

Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy

2025-2030

Thurrock Council

PLACE O&S DRAFT

PLEASE NOTE: ALL DATA/TEXT HIGHLIGHTED IN GREY WILL BE REFRESHED AHEAD OF FINAL DRAFT TO BE PRESENTED TO CABINET

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Introduction

The Homelessness Act 2002 requires Local Authorities to formulate and publish a Homelessness Strategy every five years. Each strategy must set out plans for the prevention of homelessness, including ensuring sufficient accommodation and support are, or will be, available for people who become homeless or who are at risk of becoming so.

Thurrock Council last published its Homelessness Strategy in September 2020. Since this time, there has been a significant period of change, such as:

- developments in law and legislation
- COVID-19
- The cost of living crisis
- Government intervention of Thurrock Council

The council's Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy represents an ambitious approach. Thurrock recognises that homelessness is the result of causality, as opposed to being an issue which can be resolved within itself. Until the specific factors currently affecting Thurrock are fully grasped, along with a practical approach to understand and meet the future needs of the borough, homelessness cannot and will not be holistically resolved. Through taking a wider, collaborative approach to the barriers present within communities and embedding strong frameworks for future provision then meaningful steps can be taken to improve outcomes.

Corporate Context

The Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy is underpinned by Thurrock Council's values which were adopted in 2024.

Together, we hold ourselves to account to get things done

Behavioural driver	Way of working
Accountability	We set ourselves high standards and are each accountable for our actions
	We will move at pace, being decisive and making clear choices
	We will be unwavering in actively demonstrating accountability to elected members and residents
Integrity	We will keep our word and will do what we promise
	We will be open in explaining and applying our processes and in our decision making

Together, we make possible what cannot be achieved alone

Behavioural driver	Way of working
Collaborative	We will be a credible, versatile, and engaging partner and collaboration will be the bedrock of all our work
	We will find better solutions by pooling our skills, resources, and know-how, collaborating across services and directorates
	We will trust and support each other, and work together to the benefit of our residents
Impactful	We will be evidence led in our policies, practices, and programmes, to use our resources wisely and efficiently to get things done
	We will track our performance and be open to greater change to increase the impact we are making

Together, we listen and act to continually improve

Behavioural driver	Way of working
Responsiveness	We will listen with intent and purpose
	We will take the time to review, reflect and respond
	We will deliver a high standard of service to our residents, businesses and partners and will provide information that is timely and targeted
Adaptability	We will be agile in our approach
	We will lead and embrace the change required to deliver the right outcomes

Legislative Framework

This section provides a summary of the key legislative elements which define the powers, duties and obligations of local authorities and other public authorities towards those who are homeless or are threatened with homelessness.

Housing Act 1996 Part 7

The main legislative provisions surrounding homelessness are contained in Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996. This Act provides the basis for action to prevent homelessness and provide assistance to those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. The Housing Act 1996 includes:

- principal criteria which guide and defines the duties which a local authority will owe to a homeless applicant
- the requirement for a local authority to make inquiries to see if any duty is owed to an applicant that the authority has reason to believe may be homeless or threatened with homelessness
- when and how an applicant should be notified of any decision
- main accommodation duties and how they can be discharged
- how a decision can be challenged.

Whilst this the Housing Act 1996 is the primary piece of legislation, since its implementation it has been amended on a number of occasions, most notably due to the Homelessness Act 2002, the Localism Act 2011, and most recently the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

Homelessness Act 2002

The Homelessness Act 2002 introduced the requirement for local authorities to adopt more strategic approaches to tackling homelessness. The Act included obligations for local authorities to undertake regular reviews of current and future forecasted levels of homelessness within the local authority area and outlined the requirement for the cyclical development and refresh process of homelessness strategies.

Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) (England) Order 2002

Section 189 within Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 outlines several examples of applicants which would have a priority need for accommodation, such as pregnant women, a person with dependent children, or a person who is vulnerable due to old age, physical disability, or mental illness. This Order added further examples of applicants which would have a priority need for accommodation, such as homeless 16- and 17-year-olds, care leavers under the age of 21, and people who are vulnerable because of time spent in care, the armed forces, prison, or custody, and those who are vulnerable due to fleeing domestic violence.

Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2003

Under this Order it is outlined that bed and breakfast accommodation, defined as accommodation which is not self-contained or requires the sharing of certain amenities with another household, is not to be regarded as suitable for families with children or containing a pregnant woman. If bed and breakfast accommodation is the only accommodation which is available then exceptions can be made, however any such placement must not exceed a maximum length of 6 weeks.

Localism Act 2011

The Localism Act 2011 amended Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 by providing local authorities the power to end a main housing duty by arranging an offer of suitable accommodation in the private rental sector. This was introduced as a way of reducing the time that households spent in temporary accommodation as local authorities would have access to a greater range of housing options for applicants, both inside and outside of the local authority area.

Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 introduced several reforms to homelessness legislation in England. Through this Act, greater duties were placed on local authorities to intervene at far earlier stages to better prevent homelessness within their area.

Further to this, the Act requires local authorities to provide advice and assistance to all households which are homeless or at risk of homelessness, rather than just those households or applicants with an identified priority need for accommodation.

The Homelessness Reduction Act introduced:

- the requirement to provide enhanced advice and information about homelessness and the prevention of homelessness
- new duties to prevent and relieve homelessness for all those who are eligible for assistance, regardless of intentionality or priority need
- an extension of the period where households are considered to be 'threatened with homelessness' by local authorities from 28 to 56 days, allowing the local authority to work with households much earlier to prevent homelessness
- new personalised housing plans and assessments which outline the actions and reasonable steps which both the applicant and the local authority will take to prevent or relieve homelessness
- a new 'duty to refer' for specified public authorities, such as prisons and hospitals, to refer service users (with their consent) who they believe to be homeless or at risk of homelessness to local authority homelessness services.

Domestic Abuse Act 2021

The Act gives those who are homeless because of domestic abuse priority need for accommodation secured by the local authority. This will help to ensure victims do not remain with their abuser for fear of not having a roof over their head.

The Act extends priority need to victims who are homeless because of domestic abuse and eligible for assistance. This means that councils no longer need to consider if a victim is vulnerable as result of their abuse to access accommodation secured by the local authority.

End Rough Sleeping for Good 2022

The strategy is organised through four key themes – Prevention, Intervention, Recovery and a Transparent and Joined up System. The strategy also sets out a clear definition of what the government means by ending rough sleeping, which is that it is prevented wherever possible, and where it does occur it is rare, brief, and non-recurrent.

