

REPORT TO CUSTOMER FOCUS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 5th February 2026

Report of: Jo Yelland, Strategic Director People and Communities

Title: Homelessness Strategy and Housing Needs update

1. What is the report about?

This report is an update requested by Scrutiny on progress towards addressing the 5 priority areas in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Prevention Strategy 2023 – 2027, in the context of the national Plan to End Homelessness, new government legislation and funding arrangements and operational work underway to meet the new requirements.

2. Recommendations:

- 2.1 For members to note progress made on the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Prevention Strategy 2023 – 2027.
- 2.2 For members to note the need to revisit the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Prevention Strategy during 2026 in response to the National Plan to End Homelessness (2005) and new legislation.
- 2.3 For members to note the organisational and commissioning work already underway to start to address the new requirements.

3. Reasons for the recommendation:

Officers request that the above recommendations be noted by the Scrutiny Committee.

4. What are the resource implications including non-financial resources

As it stands there are no additional specific resource requirements not already included in the 2026/27 budget setting process.

5. What are the legal aspects?

The Council has a duty under Section 1 of the Homelessness Act 2002 to adopt and publish a homelessness strategy and renew it every five years. The Homelessness Prevention Strategy sets out new requirements for this highlighted in this report and due to be detailed by the publication of new Government Guidance during 2026.

6. Report details:

The report provides an update for members on:

1. Strategy progress
2. The National Plan to End Homelessness and its implications for the council
3. Homelessness strategy review
4. Current organisational and commissioning changes underway intended to meet the challenges and opportunities in the new national plan.

6.1 HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY: PRIORITIES

The council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Prevention Strategy 2023 – 2027 has five main priority areas:

- Ending Rough Sleeping – by end 2024
- Increasing Homelessness Prevention
- Progressing Health, Wellbeing & Recovery

- Growing Inclusion and Enablement
- Optimising Systems and Partnerships

6.2 HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY: DATA OVERVIEW

The table below sets out the monthly data returns on key metrics for Homelessness Prevention for the full year 24/25 and 25/6 to date. The highlighted data show the there is a swing towards people coming to us in a crisis (relief so already homeless) over coming to us earlier in prevention stage.

Performance Indicator	Q1 24/25	Q1 25/6	Q2 24/25	Q2 25/26	Q3 24/25	Q3 25/26	Q4 24/25
Homeless Application - Prevention Duties							
Number of new Prevention applications taken during month (B)	130	106	110	72	93	81	80
Total number of open Prevention applications (end of month snapshot) C	308	233	306	191	278	189	217
Number of Prevention applications successfully discharged during month (D)	63	39	48	24	63	26	42
Number of Prevention duties moved on to Relief during month (homeless) E	21	24	29	16	19	29	26
Homeless Application - Relief Duties							
Number of new Relief Applications taken during month (F)	151	83	117	152	119	108	121
Total number of open Relief applications (end of month snapshot) C	323	269	333	350	317	313	296
Homeless Application - Main Duties							
Number of Applications moving to main housing duty (J)	35	44	42	55	32	62	27
Total number of Main Duty applications (end of month snapshot) C	189	162	241	189	237	186	207
Main duties successfully discharged (K)	35	31	36	32	40	35	35
Accommodation	Q1 24/25	Q1 25/6	Q2 24/25	Q2 25/26	Q3 24/25	Q3 25/26	Q4 24/25
Total Number of households in TA (end of month snapshot)	398	335	425	358	392	328	368
(Of the above) number of households accommodated under a Power	11	0	2	0	2	1	4
Number of families	101	38	135	53	107	53	135
Number of people in spot purchase (Commercial B&B / Hotel) including GWH.	22	43	30	31	28	32	18

6.3 STRATEGIC OVERVIEW : NATIONAL CONTEXT

In December 2025 Government launched its new National Plan to End Homelessness. This sets out a renewed focus on responding to growing and entrenched homelessness issue across the UK. This sets out that the best way to end homelessness and rough sleeping is to prevent it before it happens. The focus of the plan is on:

- building more homes that are affordable,
- raising living standards,
- supporting individuals through crises, and
- reforming public services to put prevention at their heart.

In Appendix 1 an extract from the Plan to End Homelessness is attached as Member Briefing paper 1 providing members with information about the national context. Member Briefing Note 2 provides a summary of the Plan to End Homelessness. Member Briefing Note 3 provides a summary of new Housing Related Legislation

The Plan to End Homelessness is built on 5 pillars:

1. **Universal Prevention:** Tackling the root causes of homelessness
2. **Targeted Prevention:** Support for people at higher risk of homelessness
3. **Preventing Crisis:** Helping people stay in their homes
4. **Improving Emergency Responses:** Improving temporary accommodation and making people's experiences better if they do become homeless
5. **Recovery and Preventing Repeat Homelessness:** Ensuring people don't experience homelessness more than once and halving long-term rough sleeping

The Plan outlines immediate action intended to help councils address the most unacceptable forms of homelessness and rough sleeping which are:

- Eliminating unlawful Bed & Breakfast (B&B) use for families,
- Tackling poor-quality temporary accommodation more widely
- Halving the number of people experiencing long-term rough sleeping

As the briefing note sets out a raft of new strategies and investment plans will be brought into play at a national level intended to bring about long-term sustainable change to address the root causes of homelessness including:

- Building 1.5 million homes, including a generational increase in new social and affordable homes backed by £39 billion investment.
- Making sure that social homes go to people who need them, by updating social housing allocations guidance and making best use of the current stock.
- Reforming the private rented sector via the Renters' Rights Act, banning Section 21 evictions and improving security for tenants.
- Tackling poverty and boosting living standards by scrapping the two-child limit, increasing the National Living Wage and increasing the standard rate of Universal Credit.

