stour Valley South, Yeldham
- 5% of respondents were from wards outside of the Braintree district

Respondents were also asked about the style, layout and language of the strategy.

- For style of the strategy, an average of 6.7 out of 10 was given, equating to a response of between neutral and agree that the style was appropriate to its purpose
- For layout of the strategy, an average 6.7 out of 10 was given, equating to a response of between neutral and agree that the layout was good and clear
- For language of the strategy, an average of 6.8 out of 10 was given, equating to a response of to what extent do you agree that the language is easy to understand and makes it clear to the reader

AGE AND DEMOGRAPHICS

- 49% of respondents were aged 50-69
- 25% were aged 70+
- 18% were aged 30-49
- 3% were aged under 29
- 5% chose not to give their age

- 66% of respondents were female
- 28% were male
- 5% chose not to give their gender
- 1% chose 'Other'

- 84% of respondents were from a white ethnic background
- 2% were from an Asian ethnicity
- 2% were from a Black ethnicity
- 2% were from a Mixed or multiple ethnicity
- 10% preferred not to divulge their ethnicity

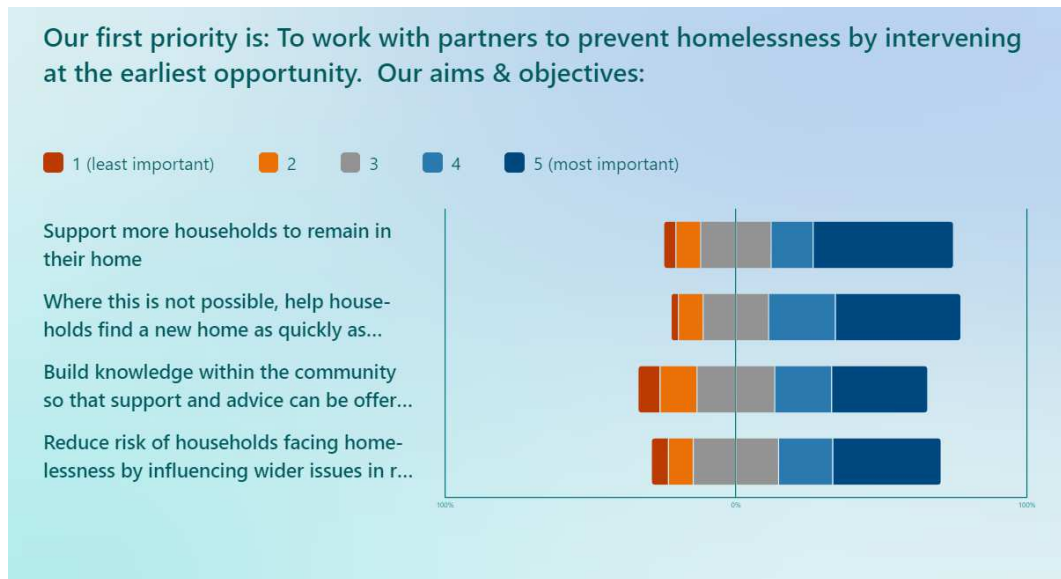
These figures accurately reflect the wider demographics of the district.

VISION, OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES

For each of the priorities, respondents were asked to give a rating from 1-5 (1 being lowest) on how important they personally deem each objective of the priority to be.

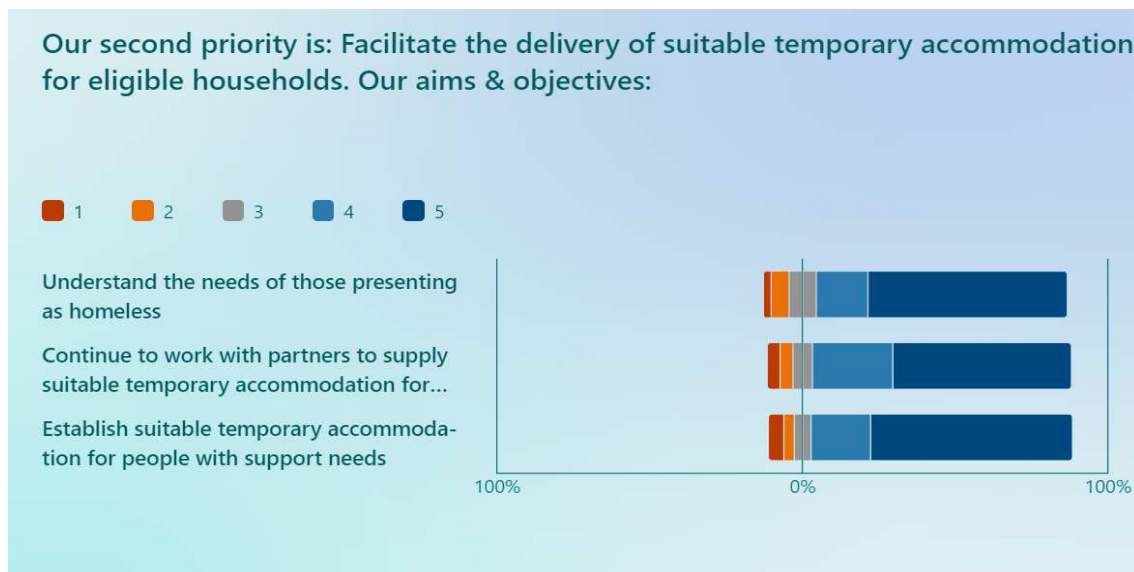
The further the overall bar stretches to the right (towards 100%) the more the general feeling of importance was with that particular objective. The individual sections of the bar represent each category of relative importance, for example, a larger red portion would mean more people rated that objective as 'least important'. The larger the dark blue section, then the more respondents ranked that as the most important.

