

HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING UPDATE JAN 2025

Community Connections



I. INTRODUCTION

Nationally and locally homelessness has increased significantly over recent years. The continued impact of the cost-of-living crisis, rising inflation, oversubscribed health and wellbeing services, including the lack of affordable housing across all housing tenures has resulted in further demand for housing services and temporary accommodation.

The experience of homeless households currently attempting to access private rented accommodation is that there are more than 30 (often up to 100) applicants for every available property, with some being able to offer higher rent or several months' rent up front to secure the property, and/or landlords favouring other applicants.

The number of available social housing lets in Plymouth has declined by 36% over the last 5 years and this further exacerbates the challenges faced by homeless households and the length of time in temporary accommodation.

These factors impact the ability for homeless households to move on to an affordable home and means longer stays in all forms of temporary accommodation, including bed and breakfast. This has resulted in many supported housing services becoming silted up.

The financial impact on Local Authorities in meeting statutory temporary accommodation duties under homelessness legislation has always been challenging however this has become more so in recent years putting significant additional pressure on council budgets.

Wider legislation changes also have an impact on the housing market. The current Government are taking forwards the Renters Rights Bill which started its journey under the previous Government and is now being considered by the House of Lords. This legislation is expected to end the use of section 21 "no fault" evictions. Section 21 remains the highest reason for households presenting as homeless. The legislation seeks to reduce no fault evictions and improve overall standards in the private rented sector. However, it is expected that there will be an increased proportion of landlords who will leave the sector as they are not able to meet the requirements and associated costs. This will place further pressure on the availability and affordability of the private rented sector.

The challenge is recognised nationally, with an increased focus on the development of affordable housing, as well as reform of the private sector and a higher level of Homelessness Prevention Grant via the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

Locally there is a relentless focus on tackling the housing crisis, exemplified through the establishment of the Plymouth City Council Housing Taskforce, co chaired by the Cabinet Member for Housing, Cooperative Development and Communities and the Chief Executive. The taskforce has overseen the launch of the Plan for Homes 4 which encompasses the desire to tackle homelessness and its causes with the provision of long term solutions as its focus.

The Homelessness Recovery Programme is delivering activity to prevent and relieve homelessness under the four pillars of Prevention, Intervention, Recovery and Systems Support.

Seven individual plans sit within this Programme: -

- Accommodation Development
- Rough sleeping and Single Homelessness Prevention
- Children and Young people Homelessness Prevention
- Supported Accommodation Review
- Families Homelessness Prevention
- Domestic abuse Safe Accommodation Plan
- System Support/Development

2. Plan for Homes 4

This dedicated plan builds upon the successful Plan for Homes programme which provides a housing delivery framework and was first launched in November 2013 and refreshed in March 2016. In March 2019 Plan for Homes 3 was updated and extended to 2024.

Plan for Homes 4 continues the programme and sets out our commitment to enable and directly provide increased delivery of quality new homes, and to support the regeneration, improvement, and energy efficiency of existing homes of all tenures. Working with a range of partners we aim to meet our key housing challenges and provide for a range of housing needs, particularly addressing the increase in homelessness and use of temporary accommodation.

Plan for Homes 4 sets out 6 themes of housing activity: affordable housing; market housing; private rented housing; supported and specialist housing; partnerships; with a cross-cutting theme of climate action.

Plan for Homes 4 also identifies 10 key strategic initiatives within these themes, which include a range of housing, planning, and wider corporate service activities to help meet identified housing needs, tackle homelessness, poor housing conditions, and reduce carbon emissions; exploring opportunities for increased delivery, greater innovation, and maximising investment for the homes the city needs.

3. Annual Grant funding for Homelessness

Plymouth City Council receives a ring-fenced Homelessness Prevention Grant from central Government via the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

In addition, there has been a Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) grant allocated to local authorities over recent years and is part of the government strategy to address homelessness and rough sleeping as well as to improve services for individuals who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

Plymouth City Council has been in receipt of RSI funding on an annual basis since first application in 2018 and collaborating with the Plymouth Alliance has worked to design and deliver a holistic response to the prevention and relief of homelessness and rough sleeping.

