



2024  
2029

Braintree District Council

# Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

Annual Report - April 2025



**Braintree**  
District Council

# Summary

Braintree District Council published its Homelessness & Rough Sleeping (H&RS) Strategy in May 2024, covering a five-year period from 2024 to 2029.

Local Housing Authorities must publish a strategy every five years to set out how it will prevent homelessness and meet its legal duties to those who become homeless, including those at risk of sleeping rough. The ambition of the strategy is to prevent homelessness at an early stage. Where this is not possible, the strategy aims to support homeless households and those in housing need into secure, suitable and affordable housing.

Our focus is on supporting people who may be homeless or at risk of homelessness in the future, by offering advice and support when they need it most. We believe it is essential to apply early intervention principles and to collaborate in order to prevent homelessness from occurring in the first instance. Our efforts continue to investigate the underlying causes of homelessness to inform the design, planning and implementation of the services we provide.

This report focusses on the achievements and outcomes to date and considers the next steps to keep the strategy evolving and sustainable.

# Introduction

The aim of our strategy is to ensure that Braintree District council is doing everything possible to prevent and respond to homelessness in the district.

All of our research provided evidence from households presenting as homeless in the district, it indicated strongly that these households have more complex needs than previous years. Factors which impact households include recovering from Covid-19, the cost-of-living crisis and pressure on the 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.

Recent research from the Office of the Children's Commissioner for England shows us for the first time, the negative impact housing insecurity has on educational attainment, showing a direct relationship between the number of times a child moves home and declining GCSE pass rates.

While accommodation outcomes are improving, there has been a decrease in the rate of offenders housed on release from custody since 2022 across England, with data published by the Ministry of Justice highlighting homelessness as a key driver of reoffending.

# The H&RS Strategy has four overarching strategic priorities, which are to:

## Priority 1

**Prevent Homelessness:** Work with partners to prevent homelessness at the earliest opportunity

## Priority 2

**Deliver suitable temporary accommodation:** Facilitate the delivery of suitable temporary accommodation for eligible households.

## Priority 3

**Access to accommodation:** Improve access to appropriate and sustainable accommodation

## Priority 4

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

These priorities are reflected in our Corporate Strategy under the Communities key theme.



FIT FOR THE FUTURE

The H&RS strategy aligns with our Healthy Housing Strategy 2023-2028 and links into its priorities 2 and 3

- **Priority 2 Support for specific needs:** Enabling housing across the district to meet the needs of all our residents, especially those who are vulnerable
- **Priority 3 Access:** Improving access to and the quality of existing properties including the Private Rented Sector

# The Homelessness Prevention Partnership

The H&RS strategy outcomes are supported by a range of partnerships, sub groups and joint initiatives.

This approach enables both case by case collaboration and wider information sharing and early interventions. Some of the partnerships supporting our strategy and its outcomes are:

- **Community Safety Hub**
- **Joint Referral Panel**
- **Domestic Abuse Sub Group**
- **Tenancy Sustainment Sub Group**
- **Homelessness Prevention Partnership**
- **Disability Working Group**
- **Cost of living Partnership**

**The Homelessness Prevention Partnership (HPP)** is collectively responsible for ensuring the delivery of the outcomes of the H&RS strategy and its members are committed to ending homelessness and tackling the causes of homelessness. Members include:

- CHES
- Hope House
- Futures Together
- Salvation Army
- Sanctuary
- The Probation Service
- JobCentre Plus/DWP
- Braintree District Council
- Peabody
- First Stop
- Braintree Foyer
- Eastlight Community Homes
- NACRO
- Mental Health Practitioners
- Essex County Council
- Public Health

The partnership meets every quarter to review the **Homelessness and Rough Sleeping action plan**.

The focus of the meeting is to explore funding and partnership opportunities, share good practice and share challenges facing the delivery of their individual services. The focus is always on early intervention and prevention of homelessness.