Priority 1: To work with partners to prevent homelessness by intervening at the earliest opportunity



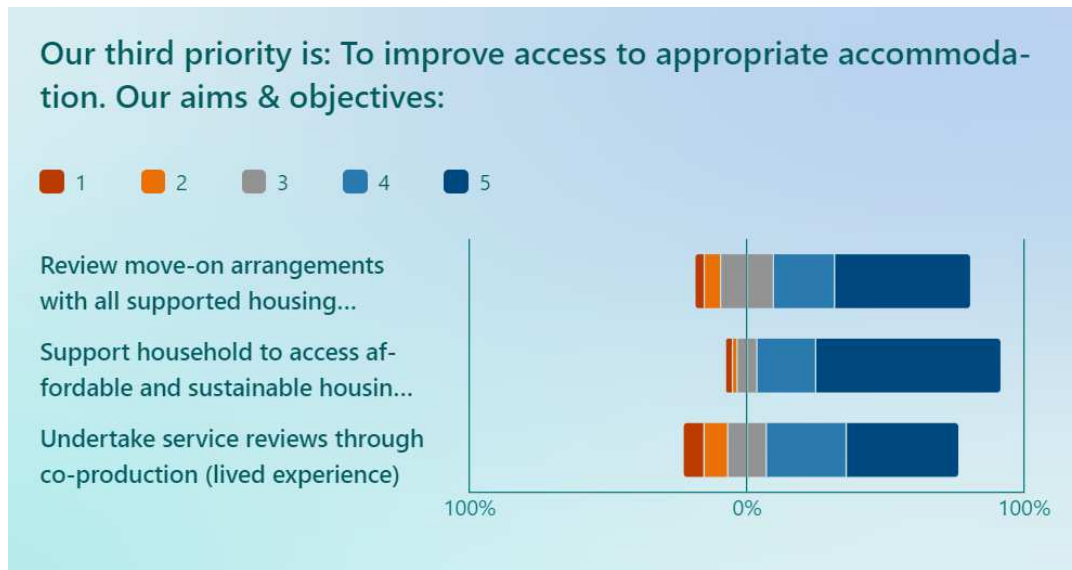
The objective of ‘helping households find a new home as quickly as possible’ ranked highest out of the 4, with 66.1% of all respondents ranking this either a 4 or 5 in terms of level of importance. Building knowledge within the community ranked lowest 52.6%.

Priority 2: Facilitate the delivery of suitable temporary accommodation for eligible households.



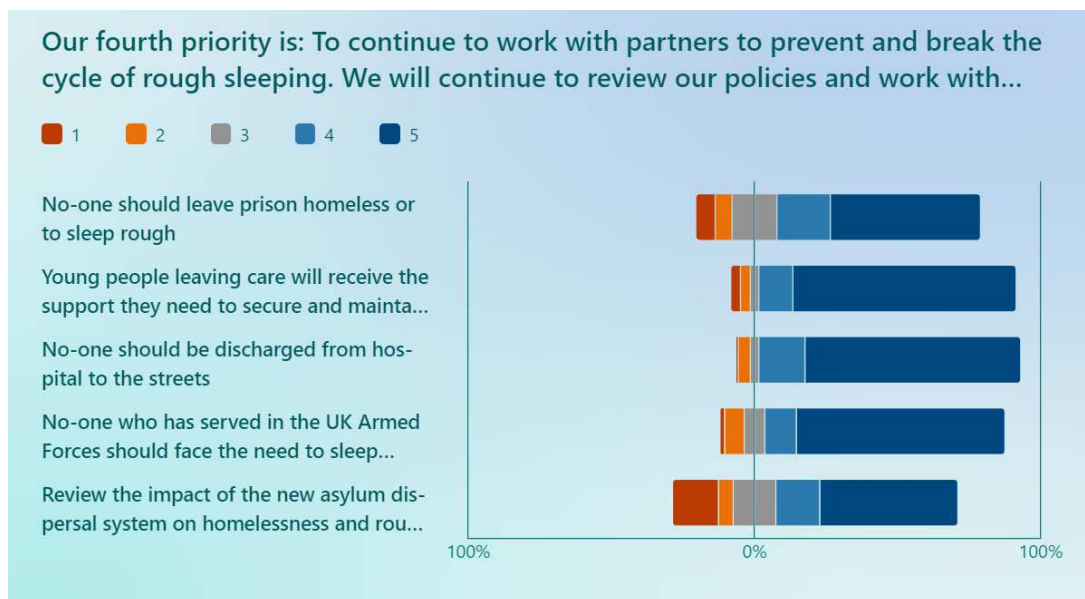
All 3 of the objectives appeared to resonate with all responses, with them all being given high scores of relative importance, showing that the public believe that having suitable temporary accommodation is a high priority. 85.6% of respondents ranked ‘establish suitable temporary accommodation for people with support needs’ as the most important of the 3 objectives, giving 4 or 5 out of 5.