The service delivery has developed over the years of the funding with a consistent core response. Services have been able to develop and grow in line with the funding opportunities and in response to the growing challenge.

Furthermore, there has been an increased focus on preventing households who are at acute risk of homeless/ and or rough sleeping with additional Winter Pressures Funding awarded in November 2024 and January 2025

Funding Stream	24/25 Award £	25/26 Award £
Homelessness Prevention Grant	1, 452,661	2,176,530
Rough Sleeper Initiative *	1,959,279	1,976,631
Winter pressures	Tranche 1 89,000 Tranche 2 188,000	

*includes Accommodation for Ex offenders (AFEO), and Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme (RSAP)

4. Homelessness Service Demand

Approaches to the Community Connections Housing Options Team has risen significantly post Covid.

There is always a slight fall in the number of households approaching the housing options team in December, and compared to previous years, this years' fall is in line with previous years.

2024-25 Monthly data	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of households approaching for housing advice	357	345	383	418	396	396	405	402	296
New Applications	169	152	132	148	155	131	107	98	110
Number of new prevention cases (households at risk of homelessness within 56 days)	63	53	50	56	82	66	71	68	47
Number of new relief cases (already homeless)	72	58	58	63	64	50	52	50	57
1st Dec 2024 Snapshot data									
Total number of current cases held - all duties	1078	1151	1194	1282	1248	1092	1047	990	950
Total number of prevention (homeless within 56 days) cases held	247	284	291	318	323	314	308	291	269
Total number of relief (homeless) cases held	217	239	248	234	195	160	143	150	156
Total number of main duty owed (duty decision taken) cases held	266	266	256	258	263	288	280	272	275

The Housing Options Team continues to support a high level of homelessness cases. The number of households approaching because they are at risk of homelessness has steadily decreased over the last seven months albeit higher than April 2024.

Despite the challenging climate, between April and Nov 2024, the team has successfully: -

Prevented 243 households from becoming homeless

Supported 217 households away from homelessness within 56 days of them becoming homeless

Accepted a main duty and supported 238 households out of homelessness.

4.1 Client feedback on the team and the service:

“Getting into temp and Housing Options supporting me to do this has saved my life and I couldn’t have imagined I would have ever been able to leave the awful situation I was in”

“Thank you so much for your continued support and professionalism through this very traumatic time in my life”

“You were so polite, so caring and a shining light in a very dark period of my life”

“Thank you for your kindness and compassion when discussing the daunting situation and homelessness process. You immediately put me at ease and treated me like a human being rather than a box to be ticked or someone to be judged. You are an absolute credit to the job”

5. Temporary Accommodation Demand

Where homelessness and priority need is established, there is a statutory duty to provide temporary accommodation.