Statutory Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities

The Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities is a document to support Local Authorities in understanding how they should deliver their homelessness functions, in line with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

Since the last strategy was published in 2020, there have been several updates to the document, affecting how Thurrock delivers services. Updates to the document include:

- changes to what is deemed ‘acceptable’ for households with family commitments, such as B&Bs and hotels where there are no cooking facilities or shared facilities
- revised guidance that recent arrivals with family commitments may be accommodated in B&Bs for longer than 6 weeks if no other availability
- advice that vulnerability of a recent arrival is determined on significance of disruption to any caring responsibilities
- recommendation for a sign-off process for care leavers to be made between the Housing service and Children’s service
- guidance around agreements with relevant authorities as to how to handle repeat referrals for the same applicant under Duty to Refer
- expectations for staff to understand the identification of and methods of assisting victims of modern slavery
- confirmation that care leavers have a local connection to all housing authorities within a county council area
- advice that decision notifications can be classed as served on an applicant if they are available for collection for a reasonable period
- extensions to the classes of person who are exempt from eligibility restrictions (refugees from Gaza/Sudan/Ukraine/Afghanistan under specific schemes)
- consideration given to the provision of cots for households who do not have one, and whom have at least one child under the age of 2 in temporary accommodation
- confirmation of the ability to use “lodging” arrangements for discharge of prevention and relief duties, such as in the method of Homes for Ukraine
- expectations of closer working with relevant authorities in cases of ex-offenders

National Context

Homelessness

In its basic form, there is homelessness in England as people on the lowest forms of income are unable to find and maintain an affordable home, despite living in the world's sixth largest economy. However, this is complicated by several social and political factors, including:

- a lack of affordable, good quality homes due to historic low levels of truly affordable property building – evidence by Shelter suggests approximately 90,000 homes need to be built per year to meet current demand trends, whereas delivery of new homes in 2023 compared to 2022 was a drop of 9%
- inadequate financial support for households on low incomes – one in three private renters rely on Universal Credit or Housing Benefit to assist in paying rent, and alongside the Household Benefit Cap, households are being pushed towards homelessness due to the widening financial gap.
- wages remaining below the rate of inflation – in England, wages since 1999 have increased by 27% on average, whereas house prices in the same period have increased by 284%
- eviction from private rented accommodation due to short-term tenancy agreements, 'no fault' evictions and unaffordable rent prices

The above factors have been exacerbated in recent years by COVID-19 and the cost of living crisis in particular.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic saw a national push to ensure rough sleepers had access to safe accommodation through the 'Everyone In' initiative, the pandemic had wider impacts particularly for people who were previously not at risk of homelessness. This was due to financial pressures caused by furlough and an increase in unemployment, as well as unstable living environments becoming more precarious such as sofa-surfing and overcrowding.

Following 18 months of COVID-19 restrictions, by Autumn 2022 circumstances were complicated further by the cost of living crisis, the worst in the UK since the 1950s. A perfect storm was created whereby the most vulnerable in society was starting to recover from the pandemic, only to be struck by an unprecedented rise in household bills and necessities. Research conducted by Crisis found:

- increases in rental prices due to inflation on mortgage rates were unaffordable
- outgoings were increasing at a higher rate than income, pushing households into poverty
- low-income households were disproportionately affected, with 1 in 4 low-income households admitting to skipping a meal each day to save money

Finally, political changes within the leadership of the government have impacted the national response to tackling homelessness, such as the stagnation of the Renters (Reform) Bill. The Bill had the ambition of giving renters a better deal, improving both housing quality and security of tenancy. However, despite undergoing the third reading in the House of Commons, the Bill was abandoned in May 2024 at the point of the general election being called.

It is evident within England that the homelessness crisis continues to deepen. In February 2024, the Chartered Institute of Housing reported that 109,000 households were in temporary accommodation, which was a 10% increase from the previous year. The number of households with children in temporary accommodation also increased by over 12%. In 2023, 25,910 households in England needed council support to avoid becoming homeless after receiving a section 21 notice, which is a record high.

At the end of March 2024, the most common reasons for the loss of accommodation as reported in national MHCLG statistics were:

- the end of an assured shorthold tenancy (37.9%), of which
 - 64.31% were evicted as the landlord wished to sell or re-let the property
 - 2.53% were evicted due to rent arrears following an increase in rent, which is an increase of 27.6% from comparable quarters
- Family or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate (22.9%)

The use of temporary accommodation across England has increased significantly over the past decade. At the end of March 2014 there were 58,440 households living in temporary accommodation. By the end of March 2024, the number of households living in temporary accommodation had increased by 101% to 117,450.

Rough Sleeping

Local authorities are required to undertake an annual exercise which provides a snapshot of people sleeping rough within their administrative boundaries on a single night and can be carried out as a physical count or an evidence-based estimate. There are challenges associated with accurately reporting the number of people who have experienced rough sleeping, and the number of people identified as sleeping rough on any given night can be affected by the weather, the availability of alternatives to rough sleeping such as night shelters, the size of the local authority area and the time of year.

In 2022 the government implemented the *End Rough Sleeping for Good* strategy, a cross-government approach to end rough sleeping in England by 2024. This would be achieved through a four-pronged approach of prevention, intervention, recovery, and collaboration. However, despite the pledge to end rough sleeping, by Autumn 2023 the rough sleeping count shows:

- a 27% increase in numbers of people counted as sleeping rough on the previous year. This number is 120% higher than in 2010 when the snapshot approach was first introduced.
- rough sleeping increased in every region compared to the previous year, with the largest increase in London of 172% since 2010

82% of the people sleeping rough were aged over 26 years old, consistent with findings since demographics started to be collected where possible from 2017. In total, 82% of rough sleepers were male and 15% female.

However, since the Autumn 2023 count the first national census of women sleeping rough in England has been conducted. This census shows that there is gender-bias in the annual counts, meaning that women are likely to be underrepresented in rough sleeping data. On review of the 2023 data, there may be up to nine times as many women rough sleeping across England. As an

example of this stark contrast, in the Autumn 2023 count Greater Manchester reported five women to be rough sleeping, but the census identified a total of 188.

Through the life of the rough sleeping count, it has been acknowledged women rough sleepers are typically more hidden as opposed to males. This means women are less likely to 'bed-down' in the street but instead frequently move location during the night, make themselves less visible or even conceal their gender to ensure their personal safety. The census uses this knowledge to ensure the count is 'gender-informed', and therefore able to create a more comprehensive and accurate understanding. For example, locations counted areas such as A&E waiting rooms, buses or trains and all-night cafes. Following the census, there is growing pressure to ensure homelessness policies and strategies are better gender-informed so women have access to the right support.

In terms of other demographic indicators of those who experience rough sleeping, 62% of rough sleepers were UK nationals, with EU nationals from outside the UK and non-EU nationals accounting for 18% and 9% of the total respectively.

The national Rough Sleeping Initiative grant, introduced alongside *End Rough Sleeping for Good 2022*, is coming to the end of its agreed funding period in April 2025. It is likely that by the end of the 2024/25 financial year, local authorities will be advised of any new funding settlement; however, at present it is unknown what, if any, future monies will be made available.