Priority 3: To improve access to appropriate accommodation.



Affordable housing was highlighted here as being given a greater importance than the other objectives, with a score of 88.1% of respondents giving it 4 or 5, whereas the undertaking of service reviews through co-production was scored lower and less people deemed that as a priority at 69.5%.

Priority 4: To continue to work with partners to prevent and break the cycle of rough sleeping. We will continue to review our policies and work with partners to meet the ambition set out in DLUHC’s Ending Rough Sleeping for Good.



There was a significant increase in the number of ‘1’ scores of lowest importance given to the objective regarding asylum dispersal systems, as well as several negative comments around refugees and asylum seekers. 21.2% of respondents ranked this objective either a 1 or 2, which was the highest percentage for the lowest ranking numbers out of all the objectives for all priorities. Prison releases also scored lower on the scale, whereas people leaving hospital, care or the Armed Forces scored much higher in terms of relative importance to the public, with the three receiving 91.5%, 89.9% and 83.9% respectively for 4 or 5 out of 5 scores.

33% of respondents who chose to comment mentioned refugees or asylum seekers in their comment for any of the priorities. 93% of these comments could be deemed to be negative towards refugees or asylum seekers. 85% of these negative responders were aged between 50 and 69.

Overall, the following is a summary of all the objectives in the order of which ones received the most 4 or 5 ratings of importance and therefore got closest to 100%, meaning that the public deemed these to be more important:

Priority 1

66.1% - Where it is not possible for a household to remain in their home, help households find a new home as quickly as possible

62.7% - Support more households to remain in their home

55.9% - Reduce risk of households facing homelessness by influencing wider issues in relation to vulnerability to homelessness and the local housing market

52.6% - Build knowledge within the community so that support and advice can be offered at the earliest opportunity

Priority 2

85.6% - Establish suitable temporary accommodation for people with support needs

84.8% - Continue to work with partners to supply suitable temporary accommodation for eligible households to move into

82.2% - Understand the needs of those presenting as homeless

Priority 3

88.1% - Support household to access affordable and sustainable housing options which are suitable for their needs

71.2% - Review move-on arrangements with all supported housing providers

69.5% - Undertake service reviews through co-production (lived experience)

Priority 4

91.5% - No-one should be discharged from hospital to the streets

89.9% - Young people leaving care will receive the support they need to secure and maintain suitable accommodation

83.9% - No-one who has served in the UK Armed Forces should face the need to sleep rough

71.1% - No-one should leave prison homeless or to sleep rough

63.6% - Review the impact of the new asylum dispersal system on homelessness and rough sleeping

Below are some word clouds generated from the free text sections of the survey, where respondents were given the opportunity to write their thoughts and comments for each priority and generally about the strategy itself.



Figure 1 - Priority 1 Comments

32% of people that commented suggested that the first priority should always be to prevent homelessness. Prioritisation of local people also featured with 13% of commenters for this first priority voicing their concerns that local people appear to be losing out to refugees or asylum seekers.



Figure 2 - Priority 2 Comments

Yet again, prioritising local people was the common thread for the second priority, with 23% of comments featuring this same theme. Having more suitable temporary accommodation was also high on most respondents agendas, with 13% of comments featuring support for building and providing more temporary accommodation to suit the needs of the people that require it.



Figure 3 - Priority 3 Comments

More options to move on to suitable accommodation featured the most frequently in the comments for priority 3, which correlates with the notion that the public also believe there is a lack of affordable and social housing, which also featured highly. These two themes that crossover took up 60% of all comments for this priority.



Figure 4 - Priority 4 Comments

As mentioned previously, the feelings from the public around refugees and asylum seekers were made abundantly clear in this comment section of priority 4 with 48% of comments featuring this theme. Other themes were around having more affordable social housing (17%), more night shelters (13%) and giving priority to veterans and consulting with rough sleepers (both 10%).

RESULTS AND FEEDBACK FROM FOCUS GROUPS

ATTENDEES

- Peabody (15/02/2024): 2 staff members, 1 of which was previously a care leaver, 1 of which was previously in prison.
- Rough Sleepers Initiative (05/03/2024): 1 staff member who specialises in mental health & homelessness.
- Braintree Foyer (05/03/2024): 3 staff members, 1 of which was previously a resident, 4 current residents, 3 males and 1 female, aged 18-35
- Digby's Court Temporary Accommodation (28/03/2024): 2 staff members, both had lived experience of homelessness and 1 female resident.

PRIORITY 1: WORK WITH PARTNERS TO PREVENT HOMELESSNESS BY INTERVENING AT THE EARLIEST OPPORTUNITY.