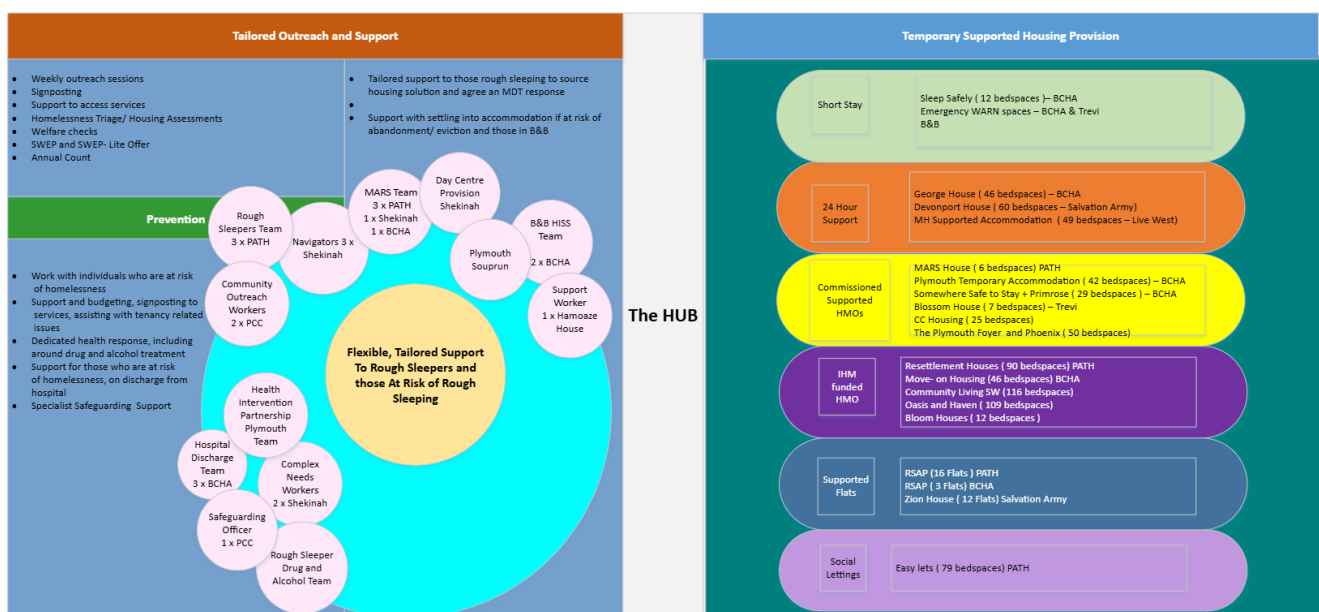
2024 Snapshot as at 1 st of month	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of households in temporary accommodation (all forms of temp)	354	360	367	379	365	347	358	357	370
Number of households with children/expected children in temporary accommodation	192	187	200	196	187	189	194	193	197
Total number of households in holiday lets/other nightly paid	45	43	41	39	37	37	36	34	42
Number of Households in B&B	187	185	194	200	173	162	174	176	166
Number of households with children/expected children in B&B	41	41	43	27	21	24	32	31	17
Number of households with children/ expected children in B&B_for MORE than 42 days	20	13	8	11	8	3	9	9	6

The increase in numbers presenting over recent years has seen a 162% increase in temporary accommodation demand.

6. Temporary Accommodation Provision Development

In April 2019, the Plymouth Alliance was launched, and homelessness temporary accommodation and supported housing, advice and support services were commissioned as part of the ‘complex lives’ procurement including services such as substance misuse, and some mental health provision. Plymouth City Council is one of eight organisations within the Plymouth Alliance

Using a collaborative model, the focus is on creating systemic change: changes to culture, funding structures, commissioning and policy which support a new, more integrated way of working. The Plymouth Alliance and deliver a range of accommodation and support services that work with people who are homeless/at risk of homelessness, these include:



Additionally, there has been a cross departmental focus on increasing cost effective, affordable temporary accommodation provision. A cross- departmental Housing Development Action Plan has been implemented and is additionally reviewed and updated by the Alliance Accommodation Subgroup which is well attended by providers and other relevant stakeholders.

The following tables detail the number of units that have been delivered and those are expected to be ready to let within the next 15 months.

7. Temporary Housing Delivery: Homeless Families:

Number of new units delivered since May 2023
78

New temporary accommodation for homeless families	Forecasted number of units (Pipeline)
Royal Building Refurbishment	Minimum of 30 flats
BCHA, in partnership with a private landlord	20 homes (fully delivered)
BCHA acquired properties utilised the capital funding from the Local Authority Homes Fund (LAHF)	8 homes (to be delivered by March 2026)
Expression of Interest approved for submission to LAHF for additional funds for temporary accommodation family homes. Awaiting outcome from MHCLG	15 homes (to be delivered by March 2026)
Plymouth Community Homes Regen Stock	10- 20

The number of family temporary accommodation units is set to increase by a further 95 homes.

