A person wearing a dark, hooded jacket is sitting on a patterned mat on a street. They are looking down, and their hands are tucked into their jacket. The background is a blurred street scene with buildings.

## **Sefton's Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029**

Action Plan (Summer 2024)

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# Executive Summary

In 2023, researchers from Imogen Blood & Associates were asked to review Sefton's Homelessness services. In July and August 2023, the researchers:

- visited twelve different homelessness services.
- spoke in depth to around 40 people who had used these services.
- spoke to 32 professionals, and another 27 professionals filled in a survey.
- looked at lots of information about homelessness in Sefton.

Imogen Blood & Associates developed the Homeless Review from their research and produced the Strategy. The Strategy sets out the priorities recommended to Sefton Council and organisations it works with to tackle homelessness over the next 5 years.

The Strategy was also subject to a 12-week consultation period to gain the views from organisations and the public.

The following table summarises the priorities and key actions:

## 1. Improve Access to Accommodation

- Develop alternative housing models and pathways for those who are in or close to work, including younger people.
- Improve access to affordable housing, with housing strategy and development decisions to be informed by intelligence and priorities from the review.

## 2. Reduction of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping

- Improve coordination of homelessness prevention activities across sectors, to include a focus on 'hidden' homelessness, tenancy sustainment and pre-eviction protocols.
- Continue to implement, evaluate and develop new approaches to delivering Housing Options services across the whole system.

### **3. Focus on Support**

- Improve accommodation and the provision and coordination of specialist support for people with high health and/or care needs.
- Implement housing-led oversight within the supported housing pathway and improve data reporting so this can be used to monitor whole system performance.
- Improve the quality of emergency bed and temporary accommodation provision and associated support.
- Sustain, further promote and seek to expand floating support, tenancy sustainment and dispersed schemes, especially where there is potential to convert to general needs.

## Links to Sefton's Housing Strategy




<b>Action / Recommendation.</b>	Tackling all forms of Homelessness.
<b>Contributing Links To Sefton's Core Purpose.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect the most vulnerable</li> <li>• Facilitate confident and resilient communities</li> <li>• Commission broker and provide core services</li> <li>• Place - leadership and influencer</li> <li>• Drivers of change and reform</li> <li>• Generate income for social reinvestment</li> </ul>
<b>Responsibility / Lead Organisation.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sefton Council's Economic Growth and Housing and Communities Departments</li> <li>• External Partners – Homelessness Partnership Forum</li> </ul>
<b>Resources Required.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing and Investment Services/Communities – existing staff resources.</li> <li>• Commissioning of work regarding Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy.</li> <li>• Working with DLUHC and LCRCA to identify resources</li> </ul>
<b>Outcomes Required / Success Measures And Timescales.</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Approval of Sefton's Homelessness &amp; Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024- 2029. April 2024.</li> <li>2. Full implementation of Homelessness Strategy Action Plan following implementation of strategy refresh. Timescale - April 2024 - ongoing</li> <li>3. Annual Rough Sleeper Count &amp; verification. Timescale - Annually (November).</li> <li>4. Quarterly Reviews of this Action Plan at the Homelessness Partnership Forum to track success</li> </ol>

## Priority 1 - Improve Access to Accommodation

- Develop alternative housing models and pathways for those who are in or close to work, including younger people.




The consultant interviewed several supported housing residents who were working or wanted to work and potentially save for a deposit for a private rented property but were restricted in this because of supported housing funding models.

There are examples of affordable sharer models being run elsewhere (see S.5 of Evidence Base Report). The consultant would encourage partnership working between DWP, employability and homelessness services to develop and agree pathways and options for this diverse group.

<p>1. Scope, adapt as necessary for local context and seek to introduce one or more of the suggested models to provide transitional or longer-term sharer models for those who are in or close to work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Speak to HBen about possibilities around this model</li> <li>- Links to existing Floating Support but lack of capacity</li> <li>- Speak to RPs about the possibility of adopting this model for individual properties</li> </ul>	<p>Status – in progress/not yet complete.</p> 
<p>2. Work in partnership across housing, employment and benefits agencies to develop and coordinate this offer.</p>	<p>Status – on track.</p> 
<p>3. Identify and divert individuals from the supported housing pathway into such models at the earliest opportunity to free up supported bedspaces, reduce the risk of avoidable deterioration in people's circumstances, and provide an exit route from homelessness for this group.</p>	<p>Status – on track.</p> 

- Improve access to affordable housing, with housing strategy and development decisions to be informed by intelligence and priorities from the review.

Bold action is clearly needed in relation to housing supply in Sefton as elsewhere and a business case could be made based on potential cost savings to homelessness services. Detailed recommendations in this area are beyond the scope of our review, and we understand some of the following activities are already planned or underway.