Accessibility of services:

- services too far away; night shelters in Chelmsford and Colchester, Open Road in Chelmsford, Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous in Dunmow
- services only open at certain times; timekeeping of homeless people is often poor so they struggle to attend appointments or services at the right time
- referral processes need to be more accessible; paperwork is overwhelming and some people are illiterate so require extra help to complete the forms

Approachability of services:

- people reluctant to approach services due to the formality and stigma surrounding them
- services need to be promoted in a different way
- services need to approach individuals, not the other way round
- talking to people in an environment that is comfortable for them is more effective
- language used by services needs to be carefully considered; people won't approach services that think they need 'hand-holding'

Gaps in services:

- services not equipped to deal with high support needs, particularly mental health
- CHES and First Stop are great but they don't provide hot meals
- lack of support for institutionalised individuals; NACRO 'Through the Gate' scheme had staff meet prison leavers which was really effective, but this isn't running anymore
- service gap for districts with low numbers of homeless people; resources are often centred around larger areas with more homeless individuals, but these areas already have lots of resources available

Support for mental health:

- NHS 111 service and IAPT support is poor
- people are just put on medication; there needs to be more long-term solutions and monitoring of mental health

- uncertainty increases stress
- access to exercise and a gym improves mental health, e.g. Braintree Foyer have their own gym which they also offer to the public

Education and training:

- people don't know where to get help
- silo working, not all organisations are aware of what others are doing
- need an information leaflet about services and their processes
- education and research needed around adverse childhood experiences and trauma informed approaches
- needs to be better regular training for frontline services surrounding mental health and housing legislation

Communication:

- need a centralised platform where services can share ideas
- lack of communication; duplication of documents and work, and inconsistent support
- transparency is important between support services and support recipients

Policies and regulations:

- rules don't allow for complex cases
- policies and procedures restrict job roles; staff have to go above and beyond to provide effective support
- expectations of services can often be a barrier to delivering customer-led support; services may need to go against what they are commissioned for in order to provide successful support
- lack of information sharing due to GDPR; often services ask for consent from the data subject which slows down the support process
- people are often happy for their data to be shared and many of them assume this is already being done; people are fed up with having to fill out forms and explain their situation multiple times to different services

PRIORITY 2: FACILITATE THE DELIVERY OF SUITABLE TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION FOR ELIGIBLE HOUSEHOLDS.

Suitability of TA:

- staff in TA are not trained to deal with complex support needs; they can only point people in the right direction, e.g. GP
- need more trained people on-call to help staff in TA
- hospitalised mental health patients face delayed discharges because there is no accommodation suitable for them

- lack of supported TA means more people are placed out of district
- age restrictions in TA don't help to create a balanced community

Out of district placements:

- need to reduce the number of out of district placements
- some services are not contracted or commissioned to travel out of their area
- out of district placements are detrimental to the mental health of individuals

HMOs:

- need to be more aware of who is placed in HMOs
- residents that are ex-offenders or have complex needs often don't get on which creates a negative environment
- sometimes HMOs make it difficult to create a positive intention within the community

Institutionalised individuals:

- living alone is difficult but living in HMOs is sometimes not the best option; two bed units have been effective in the past
- a priority for care leavers is that they need to feel safe; not many of them feel safe in TA

PRIORITY 3: IMPROVE ACCESS TO APPROPRIATE ACCOMMODATION.

Move-on accommodation:

- lack of move-on accommodation
- any personal progress made by individuals in TA is lost if there is no move-on accommodation
- need alternative sources of accommodation (besides PRS), e.g. some jobs and volunteering can provide accommodation
- people are open to shared tenancy, e.g. two beds (particularly if they know the other person)
- security and stability are important but lifelong tenancies are not offered anymore
- need more social housing; many were sold through right-to-buy but weren't replaced

Employment:

- lack of incentive to work as people know the rent will go up; need to be educated that even though the rent may go up, they will still have more money in their pocket at the end of the month
- better to work 1-2 days or full-time; working 3-4 days leaves you with less money which means transitioning into full-time work can build arrears

PRS:

- very rarely to people move into the private rented sector as the costs are too high and it is inaccessible; people need a guarantor, good credit scores, and a deposit which is unlikely if you have been homeless
- PRS isn't secure; people from traumatic backgrounds want stability
- private landlords don't share the same social value as social landlords; even if a property is labelled as a 'supported network project', the owners are still first and foremost letting agents
- landlords need an incentive e.g. sustained financial support

Moving out of TA:

- finding accommodation is not enough
- first week in a tenancy is often worse than living in TA; sometimes households wait months for their gas/electricity/water to start working (particularly in new builds)
- people need help finding furniture and appliances
- moving out of TA is extremely stressful as it happens so quickly; sometimes it happens so quick that services cannot support them during this process

Tenancy sustainment:

- massive issue, particularly amongst institutionalised individuals and those with complex needs
- needs to be more tenancy sustainment staff that also specialise in mental health
- JRP paperwork needs to include more detail; the risks of mental health patients aren't being captured which means some people might not have the tenancy sustainment support they need

Gateway to Home Choice:

- waiting lists too long
- system issues can lead to people losing their effective date
- people need to be educated about the process
- many people lose or forget their login details; an AI system could be put in place to handle these queries

PRIORITY 4: CONTINUE TO WORK WITH PARTNERS TO PREVENT AND BREAK THE CYCLE OF ROUGH SLEEPING.