Changes in Legislation and Policy

Since the last strategy was published in September 2020, there has been a significant level of change which has influenced the Housing sector. Some of this change has been temporary in response to the unprecedented events of COVID-19 and the cost of living crisis, but several permanent, key decisions have been made which will invertedly influence the number of households approaching the council for assistance or experiencing risk of homelessness:

- the continual 1% reduction in social rents came to an end in 2020
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Ending Rough Sleeping for Good 2022
- Increase in National Insurance rates, in effect from April 2022
- Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 (also known as Awaab's Law)
- from 2023 a £40 levy for five years has been placed on each household to counterbalance the previous Energy Bills Rebate scheme
- new Consumer Standards and Inspection Regime
- Cost of Living payments came to an end in 2024
- Removal of Winter Fuel Allowance for pensioners not in receipt of certain benefits

There is also potential for further influence within the Housing sector when considering the change in national government leadership and the increased regulation of the Housing sector. These include:

- Government plans to build 1.5 million homes within the next five years with a revision of planning restrictions

- the revival of the Renters (Reform) Bill as the Renters Rights Bill; however, it is anticipated that there will be a significant increase in S.21 evictions in the period immediately after the Bill receives Royal Assent, before the legislation is enacted fully
- the ongoing review of the Decent Homes Standard, with plans to apply this to the private rented sector
- changes to EPC requirements for rental properties, with properties requiring a minimum rating of C by 2030
- the English Devolution White Paper, incorporating Devolution and Local Government Reform which calls for a review of funding and powers considering several authorities are facing financial crisis, risking delivery of statutory services

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As the data currently stands, Thurrock has a continually growing population which will create greater pressures on local housing supply. In complexity, this population is also aging at a rate which will require a bespoke response to ensure housing availability remains sustainable and appropriate through a resident’s lifetime.

Thurrock at Work

Unemployment and unaffordable cost of living are two of the biggest risks to homelessness and rough sleeping. Without a stable income and manageable expenditure, it will be extremely difficult for an individual to maintain consistent living arrangements.

Since the previous Census, unemployment rates remain higher than the East of England, but lower than the national average. From the percentage of the Thurrock population unemployed, there has been a 4.3% increase in individuals wanting to seek employment and a counterbalanced 4% decrease in individuals not wanting a job. An emerging trend within unemployment rates is the growing number of individuals classed as long-term sick, suggestive of the barriers people within Thurrock may face when looking for employment.

Earnings within Thurrock have improved, especially when compared to the East of England and England overall. However, there is a great disparity between the earnings for men and women, with men earning proportionately more than women. Women in Thurrock continue to be paid lower than the Eastern average and only marginally more than the average for England, whereas men in Thurrock earn more than both categories.

In 2023, a full-time worker in Thurrock was likely to take home just over £700 per week on average. For the same period, the average hourly wage was sat at £18.32. Both figures have been an increase when compared to figures from 2022.

	Thurrock (£)	East of England (£)	Great Britain (£)
All Full-Time Workers	711.9	705.7	682.6
Male Full-Time Workers	811.3	755.6	728.3
Female Full-Time Workers	629.1	635.3	628.8

Source: [Earnings by place of residence \(2023\) – NOMIS data](#)



[Annual survey of hours and earnings - resident analysis - Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics \(nomisweb.co.uk\)](#)

Housing Market

Accommodation in Thurrock, whether privately owned or rented, is demonstrating increasing levels of unaffordability.

Research undertaken by Hometrack shows that average property values in Thurrock have risen by more than £82,000 in the past eight years, with the average property value now standing at £353,000.

	July 2016	July 2018	July 2020	July 2022	July 2024	% increase	£ increase
Average property value	£270,619	£300,839	£302,950	£350,187	£353,133	30.5%	£82,514

The smaller property types which may attract first-time buyers, such as one- and two-bedroom flats, have seen values increase slightly over the past four years. For families seeking to move to a larger home, the increase in property value is far more significant.

Property Type	July 2020 Value	July 2024 Value	% increase	£ increase
1 bed flat	£155,586	£168,023	8.0%	£12,437
2 bed flat	£202,023	£221,133	9.5%	£19,110
2 bed house	£282,165	£324,318	14.9%	£42,153
3 bed house	£319,403	£380,378	19.1%	£60,975
4 bed house	£428,755	£521,682	21.7%	£92,927

A study by Halifax indicates that in 2023, the average deposit for first-time buyers as a percentage of the property purchase price was 16% in the East of England. At the time of writing this document, the average interest rate for a five-year fixed term mortgage with a loan-to-value ratio of 85% was 4.61%. Research undertaken by TSB Bank indicates that the average term of a first-time buyer mortgage in 2023 had increased to 32 years.

Using this information and the average property price data above, the table below provides indicative average monthly mortgage repayments during the fixed term period.

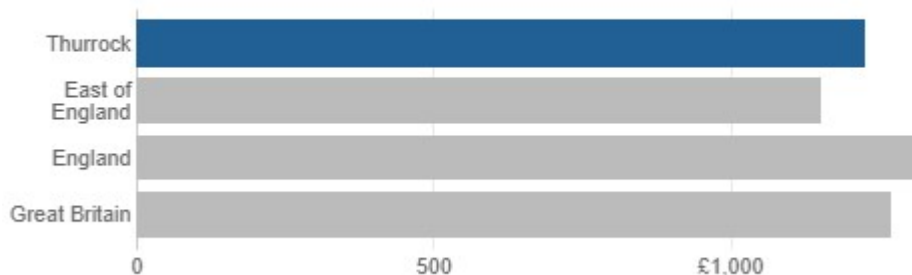
Property Type	July 2024 Value	16% deposit	Mortgage required	Monthly repayment	Gross annual household income required to achieve affordability
1 bed flat	£168,023	£26,884	£141,139	£703.60	£28,144
2 bed flat	£221,133	£35,381	£185,752	£926.00	£37,040
2 bed house	£324,318	£51,891	£272,427	£1,358.09	£54,324
3 bed house	£380,378	£60,860	£319,518	£1,592.85	£63,714
4 bed house	£521,682	£83,469	£438,213	£2,184.56	£87,382

The definition of ‘affordability’ in this context is in line with UN-Habitat which “calculates unaffordability as a net monthly expenditure on housing costs that exceeds 30 per cent of the total monthly income of the household.”

However, the affordability gap widens when focusing on the private rented sector. The average monthly rent in Thurrock is currently just over £1,200 a month, a 7.8% increase from the previous year. This increase is slightly higher than experienced for the East of England, showing the accelerated rate at which private rental prices are rising within Thurrock.

Average rent in Thurrock compared with the East of England

Average rental price, June 2024



Source: Price Index of Private Rents from the Office for National Statistics

The increase in private rental sector costs becomes even more stark when compared against the rental market values from 2019 – over the past five years, rents have increased between 28%-42% in the private rental sector in Thurrock.

In the context of household budgets and finances, a household renting a property in Thurrock in 2024 may be paying between £2,400 and £6,000 more (depending on property size) than they were in 2019.