## Monitoring the strategy:

Preventing homelessness within Braintree district is a collaborative endeavour, and the **Homelessness Prevention Partnership** brings together multiple agencies and community volunteer services to drive, via the strategic action plan, the key priorities identified in the strategy and deliver the outcomes.

The action plan is our living document that supports the overall aims from each of the four priorities of the Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy. Each action is owned by a lead officer, with team support, and developments are updated monthly by tracking key achievements and outcomes. This keeps projects moving forward and documents and monitors progression throughout the year.

Services working within the homelessness sector recognised that prioritising and offering early intervention is essential. However, it is recognised that in order to provide effective early intervention services, teams require a deeper understanding of mental health, housing advice, housing legislation and relevant laws, as well as a need to develop a holistic approach to these services.

The HPP are focussed on promoting more housing briefings, working with partners to deliver Mental Health and Domestic Abuse training and reviewing and updating existing processes to enhance their clarity and accessibility. Our aim is to foster greater continuity across the housing services that our residents and customers rely upon.

# Future challenges

There are global and national factors which may impact housing across the country. These issues can have significant consequences which could effect homelessness and rough sleeping across the county.

**The Renters’ Rights Bill** is expected to reach Royal assent in the summer of 2025, which will bring many changes to the private rented sector and impact on local authority resources to manage and monitor the new regulations. The aim of the policy is to end Section 21 ‘no fault evictions’ and improve standards in the private rented sector. While there is no certainty as to exactly how this will change the landscape of the private rented sector, it is likely there will be some short-term impacts on both private tenants and landlords. It is predicted that landlords may exit the market, possibly resulting in fewer properties available within the private rented sector. We will be monitoring this closely to ensure we are able to support tenants through the process.

**Local Government Reform** is in its early stages in Essex, and as a member, Braintree District Council has committed to both the devolution priority programme and the local government reorganisation. Final plans for the reorganisation are expected in the Autumn of 2025 and the establishment for a mayoral county combined authority by April 2026. While the priority will be to ensure no disruption to our statutory services, there is likely to be structural changes made to both service areas and strategic plans and these may have an impact on the delivery of some of our strategy actions. We will continue to monitor this to respond promptly to the changing environment.

**Cost of Living** continues to impact those with existing disadvantages and vulnerabilities within our communities, and puts many households at greater risk of both immediate hardship and reduced opportunities and wellbeing. Braintree District Council is committed to delivering and facilitating support and advice to do what we can to protect our residents against the impact of rising costs of food, fuel and other essentials. Our homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy acknowledges the importance of horizon scanning and data analysis to keep ahead of the trends and risks associated with these issues, and we will continue to monitor and report trends on data and research around homelessness and rough sleeping.

**Climate, national policies and funding streams.** Climate change, international conflicts and national priorities can affect our lives through changes in legislation and policies. The strategy acknowledges this by ensuring BDC is ready to respond to the impacts of legislation and political changes on homelessness, which includes Accommodation Based Housing Related Support, Renters’ Rights Bill, the Supported Housing Strategy and Essex Housing Protocols. The strategy also monitors the impact of Wethersfield and other asylum and immigration policies on rough sleeping in the district. Our strategy includes an action to maximise and share opportunities for external investments through funding and grants and we will continue to monitor all avenues available to keep updated on all national and regional funding opportunities that support our aim to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping.

# Outcomes 2024-2025

## Priority 1

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

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 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. In Braintree, the main reason for presenting as homeless has been loss of assured shorthold tenancy in the private rented sector.

- Housing Options Service has appointed two Early Intervention Officers to provide advice and support at an earlier stage to support households to remain in their home.
- The Cost-of-Living Partnership has supported those on low income by distributing 600 electric blankets.
- The employment advisor has meaningfully engaged with 392 people, with 57 job starts recorded. 981 people who participated in the employment advisory service achieved a social justice outcome or a positive movement towards work.
- The Housing and Communities Service has monitored and reported on national and local trends which impact homelessness and rough sleeping. The data has been used to make evidence led decisions on grants, funding and resources.