<p>1. Review Property Pool Plus policies and processes in relation to their impact on the effective running of homelessness services, and to streamline procedures as far as possible to make best use of staff time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To be taken up at PPP Contract Board to change policy for those in Supported Accommodation</li> <li>- automatic bids on all overstayers</li> <li>- Referral to HOT's EIP team</li> </ul>	<p>Status – in progress</p> 
<p>2. Continue with the HMO licensing scheme to tackle the very poor conditions and harassment from some PRS landlords we heard about in the engagement, especially within Southport.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ongoing</li> </ul>	<p>Status – In progress</p> 
<p>3. Ensure that as Sefton makes plans for its Council Housing Programme (CHP) that models which can provide more permanent housing options for people experiencing homelessness are considered, alongside more cost-effective forms of temporary accommodation (this might, for example include concierge/ extra care type models aimed at this client group).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All options are being considered.</li> <li>- Multiple tenancies into direct matched properties offered by RPs to HOT</li> </ul>	<p>Status – In progress</p> 

4. Invest more in developing partnerships with and attractive offers to private sector landlords. Given the current state of the market, this may need to include the council or other providers leasing from landlords or providing insurance or incentive.
- Council being guarantor for PRS properties.
  - Incentives already offered although EIP Officer is doing an exercise with PRS landlords about what could entice them back.
  - Landlord insurance scheme is a possible blocker?
  - Council looks into landlord insurance policy as an offer to landlords?

Status –  
In progress










## Priority 2 - Reduction of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping

- Improve coordination of homelessness prevention activities across sectors, to include a focus on 'hidden' homelessness, tenancy sustainment and pre- eviction protocols.





The consultant observed the impact of strong multi-agency operational relationships developed in Southport between CVS, council, criminal justice, health and others, and heard how co-location, trauma-informed training, champion schemes and joint projects had contributed to this. Interviewees recognised the different landscape and resources in Bootle for replicating this approach, and the potential benefits which this could have. They were also struck by the breadth of activity across sectors which was contributing to the prevention of homelessness: the consultant heard that people did not always know about these resources and that those running them were sometimes operating in isolation from the rest of the system.

<p>1. Review learning from Light for Light hub model in Southport, and consider how the council, its statutory and voluntary sector partners might coordinate efforts to develop a similar approach in Bootle.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CGL have used the facility in Bootle (L4L &amp; Excel Hub)</li> <li>- Discussions with ICB regarding the possibility of a doctor in south sefton for a homeless service hub</li> </ul>	<p>Status – in progress/not yet complete.</p> 
<p>2. As part of this process, review the delivery of outreach surgeries to homelessness hubs and hostels by drug and alcohol, Probation and other specialist services – this is greatly valued in some settings, but appears to be missing from others, with individuals sometimes having to make long and expensive journeys to appointments in other parts of the borough.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CGL Outreach Worker in Bootle &amp; Southport</li> <li>- Review of whether all Homeless Providers are being served</li> <li>- Setting up locations for Probation meetings and use of the Bootle Hub or CGL offices in Bridle Road?</li> </ul>	<p>Status – In progress</p> 

<p>3. This should be part of a wider strategy to better involve the community, voluntary and faith sector, alongside HOT and commissioners in the delivery of the homelessness strategy. For example, lack of white goods/ furniture, storage of belongings, daytime warm spaces/ activities for people in emergency beds were all highlighted as key challenges and could be addressed through greater coordination of and with community-led resources. These agencies can play a key role in generating intelligence on 'hidden' homelessness. See examples from s.5 of the Evidence Base Report on approaches taken in other areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Links to Life Rooms and Warm Spaces already.</li> <li>- CHART have stores for clients, which could be used on occasions by partners.</li> <li>- CGL have goodwill market in Bridle Road office.</li> <li>- Sefton set-up daily gym passes for those using Sit-Up.</li> <li>- Update partners on Warm Spaces available.</li> <li>- Hugh Baird / Southport college links for younger people in Sit-Up.</li> <li>- Links to ESOL for those not having English as a first language. South Sefton Adult Education Centre or Hugh Baird, Southport College.</li> </ul>	<p>Status – In progress</p> 
<p>4. Ensure that social landlords, DWP and social care are also part of this strategic approach, so as to implement a clear multi-agency approach to early intervention and pre- eviction protocols: at the moment there is a sense that Housing Options are only relevant where there is a risk of homelessness within 56 days.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Links to Social Worker based in HOT.</li> <li>- Weekly HOT meetings with Sefton's largest RP already happening regarding arrears.</li> <li>- Need to start this with other RPs in Sefton.</li> </ul>	<p>Status – on track.</p> 
<p>5. Sustain and more widely promote the Homelessness Forum, or other methods to share information and coordinate activity across statutory and voluntary sectors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In progress</li> </ul>	<p>Status – In progress</p> 

- Continue to implement, evaluate and develop new approaches to delivering Housing Options services across the whole system.