Property Type	2019		2024		Increase %		Increase £	
	Lower Quartile	Average	Lower Quartile	Average	Lower Quartile	Average	Lower Quartile	Average
1 bed	£166	£172	£213	£231	28%	34%	£47	£59
2 bed	£207	£219	£293	£312	42%	42%	£86	£93
3 bed	£265	£276	£369	£392	39%	42%	£104	£116
4 bed	£336	£357	£438	£462	30%	29%	£102	£105

The price rises being experienced within the private rented sector are following a combination of difficult factors, including:

- tax changes introduced to private landlords in 2016 which has gradually turned landlords away from the sector
- greater regulation of the private rental sector, with an emerging trend of private landlords being held accountable to the same regard as a social landlord
- dramatic increases in mortgage rates in recent years because of COVID-19 and the cost of living crisis, making private rents increase in line

Due to the above factors, several private rental landlords are continuing to leave the sector. It is estimated by Hometrack that one in ten properties placed onto the market are formally a private rented property. From these, circa 40% remain in the private rented sector due to either other private landlords purchasing to expand their portfolio, or private landlords deciding to not sell. However, this does mean that there is on average a 60% loss in private sector availability. When considering the unaffordability of purchasing as outlined above, this 60% shortfall places additional pressure on both the remaining provision of private rental properties and the council to either prevent or relieve a household's homelessness.

Local Housing Allowance (LHA) is a rate used to determine the maximum amount of Housing Benefit or housing element of Universal Credit which a household can receive when renting from a private landlord. The rate depends on several factors such as:

- age
- living arrangements within the property, including number, age, and sex of people
- rent levels in the area
- other factors such as disability

However, LHA rates are often less than the total rental cost. This means that households will still often need to budget for a percentage of rent costs from other income available or benefits. This is exacerbated when a property is classed as 'under-occupying', meaning a tenant has empty bedrooms they do not require. The amount awarded is lessened, meaning the individual has a larger financial gap to fill.

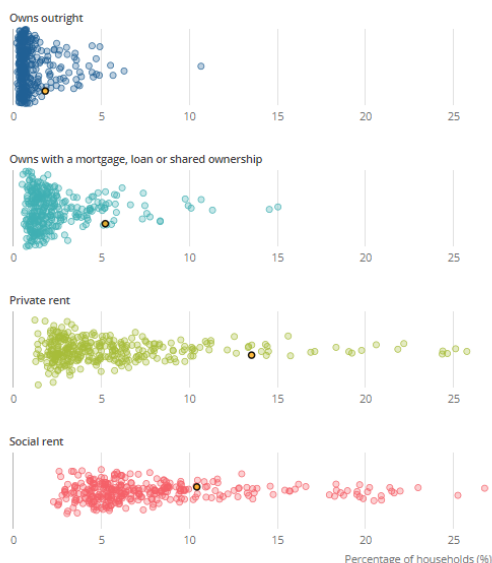
The below table highlights LHA rates for Thurrock as of September 2024, with comparable private rental rates for that size property:

	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed
2024 LHA Rate	£178.36	£218.63	£276.16	£345.21
Lower Quartile Rent	£213	£293	£369	£438
Lower Quartile Shortfall	-£35	-£74	-£93	-£93
Average Rent	£231	£312	£392	£462
Average Rent Shortfall	-£53	-£93	-£116	-£117

It is interesting to pair the above financial data with the living conditions experienced within the private rented sector. For example, 13.6% of overcrowded homes within Thurrock are within the private rented sector. Not only is this the largest category for overcrowding in Thurrock, but the rate sits above what is typically found within other local authorities for England and Wales.

When considering the factors of unaffordability, limited help and poor living conditions together, it is understandable as to why an increasing number of households find themselves at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

1.8% of homes that are owned outright,
5.2% of homes that are owned with a mortgage, loan or shared ownership,
13.6% of homes that are privately rented,
and
10.4% of homes that are social rents in Thurrock are overcrowded



Source: Census 2021 from the Office for National Statistics

Other Key Factors

Child Poverty

Rates of child poverty are a key indicator to wider economic and social factors which directly impact the accessibility of stable housing and therefore reducing the risk of homelessness and rough sleeping. By definition, a child would be classed as living in poverty when the household's income is less than 60% of the median income. Thurrock has higher levels of children living in low-income families in comparison to Great Britain, but lower than neighbouring boroughs of Basildon and Southend.

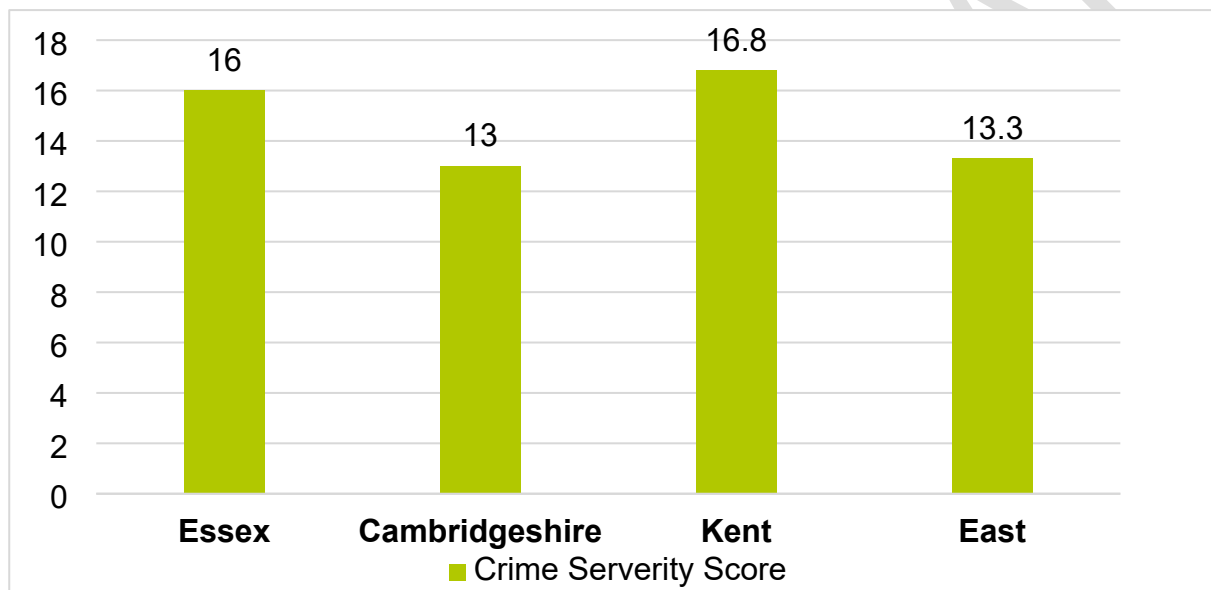


Interestingly, Thurrock saw England's largest percentage-point rise in the proportion of lone-parent households between the Census in 2011 and 2021, with rates rising from 11.2% to 13.5%. Although being in a lone-parent household does not necessarily equate to child poverty, when building this data with other factors such as gender-pay disparity and the local housing market, an ability is created in identifying households at greater risk of homelessness and rough sleeping.

Crime

Although only a minority of homeless people will become involved in offending, following research undertaken by Crisis it has been determined that criminal activity feeds the cycle of homelessness. For example, just as spending time in prison increases the risk of homelessness, unstable living arrangements increases an individual's risk of offending. This creates a self-perpetuating negative cycle, with repeated episodes of homelessness and imprisonment.

Crime Severity Scores is a measure used by the Office of National Statistics to show which crime types have the highest impact on society and to determine allocation of police resources. In comparison to equivalent Police Forces for Essex and the wider Eastern region, Essex has a notably higher crime severity score. This puts people in Essex – such as Thurrock – at greater risk of the homelessness cycle.