7.1 Temporary Housing Delivery: Homeless Individuals and Couples:

Number of new units delivered since October 2023
6 units

New temporary accommodation for homeless individuals and couples	9. Forecasted number of units (Pipeline)
Planning permission for the Night Shelter provision has been approved and is now open throughout the year	12 bed spaces
Successful bid to Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme (SHAP) funding stream is being utilised to set up new units of supported housing	Total of 118 new units (to be delivered by April 2025- July 2025)
	Path Housing - 2 x 5-6 bed houses for individuals and couples with medium to high support needs
	YMCA and Young Devon – 47 x self-contained supported flats for young people with support needs

	BCHA 11 x Accessible self-contained supported homes for people with support and mobility needs
	Young Devon 4 x flats for young people with medium to high support needs
PATH are leasing additional provision	44 bedspaces from March 2025

The number of temporary accommodation bedspaces and self-contained properties for single people and couples is expected to increase by 118 units within the next 9-10 months.

8. Devon Home Choice Register

All social housing in Plymouth is let through the Devon Home Choice scheme. Homeless households can access a higher number of properties as 50% of all properties are advertised with a preference to statutory homeless households

There has been an increase in the number of active applications from 6801 in May 2024 to 7799 at the beginning of January 2025. The use of 50% homelessness preferences is continuing to increase the number of allocations to homeless households.

Eligible Homeless households are assessed as Band B (High Housing Need).

The table below captures the Band B housing needs for social housing properties of all sizes. (this includes households who are Band B for reasons other than homelessness e.g. overcrowding, high health and well-being needs)

Plymouth Housing Need by Band and Bedroom (01/11/2024)

	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed	5 Bed	6 Bed	7 Bed	Total
Band A	2	5	1					8
Band B	708	424	214	123	61	10	1	1541
Band C	370	509	529	191	18	2		1619
Band D	2011	384	101	18	3			2517
Band E	1097	697	284	32	4			2114
Total	4188	2019	1129	364	86	12	1	7799

We are seeing month on month increases in the number of active applications from 6801 in May 2024 to 7799 at the beginning of January 2025.

The use of 50% homelessness preferences is continuing to increase the number of allocations to homeless households:

Number of DHC Plymouth properties advertised in December	63
Number of DHC Plymouth properties advertised with a preference to homeless applicants in December	37

Number of DHC lets to Plymouth based applicants in December*	69
Number of DHC lets to Plymouth homeless clients in December*	31

*Please note that the lets in the December figures include homes that were advertised in November or before.

There continues to be a lack of social housing supply in Plymouth, which is illustrated by the overall number of Devon Home Choice lets. There has been a significant drop in available social housing since the Covid pandemic:

Lets to Plymouth based households	Total Lets	Monthly average
April 19 to March 20	1160	97
April 23 to March 24	874	73

The most recent monthly lets for December 2024:

Overall, no of lets to Plymouth based households	69
No of lets to Plymouth homeless households	31

9. Rough Sleeping

Rough Sleeping is the most visible form of homelessness and the reasons for rough sleeping are diverse. The number of people rough sleeping with multiple needs and risks is increasing and there are limited suitable housing options and provision for this cohort.

Single Night Snapshot 2024	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
No of Rough Sleepers	37	34	34	44	42	26	29	40 *	25

*This was the Official Annual Rough Sleeper Count when there are an increased number of teams searching across the City

The PATH Rough Sleeper Team carry out a monthly snapshot of the number of rough sleepers seen on a single night. Long term rough sleeping, with complex lives has increased and is a reflection of the increased homelessness demand and the challenges people are facing.

Included in these figures are those with no recourse to public funds and those with no local connection. While these numbers are relatively low, teams work with individuals to sign post to relevant support and reconnect, where appropriate to their local authority area.

- In the last quarter 13 rough sleepers evidenced did not have a local connection and a further 9 rough sleepers did not have recourse to public funds.

The Council's Homelessness service works closely with all organisations delivering services to rough sleepers. Two dedicated Community Outreach Workers and the Rough Sleeper Team meet with rough sleepers in a range of locations and co-ordinate a multi-agency response.

PATH and BCHA will have a total of 23 units of new supported housing provision funded through the Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme specifically for those experiencing rough sleeping available to let from April 2025.

