

Housing Needs and Homelessness System Change

Briefing for Devon CEX Group 8th December 2025

This Presentation sets out:

- Case for transformation
- New commissioning approach
- Organisational change
- Where we are now

Housing Needs and Homelessness

The Case for Transformation

- Strategic review of performance data has highlighted significant operational and systematic issues.
- Gov's Fair Funding Review and 3-year funding settlement provide a welcome opportunity to take a more strategic view of needs and outcomes.
- Renewed focus on the transformation of our local system including the delivery of statutory services.

Strategic Data Review

Highlights that Exeter's homelessness crisis is ***structural, complex, and fast moving, driven by public system failures*** rather than private evictions

Our local system is characterised by:

- Revolving door of placements and evictions from supported housing
- People (inc care leavers) exiting institutions into homelessness
- Fragmented service delivery
- Young males with overlapping needs
- Culture of entrenched street attachment /rough sleeping
- Late engagement with the Private Rented Sector therefore missing opportunities to avoid escalation
- Low client trust and engagement

Transformation Opportunity

The conditions are right for transformative action focusing on preventative housing support, early outreach, data sharing, integrated services, and specialist housing interventions as urgent priorities to reverse trends and prevent repeat homelessness

The new system must:

1. Meet people early, hold them through volatility, and make every pathway frictionless.
2. Have a greater focus on prevention and early intervention.
3. Target institutional discharge planning and supported housing failures.
4. Ensure targeted and early Private Rented Sector engagement.
5. Be trauma informed with multi-agency support to manage the high vulnerability profile.
6. Have a sufficient mix of Temporary and Supported Accommodation.

New Commissioning Approach

- Separating out personal support from buildings: so that support stays with the person
- Maximises ability individuals to claim Housing Benefit, reducing local subsidies
- Increases the number of Housing First and Next Steps Accommodation Units from HRA.
- Encourage other Registered Social Landlords to do the same
- Allows for “off the streets” accommodation for rough sleepers including those without eligible statutory needs
- Incentivise stability and minimise the cycle of repeated evictions
- Stepping away from “compensatory” commissioning on health and care services
- Proactive solution planning with Private Rented Sector
- Move to integration and away from disintegration
- Reward Outcomes

Organisational Change

Re-structure of the Housing Needs and Homeless Service

The aim is to build a **Homelessness and Housing Needs service** that prioritises **prevention**, especially for care leavers and single homeless individuals, within a system that is proactive, integrated, and trauma informed.

To reduce crisis presentations, the service will be built on:

- early intervention and prevention,
- integrated person-centred pathways,
- partnership working,
- robust contract and performance monitoring, and
- continuous improvement.

Design Principles

1. **Prevention First** - as default Intervene at first sign of housing stress rather than waiting for statutory duty.
2. **Corporate parenting duty** - Align with the Homelessness Code of Guidance: housing teams must uphold care leavers' best interests and support their transition to independence.
3. **Trauma-informed and person-centred** - Recognise care background, build trust through lived-experience mentors and flexible engagement.
4. **Integrated multi-agency working** - Co-locate housing, children's services, adult social care, health and voluntary sector under one gateway.
5. **Person centred** – Tailored support to individual pathways

Early Intervention and Prevention Service Specialises in targeted early interventions to prevent homelessness.	Outreach Service Specialises in identification and engagement with individuals rough sleeping in public spaces and Street Link referrals.	Case Work Service Specialises in assessments and management of homelessness applications from individuals under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996	Case Work (Institutional Pathways) Service Specialises in assessments and management of homelessness applications from people leaving institutional care under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996	Accommodation System Service Specialises in ensuring safe, legal and effective temporary accommodation provision and overall system management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides brief and intensive outreach support to people experiencing housing difficulties, which if not addressed, may lead to them becoming homeless. Licensing, advice and enforcement with Private Sector Housing (Landlords) Development, administration, promotion of ECCs Private Sector Access Offer: (Renters Rights Bill) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Move on and resettlement into identified housing pathways or “off the street” offer. Reconnection – assists individuals into returning to areas where they came/ where they have support. Service navigation – connect people with other services (healthcare, benefits) Statutory assessments – undertaking homeless applications for individuals during engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implements the prevention and relief duties introduced by the Homelessness Reduction Act Decisions about interim and main housing duties, requests suitable temporary accommodation, conducts inquiries into priority need and intentionality, coordinates multi-agency referrals under the duty to refer, Supports applicants through reviews and appeals, Safeguards vulnerable adults and children (including victims of domestic abuse), Records and monitors case outcomes to ensure compliance with the Homelessness Code of Guidance and statutory obligation 	<p>Same functions as Case Work service, but with a focus on working proactively with statutory/ voluntary agencies to house people leaving institutional care including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young People leaving care Discharge from hospital Prison release Resettlement from armed forces <p>Welcome secondment of DCC staff into this team to participate in the action learning model</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commissioning effective temporary accommodation by understanding needs, forecasting demand, shaping supply and monitoring system delivery and performance . Procurement, contract and performance management of commissioned services across Directorate Delivering effective operations of temporary accommodation (including Council owned stock):ensuring compliance with legislation and statutory guidance; controlling void periods, overseeing repairs and maintenance maximising occupancy overseeing rent collection.

Where we are now

- Served notice on all external contracts to end in March '26
- Soft market engagement 17th December in preparation for procurement Jan '26 and new contracts in place for Jun '26
- Commenced organisational design and restructure for full implementation by April '26
- Working with DCC on seconding staff to new Case Work Team (Institutional)