Source: [Crime Severity Score \(Experimental Statistics\) - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk/crime-and-justice/crime-statistics/crime-severity-score)

Health and Wellbeing

The council's current approach to Health and Wellbeing within Thurrock is to level the 'playing field', ensuring that everyone within Thurrock has fair and appropriate access to the support they need to live a healthy and sustainable lifestyle. For this strategy, the importance of Health and Wellbeing is two-fold:

- cases of long-term sick are the leading cause for unemployment within Thurrock, highlighting the importance of a strong and stable healthcare framework in preventing cases of homelessness
- Thurrock is increasingly becoming an unaffordable place to live, with over half of Thurrock households not being able to purchase a home in the borough. Studies have proven the importance of a stable living environment for an individual's health and wellbeing, and the converse difficulty in maintaining a home when there is a deterioration in health and wellbeing.

Within Thurrock, the life expectancy for both males and females are notably lower than the East of England and England overall. This is reflected in Thurrock having a higher rate of smoking, obesity and cardiovascular disease when compared to the same areas.

It is important to consider the effects global events such as COVID-19 and the Cost-of-Living have had on health and wellbeing rates within Thurrock. For example, in June 2020 during the height of the first COVID-19 lockdown, the average occupancy rates in early years settings were 37%, just over half of that for the same period in 2019 at 77%. This shows a strong likelihood of child development being negatively impacted over a prolonged time, which may have future implications for the health and wellbeing of that generation. This highlights the importance of ensuring strategic plans are future-proofed, not siloing on the current.

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Service Demand

Approaches

From 2020/21 to 2023/24, the number of households approaching the council for homelessness advice and assistance has increased steadily.

In 2020/21, there were 1,819 approaches. Although the following year featured a similar number of households approaching the council the growth in demand became far more significant in 2022/23, demonstrated through a 19.89% increase in homeless approaches against the previous year.

By 2023/24, approaches for homelessness advice and assistance surged to 2,463, a 12.57% increase from the prior year and a cumulative 35.40% increase from 2020/21.

Year	Number of Approaches	% increase on previous year	% increase on 2020/21
2020/21	1819	-	-
2021/22	1825	0.33%	0.33%
2022/23	2188	19.89%	20.29%
2023/24	2463	12.57%	35.40%

Reasons for approaches

Between 2020/21 and 2023/24, the primary reasons for approaches to the council's homelessness service displayed notable shifts in trends.

The most common reason for approach across all years was being asked to leave by family, accounting for almost a quarter of all cases over the past four years. The number of approaches for this reason have remained consistent at around 500 cases per year; however, there has been a slight decline in its proportion of all approaches over time.

Loss of accommodation due to section 21 notices became a significantly larger issue, rising from 7.97% (145 cases) in 2020/21 to 13.72% (338 cases) in 2023/24. With private rental sector reforms, in particular relating to section 21 evictions, there may be a noticeable increase in households approaching the council due to being served such notices before legislation is enacted which will effectively ban this practice.

Approaches due to relationship breakdown steadily declined, from 10.17% in 2020/21 to just 5.6% in 2023/24, and whilst the number of cases of applicants seeking assistance due to fleeing domestic abuse has increased over the past four years, as a proportion of all approaches this has remained relatively stable, constituting about 6-7% each year.

Reason for approach	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	Total
Asked to leave by family	489 (26.88%)	507 (27.78%)	503 (22.99%)	516 (20.95%)	2015 (24.29%)
Section 21 notice	145 (7.97%)	171 (9.37%)	189 (8.64%)	338 (13.72%)	843 (10.16%)
Relationship breakdown	185 (10.17%)	122 (6.68%)	136 (6.22%)	138 (5.6%)	581 (7%)
Fleeing domestic abuse	110 (6.05%)	122 (6.68%)	142 (6.49%)	169 (6.86%)	543 (6.55%)
Friend no longer willing to accommodate	145 (7.97%)	58 (3.18%)	105 (4.8%)	125 (5.08%)	433 (5.22%)
Sofa surfing	153 (8.41%)	67 (3.67%)	55 (2.51%)	77 (3.13%)	352 (4.24%)
Evicted (not s.21 or s.8)	45 (2.47%)	76 (4.16%)	67 (3.06%)	108 (4.38%)	296 (3.57%)
Loss of private rented – other reason	6 (0.33%)	59 (3.23%)	113 (5.16%)	100 (4.06%)	278 (3.35%)
Rough sleeping	62 (3.41%)	53 (2.9%)	64 (2.93%)	76 (3.09%)	255 (3.07%)

Temporary accommodation demand

A snapshot of temporary accommodation data has been taken for 23 September for each of the years from 2020 to 2024.

During this time the demand for and use of temporary accommodation has grown significantly, from 279 active placements on 23 September 2020 to 574 active placements on 23 September 2024. The most significant rise in temporary accommodation demand occurred between 2023 and 2024, with a 56% increase.

Nightly let accommodation – private rental sector properties utilised for temporary accommodation - saw the largest overall growth, rising by 103% from 159 placements in 2020 to 322 in 2024. The increase was even sharper in the most recent year, with a 154% rise from 127 placements in 2023.

Within this type of temporary accommodation, placements made in accommodation out-of-borough rose by 507% from 30 in 2023 to 182 in 2024, reflecting a growing reliance on external accommodations driven by private rental sector unaffordability within Thurrock.

The use of furnished lets – properties owned by the council and being used specifically as temporary accommodation – experienced a steady rise, with a 227% increase over the four-year period, growing from 62 placements in 2020 to 203 in 2024. The increased use of this type of temporary accommodation was driven by a strategic programme of property acquisition directly in response to private sector unaffordability as the council is responsible for setting the rent for furnished lets.

Overall, the data shows a growing pressure on temporary accommodation.

Type of temporary accommodation	Sep 2020	Sep 2021	Sep 2022	Sep 2023	Sep 2024	% change from 2020 to 2024	% change from 2023 to 2024
Nightly let (Total)	159	127	104	127	322	+103%	+154%
Nightly let (in borough)	63	82	83	97	140	+122%	+44%
Nightly let (out of borough)	96	45	21	30	182	+90%	+507%
Furnished let	62	59	137	192	203	+227%	+6%
Hostel	39	36	32	41	38	-3%	-7%
B&B	19	1	5	8	11	-42%	+38%
Total	279	223	278	368	574	+106%	+56%

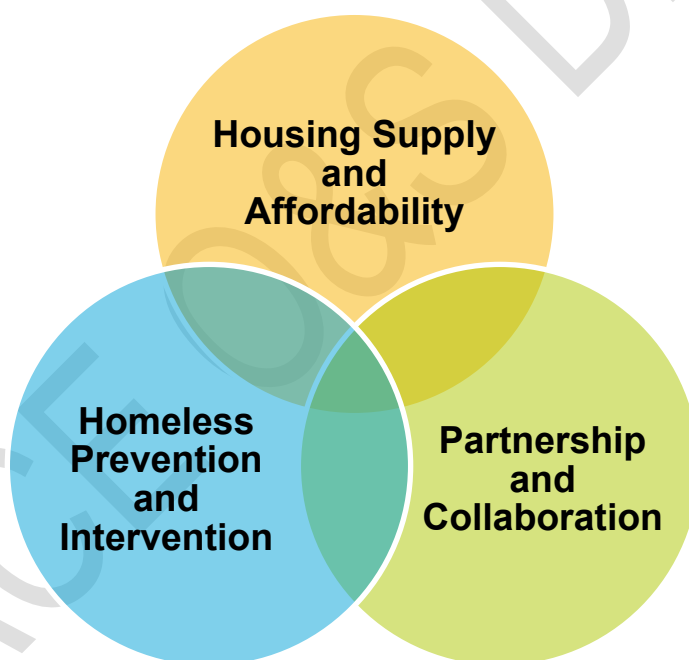
Strategic Priorities

As set out in the Homelessness Code of Guidance published by MHCLG, the council must consult public or local authorities, voluntary organisations and other people considered appropriate before adopting or modifying a homelessness strategy.