The additional Winter Pressures Funding will support bespoke individual plans for those who are facing the most challenges to move away from the streets.

9.1 Winter arrangements for those Rough Sleeping

An all-year Night Shelter called Sleep Safely based at Hamoaze reopened in November 2024 following planning permission being granted and is now open all year round and accommodates 12 individuals nightly.

During very adverse weather where there is an amber weather warning, and/ or three consecutive days of below zero degrees, PATH and PCC lead on the delivery of SWEP (Severe Weather Emergency Protocol) with organisations working with rough sleepers. During periods of SWEP, the approach is to ensure that each rough sleeper has an offer of accommodation.

- Devonport House can accommodate an additional eight individuals and George House an additional ten individuals.
- Cold weather provision is also delivered where the weather may affect wellbeing but there has been no weather warning or low temperatures forecast
- Where there is a yellow weather warning there may be additional provision offered to those rough sleepers that are particularly vulnerable due to their location or other complexities that make them a greater risk due to the weather conditions

10. Homelessness Recovery Programme Plans

Within the Homelessness Recovery Programme, the Accommodation delivery strand sits directly within the Plan 4 Homes and is part of the broader holistic strategic plan responding to housing needs and development in the City.

The purpose of the Homelessness Recovery Board has been to:

Have a continued, focused and co-ordinated multi-agency response to manage costs, benefits, risks and dependencies across the Homelessness Recovery Programme
 Deliver on the recommendations to reduce homelessness from the PCC Housing Task Force
 Develop and sign-off business cases and decision reports to deliver projects within the Homelessness Recovery Programme.

The Strategic Homelessness Programme brings together dedicated workstreams to drive the implementation of a robust response to the prevention of homelessness as well as the delivery of housing and related specialist services to those who are homeless in Plymouth

Our approach is to work in partnership with the Plymouth Alliance and other local organisations in the delivery of the actions within each of the plans.

For example, there is a key partnership with Plymouth Community Homes which has resulted in a number of successful initiatives including :-

- 260 households moved on from Temporary Accommodation since April 24, including 40 households in December 24, as a result
- An initial 10 units of temporary accommodation within regeneration stock with a possibility of more

The plans within the Programme are set out in seven dedicated action plans :-

Homelessness Delivery Plans	Key Objectives / Activities
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Children and Young People (CYP) Delivery Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of additional CYP specific supported accommodation with new Youth Hub placement arrangements • Updating the Joint Protocol around CYP Homelessness • Joint initiatives with stakeholders to reduce homelessness e.g. PCH and PCC collaboration around implementing training flats
Rough Sleeping and Single Homeless Delivery Plan	<p>Deliver Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme (SHAP) - to meet the need of single homeless and rough sleepers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PATH Houses for those with medium to high needs • BCHA self-contained accessible homes with individuals with accessibility needs and support needs <p>Deliver suitable additional temporary accommodation to meet needs of those who are Single Homeless / Rough Sleeping</p> <p>Develop innovative approaches to reduce long-term rough sleeping</p>
Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation and Whole Housing Response Plan	<p>Meeting all duties under safe Accommodation - Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (Part 4 Duty)</p> <p>Deliver suitable additional temporary accommodation and support by ensuring that Homeless Families provision meets the Safe Accommodation legal definition</p>
Homeless Families Delivery Plan	<p>Actively working with providers to increase the supply of temporary, supported housing</p> <p>PCC Housing Acquisition Programme delivered by utilising: 10million service borrowing and up to £5 million Homes England funding to provide supported family temporary accommodation to reduce the need for expensive nightly paid accommodation</p> <p>Deliver suitable additional temporary accommodation using a short-term leasing model</p>
Accommodation Development Plan (contained within Plan for Homes 4)	<p>Increase affordable housing supply in Plymouth</p>
Supported Accommodation Review Plan	<p>Improve local supported housing standards and pivoting supported provision to need</p>
System Development and Support Plan	<p>Cross-departmental priorities and tasks to advance continuous improvement and performance management across the Homelessness System</p>

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