Ex-offenders:

- many people come out of prison and move straight to rough sleeping
- any previous support networks are lost if they are in prison for a longer period, as services no longer see them as eligible
- probation service can be very evasive when it comes to information sharing which makes it difficult to understand the risks associated with each individual

SWEP (severe weather emergency protocol):

- not activated unless cold weather prolongs over certain periods
- rough sleepers are vulnerable if there are only a few days cold weather but this can still have drastic impacts on their health
- many rough sleepers don't even know SWEP exists so won't seek the help they are eligible for

Support for rough sleepers:

- rough sleepers often struggle to engage with support services
- they are more vulnerable to substance misuse and mental health issues
- females are more vulnerable than males due to assault/abuse
- lack of support if someone is suddenly made homeless; need an emergency accommodation or night shelter in the district
- many people go to leisure centres/gyms for showers and to places where they can get free Wi-Fi to access support; staff in these areas need to be aware of this and contact support services
- police don't help unless arrested; some people get arrested on purpose so the police will refer them to support
- an information leaflet is needed for rough sleepers in interim
- Rough Sleepers Initiative needs to be expanded and connected with housing associations and support services

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 – HOMELESSNESS & ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY DOCUMENT



Draft 7 - Homelessness & Rou

APPENDIX 2 – HOMELESSNESS & ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY EVIDENCE DOCUMENT



Draft 8 -
Homelessness & Roug

APPENDIX 3 – HOMELESSNESS & ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY SURVEY

**Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy (consultation/stakeholder engagement) –
Questionnaire**

The consultation period is an opportunity for interested parties from across the public and private sectors, and especially organisations that work directly with rough sleepers and those at risk of becoming homeless, to express their views on the Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 – 2029 by means of an online survey, face to face discussions, and email feedback. The online survey will be available for the full consultation period from 5th February 2024 until 8th April 2023. We would like to know what priorities are most important to you, so the survey has been designed to give everyone with an interest in the strategy the opportunity to contribute.

You can find a copy of the strategy here: (insert link to latest version of strategy)

You can find a copy of the evidence document that was used to inform the strategy here: (insert link to evidence document)

Section 1

About you

Which statement best describes you?

- Member of the public
- Parish Councillor
- Community group/charity representative
- Private rented sector landlord/agent
- Affordable or Social housing provider
- Development, construction or planning professional
- BDC Staff
- Other.....

Which ward are you from or represent?

(option to select ward)

Section 2

Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy Priorities

The aim of the Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy is to prevent homelessness at an early stage and, where this is not possible, to support homeless households and those in housing need to secure suitable affordable housing.

For each objective of the priorities, please tick the relevant box which relates to how important that particular objective is to you. (1 to 5 ranking question, 1 being least important/not important at all and 5 being most important)

Our first priority is: To work with partners to prevent homelessness by intervening at the earliest opportunity. Our aims:

- Support those at risk of homelessness to remain in their homes or to find a new home without an intervening period of homelessness.
- Work with local organisations and our partners to expand, better resource and publicise existing early intervention.
- Build knowledge within the community to offer support and advice at the earliest opportunity.

Our second priority is: To facilitate the delivery of suitable temporary accommodation for eligible households. Our aims:

- Review temporary accommodation in the district.
- Understand the needs of those presenting as homeless.
- Establish suitable accommodation for people with support needs.

Our third priority is: To improve access to appropriate accommodation.

Our aims:

- Review move-on arrangements with all supported housing providers.
- Monitor and report on changes in patterns of demand as overall growth increases.
- Undertake service review through co-production (lived experience).

Our fourth priority is: To continue to work with partners to prevent and break the cycle of rough sleeping. We will continue to review our policies and work with partners to meet the ambition set out in DLUHC's Ending Rough Sleeping for Good. Our aims:

- No-one should leave prison homeless or to sleep rough.

- Young people leaving care will receive the support they need to secure and maintain suitable accommodation.
- No-one should be discharged from hospital to the streets.
- No-one who has served in the UK Armed Forces should face the need to sleep rough.
- Review the impact of the new asylum dispersal system on homelessness and rough sleeping.

Section 3

We would like to know if you feel anything has been missed in this strategy, please feel free to leave your thoughts and opinions in the box below:

(comment here)

Any other comments? Please feel free to make any additional comments regarding the Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy below:

(comment here)

Section 4

Style and Layout

Please tick the appropriate box that reflects your opinion (strongly disagree to strongly agree)

I feel the style of the strategy is appropriate to its purpose

I feel the layout of the strategy is good and clear

The language is easy to understand and makes it clear to the reader

Demographics

- Age
- Gender
- Ethnicity

Would you be happy to be contacted to discuss any of your comments or suggestions and/or would you like the opportunity to be involved with other consultations on any further policies or strategies?

Yes please, my details are (insert email) No thank you

Report Title: Proposed Variation to the Braintree District Council Off Street Parking Places Order 2023	
Report to: Cabinet	
Date: 20 th May 2024	For: Decision
Key Decision: Yes	Decision Planner Ref No: DP/2024/09
Report Presented by: Councillor Kevin Bowers, Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Performance.	
Enquiries to: Esme McCambridge – esme.mccambridge@braintree.gov.uk	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To seek Member approval to vary the Braintree District Council (the Council) Off Street Parking Places Order 2023 (OSPPO) to facilitate public parking on a Friday evening at Causeway House car park, Braintree.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To approve a variation to the Braintree District Council OSPPO to introduce Pay & Display parking at Causeway House car park, Braintree, on a Friday evening from 7pm until 7am the following day, with effect from 1 August 2024.