## Challenges:

Rising cost of housing - Rent levels are influenced by market dynamics and are not subject to any form of price control.

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.

## Our next steps for 2025-26

- Continue to deliver and support residents in the district through energy efficiency advice, cost of living and fuel poverty support.
- Ensure better support for customers by delivering training in Mental Health and Wellbeing for staff and partners.
- Increase prosperity and opportunities for residents by delivering employment support to those furthest from the jobs market
- Homelessness covers a wide range of issues, both in terms of the causes of homelessness and the various needs for support - the strategy enables The Council to help provide the best possible solutions to those in Braintree District at risk of losing their home.

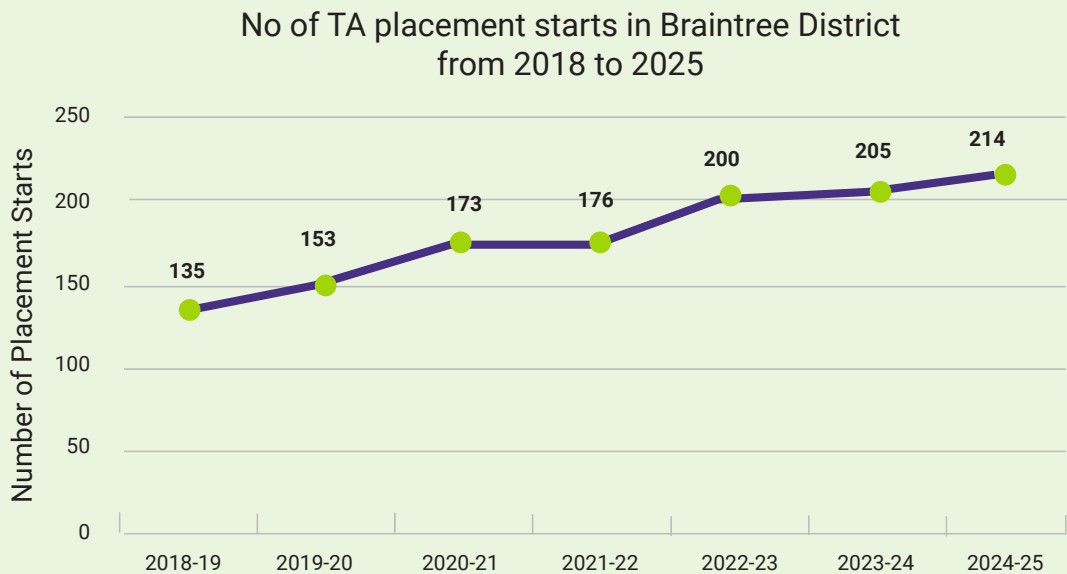


## Priority 2

Facilitate the delivery of suitable temporary accommodation for eligible households.

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. Tailoring temporary accommodation solutions to meet these diverse needs is essential for ensuring that the support provided is both appropriate and effective.

In order to ensure that temporary accommodation in the district is fit for purpose, a review was undertaken. The report provided recommendations of what is required to meet the needs of those presenting as homeless and in priority need.



A working group has been assembled to scope out and implement the recommendations. Our next steps are to take those forward for 2025-26.

### Challenges:

Proposed changes to personal independence payments could have significant effects on the ability to meet current housing costs and increase numbers of people with additional or complex needs at risk of homelessness and requiring temporary accommodation.

Identifying and sourcing fit for purpose accommodation that can meet the changing needs of a diverse population.

Reports indicate wide ranging effects on children in temporary accommodation, including isolation from peers and educational impacts. More must be undertaken to mitigate these effects.

## Our next steps for 2025-26

- The Council will continue to work in collaboration with Registered Social Landlords to identify opportunities to use buildings to meet the needs highlighted in the temporary accommodation review.
- Develop an evidence base to provide an appropriate supply of adapted temporary accommodation.
- The Council will develop options and feasibility to provide temporary affordable accommodation that is fit for the future and meets the needs of our residents.