Engagement activity undertaken throughout the development phase of the delivery of the Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy included:

- an appraisal of the 2020-2025 strategy, as outlined in Appendix 1
- face-to-face engagement sessions
- statistical analysis
- presentations to other key Council services, committees, and boards

A number of key themes emerged through the engagement period, and these key themes serve as a thread through each individual action in the strategy's action plan.



Strategic Priorities

Housing Supply and Affordability

Although the council remains committed to building new homes when sustainable, this strategy allows opportunity to focus on provision which will directly support residents in Thurrock experiencing or at risk of homelessness and rough sleeping.

Through collaborative working with the Housing Development service, a supportive framework can be provided to relieve the pressure and high demand continually experienced within temporary accommodation, addressing:

- the need for properties to continue to be acquired where appropriate for use of temporary accommodation
- the support of single rough sleepers through consideration of a variety of construction methods to maximise new build activity with the potential for use as temporary accommodation, such as modular builds
- the suitability of decanted properties for short-term temporary accommodation use whilst mainstream housing development activity is underway
- the drive for new design proposals to include temporary accommodation as a standalone feature or within mixed use schemes

Modular Builds

A transition to include the use of modular builds would be a new approach for Thurrock, and is an approach taken with great consideration and assessment. It needs to be stressed that modular builds would not be a replacement to traditional housing methods, but a targeted solution to supplement a wider scheme of work.

To ensure modular builds would be the right direction for Thurrock residents, an investigative approach has been undertaken to fully understand the viability and suitability of its use. This has included building relationships with neighbouring boroughs who are already utilising modular builds as well as working directly with suppliers to understand the practical and technical implications of such builds. From this, the council would not implement modular builds unless a number of points have been satisfied, such as:

- the site featuring accessibility to basic amenities such as the existence of nearby water, electricity, and waste connections
- the site being accessible for both the construction of modular builds as well as for residential use
- the site being proximity to local shops, community services and reasonable mobile network coverage
- a robust management plan being in place once the builds are in use, with a clear indication on duration
- procurement being completed following a complaint framework, focusing on financial stability, proven experience, and professional ability

When considering the current financial pressures facing Thurrock, consideration has been given to how best finance modular builds as a partial solution to temporary accommodation. Under new initiatives implemented by the government, previous restrictions on the use of Right to Buy receipts have been lifted, such as the financial contribution from Right to Buy receipts for replacement housing schemes having increased from 50% to 100%, and there no longer being any cap on the percentage of acquisitions each year. Alongside the use of rental income, supported borrowing and application to external funding streams, there is greater potential for Thurrock to provide sustainable and practical solutions to temporary accommodation.

Strategic Actions – Homelessness Supply and Affordability

What?	How?	Impact?
<p>Boost the supply of affordable housing, including modular homes and supported accommodation</p>	<p>Develop partnerships with modular home manufacturers to create affordable housing solutions which can be implemented quickly</p> <p>Work with housing associations and other developers to include supported living units in new developments</p> <p>Advocate for affordable housing quotas in planning approvals</p>	<p>Increased availability of affordable housing units</p> <p>Faster delivery of homes due to modular construction</p> <p>More supported living options for vulnerable individuals</p>
<p>Collaborate with private developers to release more land and make it attractive to build affordable homes</p>	<p>Identify underutilised or empty land and work with developers to release it for affordable housing projects</p> <p>Develop and offer meaningful incentives for projects that include a higher percentage of affordable homes</p> <p>Explore barriers and challenges which prevent and delay the construction of new-build developments which have received planning permission but which have yet to start on site</p>	<p>More land available for affordable housing projects</p> <p>Increased interest from private developers in affordable housing projects</p> <p>More homes built to meet housing demand</p>

What?	How?	Impact?
<p>Assess and maximise the use of council-owned properties and land to develop more housing options</p>	<p>Conduct an audit of council-owned properties and land to identify potential sites for housing developments</p> <p>Implement innovative solutions to rapidly increase temporary accommodation</p>	<p>Increased availability of council-managed housing options</p> <p>Quicker turnaround in creating temporary housing</p> <p>Efficient use of public assets for housing needs</p>
<p>Foster better relationships with private landlords to improve private sector stock condition and incentivise affordable housing offers</p>	<p>Revise the forum approach to landlord engagement to foster relationships, encourage partnerships and provide support</p> <p>Introduce rent guarantee schemes, property maintenance support, or cooperative agreements to incentivise private sector landlords to offer properties at affordable rents</p> <p>Explore the introduction of selective licensing to ensure that privately rented properties in the borough are safe, meet defined standards, and are being managed satisfactorily.</p>	<p>More affordable rental units secured from private landlords</p> <p>Improved relationships between landlords and council</p> <p>Greater housing stability for tenants in need</p> <p>Improved quality and standards of private rental sector accommodation in the borough</p>

Strategic Priorities

Homelessness Prevention and Intervention

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the world – including Thurrock – has shifted dramatically in direction and pace. The community in which the last strategy was published is very different to the community in which this strategy is being published.

A locality-based approach ensures that this strategy can be tailored to the specific needs of communities across the borough. By working closely with partners, housing providers, community and voluntary sector groups and other support services, this approach will foster a coordinated response that is both proactive and responsive. Localised approaches to homelessness prevention will help to identify individuals at risk earlier, facilitate quicker interventions, and provide appropriate support. Fostering strong community engagement will create networks of support, reducing social isolation and strengthening resilience among vulnerable populations.

Raising public awareness about the causes and consequences of homelessness is vital in shifting perceptions and misinformation. Educational initiatives will inform individuals about their housing rights, financial responsibilities, and the support available to them. Schools and community organisations can play a crucial role in delivering this information, empowering people to take preventative action before a crisis occurs. Additionally, widespread awareness campaigns will encourage public and private sector involvement in tackling homelessness, fostering a collective responsibility to support those in need.

Tenancy sustainment programmes are essential in preventing repeated instances of homelessness and will ensure long-term housing stability for vulnerable individuals and families. These programmes will provide practical support, assisting tenants in managing rent payments, understanding their rights and obligations, and accessing financial assistance where needed. Support services may include mental health and addiction counselling, employment guidance, and mediation services to resolve disputes with landlords. Expanding such initiatives can reduce evictions, alleviate pressure on services, and improve overall wellbeing by promoting independence and security in housing.