The Plan will also mean significant changes to councils approaches to tackling homelessness and will have a renewed focus on councils being able to:

- Demonstrate effective local "place" based governance
- A shift in homelessness strategies from reactive crisis responses to a culture rooted in prevention.
- Publish and regularly update action plans (Autumn 26)

- Include targets against the metrics in the new National Outcomes Framework (to be published) and a description of how, working with partners those targets will be achieved
- Identify further bespoke targets using local data

Government also sets out that council should expect increased involvement from MHCLG for areas that have a significantly high homelessness and rough sleeping population including strong local governance to effectively scrutinise actions plans and targets, and to be open to challenge and support.

Among the targets Councils will have to set and strive for (new National Outcomes Framework: priority Outcome: To Prevent and reduce homelessness and rough sleeping) are to reduce rates of:

- Households with children in Temporary Accommodation
- Families in B&B over 6 weeks
- People sleeping rough on a single night
- People sleeping rough over the month who are long term
- Preventing and relieving homelessness
- Preventing and relieving homeless for those experiencing multiple disadvantages

In practical terms this will mean a shift in culture and practice through:

- Prioritisation of single homelessness to stop people entering the cycle in the first place
- Maintaining focused, long-term engagement with people who have been sleeping rough for long periods.
- Greater focus on prevention: housing crisis should primarily be addressed through homelessness legislation and statutory duties rather than through rough sleeping services.
- Personalised support tailored to individual needs not the situation (i.e. rough sleeping) promoting a more inclusive and needs led approach
- Closer collaboration with partners to manage street activity and reduce harm
- Prioritisation of resources according to assessed need rather than solely on an individual housing or rough sleeping status
- Targeting support and resources including outreach delivery towards people who are less likely to seek help or engage with services

6.4 STRATEGIC OVERVIEW: LOCAL PREPARATION

Local data analysis undertaken in 2025 identified systemic challenges faced in Exeter in relation to homelessness and an evidenced based rationale for a new approach to the way the council delivers its statutory services and how it commissions essential frontline support services for those in need.

Following an initial 2-month snapshot review of the data a longer-term analysis was undertaken to assess whether the issues raised in the snapshot analysis were more entrenched. This more in-depth analysis confirms that earlier insights were not anomalous, but reflective of deeper, ongoing systemic challenges in Exeter's homelessness landscape.

The findings and conclusions reached from our own analysis are largely reflected in the new national Plan to End Homelessness as are the plans we have started to implement to transform the local system and reduce homelessness. This includes a fundamental transformation of both our commissioning of services outside of the council and a

fundamental restructure of the way we organise ourselves and deliver services. Along with the strategic review of performance data our plans have been informed by :

- Gov's Fair Funding Review will provide 3-year funding settlement from 1/4/26
- Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023
- Renters Rights Reform Act 2025
- National Plan to End Homelessness December 2025

The slide set in Appendix 2 provides an over view of the commissioning and internal restructure work underway

6.5 THREE YEAR FUNDING SETTLEMENT

In 25/26 ECC received the following Government Grants.

Grant	Amount £
Homeless Prevention Grant allocation	1,431,078
*Homeless Prevention Grant Top up	99,985
Rough Sleeping Prevention and Recovery Grant allocation	1,393,547
*Rough Sleeping Prevention and Recovery Grant Top up	407,054
Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme Next Steps	422,850
MHCLG new burdens funding for Accommodation based DA	36,218
Total	3,790,732

Funding 26/27

Using the national calculator provided by MHCLG we estimated Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse consolidated ring-fenced grant for 26/27 at **£3.1m: £691k** less than the 26/27 total. Our actual allocation confirmed in January 2025: ring-fenced Homelessness, Rough Sleeping, Domestic Abuse grant in 26/27 is £2,675,706. ***This is a shortfall of £1.1million against 25/26 budget.***

Within the funding formula the notional Temporary Accommodation element is £729,850 (£385,176 less than we were expecting), overall, the funding formula provides a gross increase over previous years @ £1m. Therefore, members will be asked to allocate this amount to housing needs budgets to make up the shortfall in the HPG grant from General Fund resources. Note gross expenditure (including Temporary Accommodation and Externally Commissioned Services) will be in the region of £7.3 million some of which is offset by income from Housing Benefit .

Devon County Council (DCC) have confirmed funding (ex: Supporting People Funding) for Exeter of £161,021 for the next 2 years, which previously went directly to providers of Supported Housing. Whilst we await confirmation of exact details and outcomes expected from this short term grant our initial intention is to include this on our commissioning of Supported Accommodation along with a smaller Homeless Prevention Grant of £31k.

In addition, there is further New Burdens Funding to support mobilisation of the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023 and the Renters Rights Reform Act 2025 which will cover, for the next two years the direct cost of employing 3-4 full time equivalent staff to undertake the new statutory duties detailed in Appendix 1 Member Briefing Note 3.

7. How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan?

The strategic outcome we are aiming to achieve is that "fewer people will be homeless or in temporary housing" (ECC Corporate Plan 25-28).

8. What risks are there and how can they be reduced?

This report is for information only; no proposals are being made

9. Equality Act 2010 (The Act)

No potential impact has been identified on people with protected characteristics as determined by the Act because the report is for information only

10. Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

No direct carbon/environmental impacts arising because the report is for noting only

11. Are there any other options?

Not Applicable: Scrutiny as report is for information only

Strategic Director: People and Communities , Jo Yelland,

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling this report:

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Prevention Strategy 2023 – 2027

New National Plan for Ending Homelessness December 2025