3. Summary of Issues

- 3.1 The Institute, Braintree, (The Institute) approached the Council to enquire about the possibility of introducing public parking at Causeway House on a Friday evening to accommodate people attending events at the venue. However, there may be other businesses (pubs, restaurants, etc.) in the near vicinity that would also welcome additional parking on a Friday evening closer to this side of town.
- 3.2 The Council already offers Pay & Display parking at Causeway House during the weekends, but parking from Monday to Friday has traditionally been restricted to councillors, staff, tenants and visitors to the building. Since covid and the introduction of flexible working, demand for parking space at Causeway House has reduced and, with no evening meetings scheduled on Fridays, there is scope to extend the Pay & Display option to include Friday evenings. Members and staff would retain the option of free parking providing they are genuinely on Council business and their vehicle is displaying their BDC permit, as is the case in the Council's other Pay & Display car parks.
- 3.3 The Council has 3 public Pay & Display car parks in Braintree Town Centre: these are at Victoria Square, Station Approach, and the multi-storey car park at George Yard. However, the latter closes at 7pm and extending public parking at Causeway House to include a Friday evenings would provide

additional parking to help support the night-time economy in the town centre and generate some additional income for the Council.

- 3.4 It is proposed that the parking tariff aligns with that for overnight parking in the Council's other Pay & Display car parks which is £1 from 7pm to 7am the following day. Whilst this may not generate a significant increase in revenue, it will continue to enhance the relationship between the business community and the Council, as well as offering an alternative parking solution to people visiting the town during these hours.
- 3.5 The North Essex Parking Partnership would assume responsibility for parking enforcement in line with all the Council's other Pay & Display car parks.
- 3.6 The recommendation set out in this report will help the Council to deliver the following Corporate Objectives:
 - A sustainable environment and a great place to live, work and play;
 - A high performing organisation that delivers excellent and value for money services; and
 - Delivering better outcomes for residents and businesses and reducing costs to taxpayers.

4. Consultation

- 4.1 In accordance with section 35C of the Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and regulation 25 of the Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996 there are no statutory requirements to consult on the variation to the charges at this car park.

5. Options

- 5.1 **Option 1:** Do nothing. This option is not recommended as it would mean that the patrons of The Institute, as well as other visitors to the town centre on a Friday evening, would not be able to use the Causeway House car park for public parking.
- 5.2 **Option 2: (RECOMMENDED)** Approve the proposed variation to the OSPPO to facilitate public parking at Causeway House, Braintree, on a Friday evening to enable patrons of The Institute to park close to the venue, whilst providing other visitors to the town with additional off-street parking. The Council will be seen to support local arts and heritage and the Friday night-time economy.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 In order to implement the variation, there will be some expenditure including for publication of a notice in the local newspaper and an update to the current tariff board in the car park at Causeway House. The parking machines will also require a software update to facilitate the change. The cost of these changes will be funded within existing budgets.

- 6.2 The additional tariff will marginally increase revenue, but there is no expectation that it will significantly improve the Council's overall financial situation. It is difficult to quantify the small amount of income that will be generated from the charge on a Friday evening, as the usage is currently unknown. As an example, if 10 customers pay to use the car park every Friday evening over a 12-month period, the income will be approx. £433.00 exclusive of VAT.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 The variation to the OSPPO will be carried out in accordance with section 35C of the Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and regulation 25 of the Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996 and in particular, a Notice of Variation will be published in a local newspaper (and displayed in the car park) giving at least twenty one days' notice of the variation to the OSPPO.

8. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 8.1 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 creates the public sector equality duty which requires that when the Council makes decisions it must have regard to the need to:

- (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act
- (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

- 8.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).

- 8.3 The Equality Impact Assessment indicates that the proposals in this report will not have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic.

9. Background Papers

- 9.1 Braintree District Council (Off Street Parking Places) Order 2023.

Report Title: Public Spaces Protection Order – Braintree Town Centre	
Report to: Cabinet	
Date: 20 th May 2024	For: Decision
Key Decision: Yes	Decision Planner Ref No: DP/2024/13
Report Presented by: Councillor Mary Cunningham, Cabinet Member for Stronger Communities	
Enquiries to: Tracey Parry, Community Services Manager tracey.parry@braintree.gov.uk	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report brings forward the concerns arising from antisocial behaviour within the Braintree Town Centre. In order for Braintree District Council (the Council) to consider options available for the future management of antisocial behaviour, the Council wishes to conduct a 28-day public consultation.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet agrees that a 28-day public consultation will take place to inform the Councils consideration for a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) for the management of antisocial behaviour within Braintree Town Centre.
- 2.2 To delegate authority to the Cabinet Member for Supporting Communities to make a Public Spaces Protection Order, following the conclusion of the consultation and where there is evidential support to do so.

3. Summary of Issues

- 3.1 Over the last four years Braintree Town Centre has experienced on-going anti-social behaviour issues which have impacted on local businesses and those visiting the town centre. Reports have been received from local businesses including Branocs & Connells Estate Agents in Great Square, Barclays Bank in Bank Street, the Conservative Club and the Town Hall Centre; along with members of the public, those living in residential properties within the town centre.
- 3.2 The behaviours being reported to the Council include:
- The consumption of alcohol in a manner that causes or is likely to cause harassment, alarm, distress, nuisance, or annoyance to any person.
 - Aggressive begging – begging in such a manner likely to cause harassment, alarm, or distress.