Ensuring clear, accessible, and comprehensive information on housing services is fundamental in helping individuals navigate the complexities of the homelessness system. Many at-risk individuals face barriers such as digital exclusion, language difficulties, or a lack of awareness about available resources. Providing multiple channels of communication - such as online platforms, helplines, community outreach, and printed materials - will bridge this gap. Additionally, streamlining referral processes and ensuring frontline service providers are well-equipped to guide individuals will enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of homelessness interventions.

Strategic Actions – Homelessness Prevention and Intervention

What?	How?	Impact?
<p>Embed a locality approach to the prevention and intervention of homelessness</p>	<p>Create local multi-agency teams including housing, social services, and health professionals to collaborate on homelessness prevention</p> <p>Assign dedicated staff to specific localities to build relationships and provide tailored support</p> <p>Hold regular locality-based case meetings to identify at-risk individuals and develop coordinated interventions.</p>	<p>Improved, coordinated responses to homelessness within communities</p> <p>Earlier intervention and more personalised support for individuals at risk</p> <p>Stronger local networks for sharing information and resources</p>
<p>Increase public awareness and education around the risks of homelessness and housing responsibilities</p>	<p>Develop campaigns focused on housing risks, budget management, and the responsibilities of tenants</p> <p>Partner with schools, youth groups, and colleges to deliver educational workshops on financial management, budgeting, and housing responsibilities</p> <p>Create community engagement initiatives such as forums and events to share information</p>	<p>Better-informed public and young people, reducing the likelihood of housing issues</p> <p>Empowered young individuals with knowledge of housing and budgeting</p> <p>Increased community awareness and support for homelessness prevention</p>

What?	How?	Impact?
<p>Develop and expand tenancy sustainment programs for vulnerable residents</p>	<p>Provide ongoing tenancy support services such as budget advice, mental health support, and legal assistance</p> <p>Create partnerships with charities, support organisations and social services to deliver wraparound support for tenants with complex needs</p> <p>Monitor vulnerable tenants regularly to identify early signs of tenancy instability</p> <p>Define and deliver a targeted interventions for tenancy sustainment for Care Leavers</p>	<p>Reduced tenancy breakdowns, leading to more stable housing</p> <p>Increased support for vulnerable residents, preventing homelessness</p> <p>Improved quality of life for tenants with complex needs</p>
<p>Improve access to information about housing services and the homelessness process</p>	<p>Create clear, accessible guides on housing services, tenant rights, and the homelessness prevention process</p> <p>Utilise multiple platforms such as integrated locality teams and networks, GP surgeries, websites, social media, community hubs, and libraries to distribute information</p> <p>Offer materials in different languages and accessible formats for those with disabilities</p> <p>Increase use of data and improve working with service such as Fraud to validate and verify legitimate approaches for homelessness support</p>	<p>Easier access to accurate, clear information about housing services and homelessness prevention</p> <p>Greater awareness of available services, leading to quicker interventions</p> <p>More equitable access to information for diverse communities</p>

Strategic Priorities

Partnership and Collaboration

In consideration of the Collaborative Communities Framework, the council's Corporate Plan 2024 – 2029 outlines a clear change in direction from being a delivering council to an enabling council. This means there will be a greater focus on the co-creation of services with a wider range of partners, as well as a renewed focus in the collection and utilisation of data to make service delivery more impactful.

The Housing service will capitalise on this energy within the Corporate Plan and look inwardly to assess how a similar approach can be adopted in the day-to-day. As Homelessness and Rough Sleeping is a statutory service this means there is a wealth of local authorities like that of Thurrock and with the same legal duties in sight. By the Housing service building on professional connections, we can widen the pool of resources available to Thurrock residents, whilst ensuring our own delivery is efficient and sustainable.

Strategic Actions – Partnership and Collaboration

What?	How?	Impact?
Improve coordination between housing, social services, health, and education	<p>Create cross-cutting teams and case meetings to ensure a holistic approach to supporting those at risk of homelessness</p> <p>Share client information across sectors through secure systems to enable coordinated care and support</p> <p>Co-locate services where feasible to improve accessibility and coordination</p>	<p>Holistic and integrated support for individuals and families at risk of homelessness</p> <p>Faster, more coordinated interventions</p> <p>Reduced risk of individuals falling through the cracks due to disconnected services</p>
Strengthen partnerships with non-profit organisations, charities, and community groups	<p>Host regular networking and strategy meetings with community groups, charities, and non-profits to identify areas of collaboration</p> <p>Develop joint initiatives with partners focused on homelessness prevention and support services</p> <p>Share resources and funding opportunities to maximise impact</p>	<p>Expanded support network for individuals at risk of homelessness</p> <p>Greater access to resources and services through partnerships</p> <p>Increased community involvement and volunteer engagement in homelessness prevention</p>

What?	How?	Impact?
<p>Establish clear communication protocols and channels between departments and services</p>	<p>Develop a communication framework outlining responsibilities, processes for information sharing, and expectations surrounding referral management</p> <p>Implement regular multi-disciplinary meetings and updates on cases</p> <p>Use digital platforms to create shared communication channels accessible by all relevant departments</p>	<p>Consistent and timely support for those at risk of homelessness</p> <p>Clearer lines of responsibility and faster escalation of urgent cases</p> <p>Improved efficiency in service delivery through better communication</p>
<p>Collaborate with neighbouring boroughs to share best practices and resources</p>	<p>Set up regular inter-borough meetings to discuss strategies, challenges, and solutions</p> <p>Establish partnership arrangements for out-of-borough placements, ensuring housing availability and consistency across neighbouring and nearby local authority areas</p> <p>Share resources such as training, tools, and knowledge where possible</p>	<p>More effective regional strategies for preventing homelessness</p> <p>Greater housing availability through shared resources and reciprocal agreements</p> <p>Increased collaboration, leading to more efficient service delivery</p>
<p>Engage with individuals with experience of homelessness to improve services and inform policy development</p>	<p>Create focus groups, interviews, and surveys to gather insights from people with lived experience of homelessness</p> <p>Establish a regular advisory panel consisting of individuals who have used homelessness services to review and contribute to policy design</p> <p>Hold co-design workshops where service users can collaborate with policymakers and service providers</p>	<p>Policies and services informed by the real experiences of those affected, leading to more relevant and effective solutions</p> <p>Enhanced trust and engagement between service users and providers</p> <p>Continuous improvement of services based on feedback</p>