The HOT team are in a process of transition, with new roles and direction - though positively received across stakeholders we spoke to, these are yet to bed in across services. It will be key for HOT to play a pivotal and outward-facing role in this, though there may also be opportunities to sub-contract elements of their statutory role to trusted partners.




<p>1. Continue to develop and evaluate the model of developing specialist roles within HOT to act as link workers across the system, recognising these relationships can take time to develop (as in Leaving Care).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In progress. Joint Protocol with Children's Service 16+17, HOT Prison Worker working well, DA Specialist HOT worker.</li> </ul>	<p>Status – in progress</p> 
<p>2. Finalise the protocol which is being developed with the Leaving Care team to reduce the risk of homelessness at this key transition.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Specialist early intervention worker in HOT who meet weekly with Leaving Care Team. Complete.</li> <li>- PPP policy prioritising care leavers introduced across the region.</li> </ul>	<p>Status – In progress</p> 
<p>3. Adult social care and children's social care (beyond the Leaving Care team) require a similar model with a link worker and protocol – for adult services, this could be achieved via the dedicated social worker already proposed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Commitment to deliver this by ASC</li> <li>- Commitment to have a social worker based in Housing Options Team</li> </ul>	<p>Status – In progress</p> 
<p>4. Continue to develop the drafted pathway for women with complex needs, exploring the opportunities for commissioning Housing First as part of this, in partnership with Liverpool City Region Combined Authority.</p>	<p>Status – Complete</p> 

- New Complex Women's' Domestic Abuse Service commissioned and now live
- Ongoing discussions with LCRCA regarding links to Housing First too

## Priority 3 – Focus on Support




- Improve accommodation and the provision and coordination of specialist support for people with high health and/or care needs.





There is evidence within the review of a small but significant group of people with high healthcare/ care needs (including palliative care needs), alongside complexity arising from substance use, mental health, long-term homelessness. Some of these people are currently accommodated within supported housing schemes. Others are bouncing between hospital and emergency accommodation, leading to significant safeguarding risks.

<p>1. Fund a specialist social worker to work alongside homelessness services to engage, assess and review housing, care and support options for these individuals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Commitment to deliver this</li> </ul>	<p>Status – in progress</p> 
<p>2. Complex needs panel, reporting to Safeguarding Adults Board to enable operational joint working and monitoring of the most multiple disadvantaged individuals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Homelessness Commissioner now a member of the Safeguarding Adults Board from Sept 2024</li> </ul>	<p>Status – Complete</p> 
<p>3. The Strategic Housing Commissioning Group and the proposed Strategic Housing Partnership to develop alternative, longer term (including palliative) housing and care models for those with high levels of complexity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In progress</li> </ul>	<p>Status – In progress</p> 

- Implement housing-led oversight within the supported housing pathway and improve data reporting so this can be used to monitor whole system performance.

The consultant recommends a personalised approach to identifying and advocating for settled housing options for those within the supported housing pathway. Given the huge diversity of residents' circumstances and the considerable challenges around affordable housing supply in the borough, this requires a range of coordinated measures, involving support workers, Housing Options, Property Pool Plus, and Rapid Rehousing Pathway staff, with good links to Housing Strategy, and a range of resources to access PRS properties.






<p>1. Identify who in the system is best placed to provide specialist, personal housing planning and review to residents of supported housing. This might be through further developing and coordinating existing approaches, such as Property Pool Plus surgeries, the Rapid Rehousing Pathway and the HOT Not In Priority Need (NIPN) worker, so this offer is consistent and sufficient.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Advisor from PPP to help with surgeries to remove barriers to PPP.</li> <li>- Overstayers meetings with Providers now taking place on monthly basis to remove as many barriers as possible, which include a PPP Manager</li> </ul>	<p>Status – complete</p> 
<p>2. Ensure there is sufficient expertise and authority within this role, and structures in place to which operational blocks and strategic priorities can be escalated.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- See above re: PPP manager</li> </ul>	<p>Status – complete</p> 
<p>3. Review the current use of Band B for supported housing residents and consider whether the personal housing planner can be given/ will have authority to propose or make person-led banding decisions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In progress as will be escalated to PPP Contract Board. Agreed July 2024 by Contract Board and will be part of the 12-week consultation regarding changes to the policy.</li> </ul>	<p>Status – In progress</p> 