## Priority 3

### Improve access to appropriate accommodation

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.

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.

- We have been working closely with Essex County Council and all providers impacted by the withdrawal of Accommodation Based Housing Related Support. This could significantly affect the provision of support which is delivered in several accommodation units in the district which accommodates some of our most vulnerable residents.
- The introduction of a collaborative process that ensures housing providers and tenants are in-step with each milestone in move-on arrangements has had a positive impact on Gateway to Homechoice applications and ensured the right support is in place for tenants. This has delivered more clarity around supported schemes for all involved in the process.
- Monthly reporting is now in place through our housing management system - to report on changes in patterns of demand as overall growth increases

- Our Private Rented Sector Scheme was introduced to support eligible applicants within the Braintree District to access good quality and affordable homes in the private rented sector. The scheme has supported 47 households (59 adults and 34 dependant children) to access the PRS and secure long term tenancies between December 2023 and February 2025.

### Challenges:

Evidence still shows demand for larger homes (3 bedrooms plus) which are not as readily available and this, coupled with a widening gap between average rents and Local Housing Allowance rates could mean sustaining these tenancies is challenging for larger families or those with specific needs.

## Our next steps for 2025-26

- Increase access into the Private Rented Sector and reduce the number of households entering temporary accommodation.
- Identify the right support for households to access affordable and sustainable housing options which are suitable for their needs.



## Priority 4

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

Due to the size and the rural nature of the district, determining the exact number of individuals rough sleeping is challenging. The table below shows the annual estimate of rough sleepers on a single night in Braintree District.

It's paramount that local organisations working directly with rough sleepers or people at risk of homelessness are supported. We will continue to work with our partners to utilise and distribute funding and grant opportunities such as the Winter Pressures and Cost of Living Fund to prevent rough sleeping.

2018-19	5
2019-20	5
2020-21	0
2021-22	5
2022-23	3
2023-24	5
2024-25	4

- To support people leaving prison, we will undertake work with the Probation Service to support the prison release protocol.
- Streetlink is a nationwide service that allows individuals to report sightings of rough sleepers aged 18. In 2024 - 2025, there were 118 contacts made with Streetlink to report rough sleepers in the district, of that 50 people have been verified as rough sleeping during that period.
- The Council commissions Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) and is responsible for delivering emergency accommodation during this time. In 2024 - 2025, the council accommodated 18 rough sleepers.
- We recognise that there is a significant correlation between homelessness and poor health. Many individuals facing homelessness also have additional needs making them more vulnerable to sleeping on the streets. The Rough Sleepers Initiative, funds the Mental Health Navigator's role, which plays a pivotal role in supporting and advocating for rough sleepers. The role has been successfully been funded for a further 12 months.

## Challenges:

Identifying the causes of rough sleeping is complex, and includes many factors, including structural, individual and interpersonal.

Poverty, unemployment, relationship breakdowns, housing shortages and barriers in support, are understood to be significant drivers of rough sleeping. These underlying causes can often be exacerbated by personal vulnerabilities like poor health or substance use.

Some groups may be under represented in official rough sleeping statistics because they shelter in locations unlikely to be identified by outreach workers for safety reasons. A specific challenge includes rural rough sleeping.

## Our next steps for 2025-26

- By providing funding to local authorities, the Government is committed to tackling homelessness and rough sleeping. To be able to support and accommodate rough sleepers in the district, the Winter Pressures Fund will be distributed between the Homelessness Prevention Partnership and Braintree Council.
- Continue to work with partners to break the cycle of rough sleeping by undertaking a detailed analysis of identified rough sleepers to capture support needs, protected characteristics and sustained outcomes to be able to design an early intervention model delivered in the district.
- Set up a Rough Sleepers Partnership to support those who are verified rough sleepers in the district to break the cycle of rough sleeping.