What?	How?	Impact?
<p>Engage with families in temporary accommodation and those who have moved on to gather feedback on the services received</p>	<p>Conduct post-occupancy surveys and follow-up interviews with families who have moved out of temporary accommodation</p> <p>Organise community consultations and forums to allow families to share their experiences and suggestions for improvement</p> <p>Collaborate with Homes England to ensure feedback informs future housing policies and service improvements</p>	<p>Better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of current support services for families</p> <p>Improved housing services based on family-specific needs and feedback</p> <p>Increased satisfaction and better long-term outcomes for families transitioning from temporary accommodation</p>
<p>Implement systems for collecting and analysing data on homelessness and housing needs</p>	<p>Develop a centralised data system to track homelessness trends, housing needs, and service usage</p> <p>Train staff in data collection methods and ensure consistency across departments</p> <p>Use the data to create dashboards and reports for decision-makers to guide planning and resource allocation</p>	<p>Data-driven decision-making, leading to more effective and targeted resource allocation</p> <p>Improved understanding of homelessness trends and housing needs</p> <p>Enhanced ability to identify gaps in services and allocate resources effectively</p>

Monitoring and Review

The priorities provide an indication of how each point will be achieved, with identified expected impacts which can be used to assess effectiveness. Although the priorities will be factored into annual service planning for the Housing service and wider council, as with the last strategy this remains a jointly owned document with partners. The aspiration will always remain to ensure accountability and responsibility in the execution of the document, by:

- updating approaches based on changes in legislation and best practice
- listening to feedback from stakeholders, such as residents and professionals
- proactively when it is clear Thurrock's needs have changed, or new priorities emerge

These additions will be managed appropriately and will ensure that the key themes continue to be reflected throughout strategic decision making.

To ensure that there is appropriate oversight of the delivery of the strategy, a biannual progress report will be provided to the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee, with an annual report provided to Cabinet.

Appendix 1: 2020 – 2025 Strategy Appraisal

To inform the development of the Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025-2030, an appraisal was undertaken of the 2020-2025 document. This was to understand successes to date and the areas of work which would be required to continue.

Partnership and Collaboration

This strategic priority focused on the development and embedding of true partnership and collaboration, not only between Council services but also with:

- public bodies such as NHS Trusts, Police, and neighbouring local authorities
- homelessness charities
- registered providers
- other organisations that support those who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness

Partnership and Collaboration as a theme reflected homelessness as both a cause and result of factors beyond the boundaries and knowledge of the Housing service.

Strategic Priority	Action to Date
Establish a Homelessness Partnership Board for Thurrock, bringing together partners from the public, private and community, voluntary and faith sectors as well as those with lived experience to tackle homeless in the borough	Due to unprecedented global events such as COVID-19, this priority did not have the formation or impact as previously anticipated. The Housing service remain committed to a collaborative approach to tackling homelessness in Thurrock, but aims to re-design the delivery such as through localities
Commit to work closely with London authorities to reduce the impact of out-of-borough placements of homeless households in Thurrock	Thurrock is a member of the larger Essex/London agreement which has allowed focus on this issue. Work is now underway to develop pathways within Thurrock's own Private Rented Sector to further alleviate the issue. Work is underway for developing a joint framework in collaboration with other Essex local housing authorities to improve temporary accommodation affordability and reduce the impact of competition between councils.
Work with stakeholders and the community, voluntary and faith sector to address the support, education, training, and employment needs of vulnerable people	Effective work to date has been identified within this priority but further focus is required, specifically in ensuring an effective educational framework for younger generations in understanding 'housing' as a general theme and how to best protect against known risks for homelessness.

Strategic Priority	Action to Date
Share knowledge between partners to improve the identification of individuals experiencing rough sleeping in Thurrock to provide appropriate and timely support	Following focus within this area, Rough Sleeping statistics show a decline in occurrence, but it is accepted that this is not a conclusive indicator of the priority being fully resolved. Focus now needs to shift to how the council can empower local communities to have ownership of this provision in line with locality working

Health and Wellbeing

The second theme focused on the health and wellbeing of those who approach the council's homelessness service for assistance.

Strategic Priority	Action to Date
Redefine and simplify pathways for vulnerable households to access health and wellbeing services across the borough, especially in relation to mental health	Pathways for vulnerable households were reviewed and simplified in line with the priority, but with consideration to the unprecedented times for the life of the previous strategy a refreshed approach is required in how mental health services are supported and delivered
Increase awareness of the physical impact of homelessness and work with partners to improve access to primary care services for those experiencing rough sleeping	Awareness regarding the physical impact of homelessness has been greatly improved, with access to primary care services for those rough sleeping also being streamlined.
Explore opportunities to deliver improved services to armed forces veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness	Specifically designed training has been delivered to staff to ensure veterans receive targeted support where necessary, alongside associated documents such as the Allocations Policy being consistent with the armed forced covenant and wider homelessness law and guidance
Review and revise the existing joint protocol for supporting those at risk of homelessness because of fleeing domestic and sexual abuse	The joint protocol has been revised and aligned to legislative changes since 2020. However, further work could be explored in relation to accommodation, support, and resettlement provision.

Provision and Accessibility

The third theme explored the provision and accessibility of accommodation for those who approach the council for assistance. At the time of the strategy, there was a great pressure on finding and securing affordable accommodation in Thurrock, not only in the private rental sector but within social housing as well. Demand far outstripped supply for the council's own stock.

Strategic Priority	Action to Date
Explore options to increase council-owned temporary accommodation available within the borough	Since the previous strategy, council owned stock has increased and continues to do so. This is work the service will continue to commit to, using innovative, sustainable solutions.
Review the Winter Night Shelter to assess its impact in order to guide future provision	COVID-19 had a big impact on the review, alongside the new, experimental severe weather emergency protocol (SWEP) provision providing new possibilities outside of the night shelter which need to be explored further. If SWEP provision proves to be successful, this presents an opportunity to expand the offer to become the year-round community-led rough sleeper provision in Thurrock.
Develop new social housing in the borough to be let at levels within Local Housing Allowance rates	Continuation of work, and links to innovative, sustainable solutions as referenced above
Engage with landlords in the private rented sector to secure safe, suitable, and affordable accommodation for homeless households	In consideration of the financial uncertainty and cost of living crisis, engagement with private landlords was limited. However, this is still a priority the service is committed to with a focus on how to attract private landlords beyond direct financial incentives.

Customer Excellence

Strategic Priority	Action to Date
Ensure that training regarding homelessness legislation and best practice is available for council staff and partners involved in supporting homeless households in Thurrock	Progress has been made against this priority through training to partners in Adult Social Care, Libraries, community groups and embedded within staff annual training expectations. However, this work needs to continue to ensure all frontline staff have received training, enabling officers to be multi-skilled.
Consider ways in which the council could develop support and accommodation options for people with complex needs	Targeted support has been implemented through multi-disciplinary working groups, but this needs to be expanded to ensure accommodation is provided to all individuals with varying degrees of complex needs

Strategic Priority	Action to Date
<p>Engage with those with lived experience of homelessness to support future service and policy development and design</p>	<p>Further work is required to achieve this, with a re-design of how best to achieve. A new initiative with Homes England has been proposed and once live the council has agreed to participate</p>
<p>Build a directory of specialist knowledge and skills, embedding officers with these skills directly into the homelessness service where possible, to provide timely and appropriate support to homeless households in need</p>	<p>Work has progressed with the provision of specialist officers now working with and within the service, but it needs to be ensured this experience and knowledge is captured for service continuity. This also needs to work within the new operating model of locality working.</p>

PLACE O&S DRAFT