<p>4. Ensure this role has expertise and resource to develop creative responses to individuals' circumstances, as well as advocate for access to social housing, for example identifying naturally formed groups of residents who might want to share, perhaps in the private rented sector with some support, individuals who might be suitable for Homeshare, Emmaus or other live-in volunteering roles, Property Guardianship etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Will look into Property Guardianship opportunities.</li> </ul>	<p>Status – on track.</p> 
<p>5. Develop and implement suitable oversight mechanisms to ensure progress on personalised move-on planning, whilst also highlighting early on those who are likely to have longer term care and/or support needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Weekly meetings with Providers could be used to ensure that this happens</li> </ul>	<p>Status – on track.</p> 
<p>6. Ensure that Mainstay is used to maximum effect to flag and monitor move-on needs and blockages, providing reliable intelligence to inform further commissioning and strategy. Review reports from MainStay so these focus less on the outputs/ throughputs of individual services and more on the movement of individuals through the whole system, also focusing on those who drop out or lose contact at key points (e.g., whilst awaiting placements) – our initial recommendations are detailed in section 5 of the Evidence Base document.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Homeless Commissioner has met with David Pugh to scope out possible changes to Mainstay.</li> </ul>	<p>Status – In progress</p> 
<p>7. Look to develop across HOT the current approach in which Property Pool Plus workers work through cases directly with a dedicated worker (e.g., used in Homes for Ukraine and with some commissioned providers)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ukraine Team now working with the Afghan families approaching HOT.</li> </ul>	<p>Status – on track.</p> 

- Improve the quality of emergency bed and temporary accommodation provision and associated support.

Waiting lists for supported housing placements mean that some people are spending much longer than





intended (e.g. several months) in emergency beds. All of these are offered on a nightly and night-time only basis which is having a clear impact on people's mental and physical health, safety and offending. There is still some dormitory provision (mixing people of different ages with varied needs and backgrounds, despite stated aspirations to move away from this in a post-Covid era. Meanwhile, families and those in priority need are spending longer in temporary accommodation and there is high use of nightly-paid and Bed & Breakfast accommodation which, for longer stays, is associated with poor outcomes and value for money.

<p>1. Remodel remaining dormitory provision to create individual sleeping spaces.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Council is reviewing the use of communal spaces at present</li> </ul>	<p>Status – in progress/not yet complete.</p> 
<p>2. Review daytime provision for those accessing emergency beds, drawing in wider resources where necessary/ valuable (churches, community and voluntary groups, libraries, etc) to provide a daytime and early evening offer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Daily Council gym offer set up in 2023</li> <li>- Warm spaces advertised during winters</li> </ul>	<p>Status – In progress</p> 
<p>3. Continue the Not in Priority Need (NIPN) outreach worker from HOT into emergency provision for singles.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- This now happens with visits taking place at Hatherlow Hall, Leyland Road hostel</li> </ul>	<p>Status – complete</p> 
<p>4. Work proactively with private as well as social landlords to identify high quality lease-based models of temporary accommodation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In progress</li> <li>- Investigate use of temporary building (prefabs) for single people</li> </ul>	<p>Status – on track.</p> 
<p>5. Explore alternatives such as for young people with lower support needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In progress</li> </ul>	<p>Status – In progress</p> 



- Sustain, further promote and seek to expand floating support, tenancy sustainment and dispersed schemes, especially where there is potential to convert to general needs.

From the review it was evident that too many tenancies were failing, and that additional support would help to ensure that people could sustain their tenancies.

<p>1. Ensure staff in HOT and supported housing services understand what floating support is available, for whom and how to refer into this.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- HOT do use floating support at present.</li> <li>- New Riverside intensive floating support for families in social housing service now available for HOT to refer into</li> </ul>	<p>Status – Complete</p> 
<p>2. Collect outcomes on floating support/ hub services which are consistent with HO terminology and can be included in statutory reports, i.e., prevention secured by sustaining existing OR securing alternative accommodation, and which record whether duty was accepted where referral made to HOT.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Venus open to idea of this and Mainstay could be altered to deliver this</li> <li>- Part of the discussion with David Pugh – Mainstay regarding this too</li> </ul>	<p>Status – In progress</p> 
<p>3. Review whether and how existing provision does or should link to social landlords' own tenancy sustainment offers and influence the further development of these as necessary.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gap does exist in this area</li> <li>- To be looked into</li> </ul>	<p>Status – on track.</p> 
<p>4. The Review found that Riverside's Intensive Support models were well regarded, enabling tenancies to be converted to general needs to prevent further movement where people have settled. Look for opportunities to extend and replicate this approach, recognising the risks for different cohorts from a time-limited support offer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Commissioned new service August 2024</li> </ul>	<p>Status – complete</p> 

- Also exploring with other RPs regarding this model

## Summary of Achievements & Additional Information

- Agreed at April's PPP Contract Board to award Band A to people staying in Homeless Hostels, which is now approved by Cabinet Member.
- Riverside Housing commissioned in October 2024 to provide the Sefton Families Project for 9 families a year and also to support an additional 10 families in social housing that have approached Housing Options for assistance and need intensive floating support in order to stabilise their tenancy.
- Athena House (Complex Women Domestic Abuse Service) commissioned in August 2024. Service full from September 2024 and working well.