- Threatening, disorderly, abusive, aggressive and or unacceptable behaviour.
 - Carrying out sexual acts in public view.
 - Exposing (flashing) intimate body parts in public view.
 - Urinating and/or defecating in the open air and/or within public view.
 - Obstructing access to or egress from premises or land within the restricted area.
 - Use of illegal substances;
 - Causing criminal damage; and
 - Verbal and racially abuse.
- 3.3 The Council are also experiencing antisocial behaviour issues in Victoria Car Park with inappropriate activation of call points, car nuisance & vandalism, drug dealing, urination & rough sleeping. Over the course of a 12-month period the Council have spent approximately £30k on remediating these matters at this location alone.
- 3.4 A range of partnership interventions have and continue to be delivered including:
- High visibility joint patrols between the Council and Essex Police;
 - Working with Stars (Specialist Treatment & Recovery Service) to alter the regularity of methadone prescribing to individuals from weekly to daily;
 - Locating the SOS Bus in the town centre at various times and dates during 2022–24.
 - Issuing of Community Protection Warnings and Community Protection Notices to specific individuals; and
 - Operation Grip – hot spot policing with three patrols per day within the town centre.
- 3.5 In 2014, the Home Office published statutory guidance to support the effective use of new powers to tackle anti-social behaviour through the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime & Policing Act 2014 (the 2014 Act).
- 3.6 PSPOs are one of the tools available under the 2014 Act and can be used to prohibit specified activities, and/or require certain things to be done by people engaged activities, within a defined public area. They differ from other tools under the 2014 Act as rather than targeting specific individuals or properties, they focus on the identified problem behaviour in a specific location (a public space).
- 3.7 PSPOs can be introduced for identified public areas where the local authority is satisfied that certain conditions have been met. These include identification that the activities that have taken place have had a detrimental effect on the quality of life of those in the locality, or it is likely that activities will take place and that they will have a detrimental effect; and that the effect or likely effect of these activities is likely to be, persistent or continuing in nature; is, or is likely to be reasonable.

3.8 As part of the Government's ASB Action Plan launched in March 2023, it was announced that a number of police force areas across the country would be funded to support new 'hotspot' police and enforcement patrols in areas with the highest rates of ASB. The Essex Police and Crime Commissioner area was chosen as a pilot area and now in the second year of the pilot Braintree Town Centre has been identified in the Top 10% of Essex Police Forces incidents of anti-social behaviour (ASB). This project has been named Operation Dial and funding will be made available to local policing teams and local authorities to carry out patrols and days/nights of action.

3.9 The recommendations set out in this report will help the Council to deliver the following Corporate Objectives:

- A sustainable environment and a great place to live, work and play;
- A prosperous district that attracts business growth and provides high quality employment opportunities;
- Residents live well in healthy and resilient communities where residents feel supported;

4. Consultation

4.1 Before introducing a PSPO, there are requirements under the 2014 Act regarding consultation, publicity, and notification. Local Authorities are required to consult with the local Chief Officer of Police; the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner for Essex; owners or occupiers of land within the affected area and any appropriate community representatives

4.2 Informal consultation has already taken place with the Braintree & Uttlesford Chief Inspector from Essex Police who has indicated support of the use of a Public Spaces Protection Order for the described purpose.

4.3 A range of consultation methods should be used to reach out to potential respondents. The Council will be undertaking its consultation through us of its website, which will contain the draft PSPO together with a short questionnaire for individuals to complete. The website and questionnaire will be promoted through the Councils social media channels and through posters in and around the town centre, and through direct letters to all businesses and residential properties within Braintree Town Centre and a public notice to be displayed in the defined area.

4.4 The consultation process for the PSPO in Braintree Town Centre will take place over a period of 28 days and will commence as soon as reasonably practicable if approval is received. The draft PSPO is attached in Appendix A.

5. Options

5.1 Option 1: To approve the recommendations as set out in paragraph 2 above.

This is the recommended option as it will allow the Council to formally consult on the use of a PSPO and assist the Council in gathering additional evidence required as part of its overall consideration for the future management of antisocial behaviour within the town centre.

- 5.2 Option 2: Should the Council choose not to carry out the consultation at this stage, then it will not be able to consider introducing a PSPO in the future, which will result in on-going complaints from local residents and businesses a negative impact on the use and footfall within the town centre and the inability to deal effectively with persistent anti-social behaviour.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1 Launch the consultation of a PSPO in Braintree Town Centre.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 The cost of the consultation and implementation of the Public Spaces Protection Order will be met from within existing budgets and resources.

8. Legal Implications

- 8.1 *In undertaking the consultation, the Council is following the legislative provisions and the guidelines issued to help inform its future decision making concerning the management of antisocial behaviour within the Braintree Town Centre.
- 8.2 Once concluded, the Council will review all the evidence held, and the consultation response and consider whether a PSPO is required at this time. If so, a further decision will be taken by the Cabinet Member for Supporting Communities, in accordance with the recommendations set out in this report.

9. Other Implications

- 9.1 At the time of writing this report, there are no other implications arising from the recommendations set out in this report. All further impacts will be considered at the time the Council considering imposing a PSPO.

10. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 10.1 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 creates the public sector equality duty which requires that when the Council makes decisions it must have regard to the need to:
- (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act
 - (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

- (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.
- 10.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).
- 10.3 The Equality Impact Assessment indicates that the proposals in this report will not have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic.
- 11. Appendix**
- 11.1 Appendix A – Draft PSPO
- 12. Background Papers**
- 12.1 [Local Government Association – Public Spaces Protection Orders – Guidance for Councils](#)
- 12.2 EQIA



Braintree District Council
Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
THE BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL PUBLIC SPACES
PROTECTION ORDER
(Braintree Town Centre and Surrounding Area) 2024

The Braintree District Council (“the Council”) makes this Order under Part 4, section 59 of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 (the 2014 Act), having consulted as required by section 72.

The order comes into force on [**date to be inserted**] for a period of 3 years. It applies to the public place, “the Restricted Area” shaded in orange on the plan attached at Schedule 1 to the Order.

Under section 74 (1) of the 2014 Act, “public place” means any place to which the public or any section of the public has access, on payment or otherwise, as of right or by virtue of express or implied permission.

The Council is satisfied that activities have been carried out in the Restricted Area which have had a detrimental effect on the quality of life of those in the locality. Further, it is satisfied that the effect of these activities is or is likely to be of a persistent or continuing nature, is or is likely to be such as to make the activities unreasonable and justifies the restrictions imposed by this order.

The activities that the Council are satisfied have been carried out are as follows:

1. The consumption of alcohol in a manner that causes or is likely to cause harassment, alarm, distress, nuisance, or annoyance to any person.
2. Aggressive begging – begging in such a manner likely to cause harassment, alarm, or distress.
3. Threatening, disorderly, abusive, aggressive and or unacceptable behaviour.
4. Carrying out sexual acts in public view.
5. Exposing (flashing) intimate body parts in public view.
6. Urinating and/or defecating in the open air and/or within public view.

7. Obstructing access to or egress from premises or land within the restricted area.

The Council therefore under section 59(4) prohibits within the Restricted Area:

1. Consumption of alcohol

The consumption of alcohol in a manner that causes or is likely to cause harassment, alarm, distress, nuisance, or annoyance to any person is prohibited.

If a Constable or an Authorised Officer reasonably believes that a person is or has been consuming alcohol in a manner that causes or is likely to cause intimidation, harassment, alarm, distress, nuisance, or annoyance to any person within the restricted area, they may require that person:

- a. Not to consume alcohol or anything which the Constable or Authorised Officer reasonably believes to be alcohol.
- b. To surrender anything in that person's possession which is, or which the constable or authorised person reasonably believes to be alcohol or a container or vessel for alcohol to be disposed of as they deem fit.

Offence of consumption of alcohol in breach of prohibition in Order and failure to comply with a requirement imposed under Section 63 (2) of the 2014 Act.

A person who fails without reasonable excuse to comply with a requirement imposed on him or her by a Constable or Authorised Officer commits an offence, contrary to s.63 (6) of the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 and is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 2 on the standard scale.

A Constable or Authorised Officer may under section 68 of the 2014 Act issue a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) to anyone he or she has reason to believe has committed an offence under sections 63 of the 2014 Act in relation to a requirement imposed by virtue this Order.

2. Aggressive begging

No person may aggressively beg for food, money, or other items. This includes:

- begging in a manner that causes or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm, or distress.
- begging with an intent to intimidate which may include repeated requests.
- approaching or following a person whilst making a request.
- continuing to make requests when a negative response has been given.
- begging with use of false or misleading information.
- involving activities that are unsafe or dangerous to any person or property.

- attempting to provide or deliver unrequested or unsolicited services or products with a demand or pressure for money.

3. Threatening, abusive, aggressive, unacceptable behaviour

No person may use language or behave in a manner that causes or is likely to cause harassment, alarm, and distress. This includes:

- Using foul or offensive language at a level that is likely to cause offence to others.
- Use of derogative comments or gestures to another person.
- Making any gestures or language to others that could be deemed as a threat of violence.
- Carrying out any sexual acts in public view.
- Exposing (flashing) intimate body parts in public view.
- Urinating and/or defecating anywhere within the restricted area (other than within a Public Convenience), that is in the open air and/or within public view.

The restrictions will be in place in the area marked orange in the map below (Schedule 1).

Offence of failing to comply with this Order, other than alcohol related matters.

It is an offence for a person without reasonable excuse—

(a) to do anything that the person is prohibited from doing by a public spaces protection order, or

(b) to fail to comply with a requirement to which the person is subject under a public spaces protection order.

A person guilty of an offence under this section is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 3 on the standard scale.

A Constable or an Authorised Officer may issue a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) to anyone he or she has reason to believe has committed an offence under section 67 of the 2014 Act in relation to this Public Spaces Protection Order.

Appeals

Any challenge to this Order, in accordance with section 66 of the 2014 Act, must be made in the High Court by an interested person within six weeks of it being made. An interested person is someone who lives in, regularly works in, or visits the restricted area. This means that only those who are directly affected by the restrictions have the power to challenge. The right to challenge also exists where an Order is varied by the Council.

Interested persons can challenge the validity of this order on two grounds: that the Council did not have power to make the order, or to include particular prohibitions or requirements; or that one of the requirements of the legislation, for instance consultation, has not been complied with.

Where an application is made, the High Court can decide to suspend the operation of the order pending the Court's decision, in part or in totality. The High Court has the ability to uphold the order, quash it, or vary it.