

## Manchester Homelessness Strategy

Losing a home can be the consequence of different structural or personal factors. In the past ten years, the number of households affected by homelessness has increased across the country. During this time, Welfare Reform has introduced the freezing of Local Housing Allowance, benefit caps for low-income families, and Universal Credit; average rents in the private-rented sector have increased, and demand for social affordable housing has grown, outstripping supply. In 2017, more than 300,000 people in Britain – equivalent to one in every 200 – were officially recorded as homeless or living in inadequate homes.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to this, in 2017 the number of people sleeping rough in England rose for the eighth consecutive year, with 4,751 people counted or estimated by local authorities to be sleeping rough in England on any one night in autumn – a 15% increase from the 2016 figure of 4,134, and more than double the 2010 figure.

Manchester reflects the national trend in the number of households that have lost their home. Both the use of temporary accommodation and the number of people who experience sleeping rough have increased. At the same time, the number of affordable houses on the Local Housing Allowance rate has shrunk, and pressures on affordable social housing is increasing. Housing options for people on low incomes or those receiving housing benefits are becoming limited. Financial vulnerability and levels of poverty have increased. Experience of childhood poverty is closely linked to experience of adult homelessness; Manchester has one of the highest child-poverty rates in the country.

To prevent homelessness we need to address inequalities and create equitable access to skills, education, employment and health, alongside housing. We need to ensure that personal circumstances are not a barrier to accessing services and opportunities, and give extra support to those who might need it to overcome these structural issues. An Our Manchester approach underpins this strategy, putting people's strengths and potential at its heart. It's also about recognising the contributions that are needed from lots of different people and organisations to make this strategy work. These contributions will come from those organisations working in Manchester, those working across the Greater Manchester region, and those working nationally. Changes under the Homelessness Reduction Act, including the new duty to collaborate, acknowledge the important contributions organisations can make towards preventing homelessness. Manchester is committed to this approach, supported by Manchester's Homelessness Partnership.

### Manchester Homelessness Partnership

The Manchester Homelessness Partnership has enabled organisations, services and citizens to work together on the challenges that can affect people who are experiencing homelessness. In 2015, the Partnership established Manchester's Homelessness Charter [\[insert link to Charter web page\]](#) and multiple action groups [\[insert link to Action Groups Webpage\]](#). These groups have developed new approaches to reduce homelessness, bringing together people who are homeless and organisations that provide support for people to overcome personal and systemic challenges. This strategy represents an expansion of the commitments and pledges made through the Charter, demonstrating what we commit to as a city. The Partnership also works closely with the Greater Manchester Homeless Action Network so that a common understanding of our goal goes hand in hand with shared best practise.

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<sup>1</sup> Shelter, Far From Alone: Homelessness in Britain 2017, November 2017

The Charter established a clear vision and values that have framed the work of the Partnership. This strategy is aligned to these vision and values:

### **Vision:**

To end homelessness in Manchester.

### **Values:**

We believe that everyone who is homeless should have a right to:

- A safe, secure home, and if needed, an appropriate level of support to create a good quality of life
- The full protection of the law, and not be subjected to violence, abuse, theft and discrimination
- Respect and a good standard of service everywhere
- Equality of access to information and services
- Equality of opportunity to employment, training, volunteering, leisure and creative activities.

We believe that those who work with homeless people have a collective responsibility to ensure that:

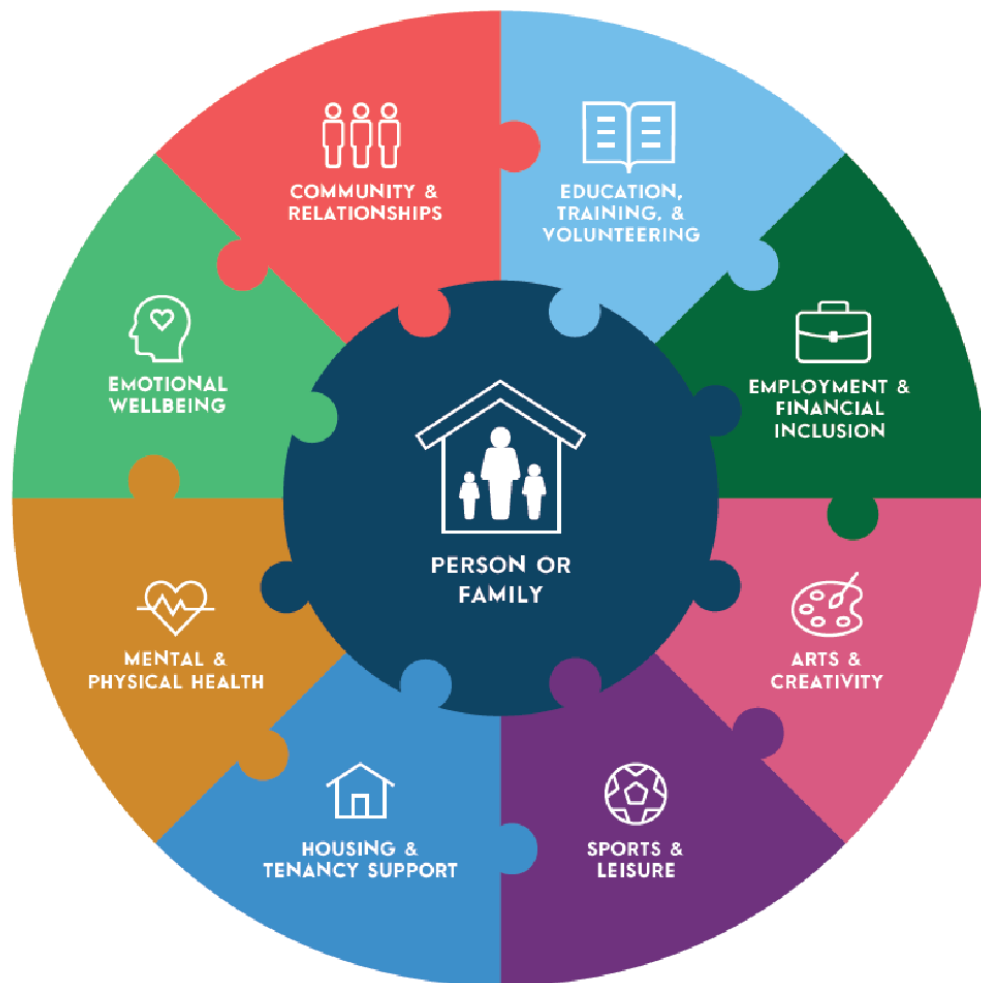
- Good communication, co-ordination and a consistent approach is delivered across all services
- People with experience of homelessness have a voice and are involved in determining the solutions to their own issues, and homelessness in general

### **Principles:**

An Our Manchester approach is integral to this strategy; its principles are aligned to this approach:

#### **We see potential and work with strengths**

To overcome the effects of homelessness, we want to create environments for people to thrive. This means recognising the assets that people and families have and starting with these strengths. It also means thinking and planning about more than just housing. The diagram below demonstrates the diverse approach towards providing support that is a principle of this strategy. It involves building self-expression, increased wellbeing, greater social inclusion and positive relationships in order to create a much deeper and more effective support structure. This includes increasing access to arts, sports and leisure opportunities, alongside employment, education and physical health. This diagram has been co-produced by the Manchester Homelessness Partnership Strategy Group and is inspired by With One Voice Jigsaw of Homelessness Support [\[insert as link\]](#).



Services are aimed at persons and families, including those in complex situations, to give them access to effective support so that everyone can get the type of help they need. Through working with the strengths of individuals we will increase the collective strengths of the city.

**We listen, learn and respond through co-production**

We value the experiences of people who use our services, or have been homeless, or who are at risk of becoming homeless. The more complex a person's or family's situation, the greater the need for co-production to find innovative, joined-up and peer-led solutions. We are committed to increasing involvement in the design, delivery and evaluation of our services with people and families who might have experienced or been at risk of homelessness.

**We work together as an inclusive partnership**

We collaborate with the voluntary sector, the Council, the police, health, housing providers, community and faith groups, businesses, universities and concerned citizens. This allows people to experience genuinely joined-up services, with strong communication about their goals and potential, rather than a disjointed system.

**It's all about people**

We work with people and families, not labels. We focus on what really matters, rather than just patching problems, and take the time to consider underlying causes and experiences rather than make assumptions. We work 'with' people and families, not 'to' them; this creates change and enables people and families to flourish.

## **Aims:**

The strategy will aim to make:

- 1. Homelessness a rare occurrence: increasing prevention and early intervention**
- 2. Homelessness as brief as possible: improving temporary and supported accommodation to be a positive experience**
- 3. Experience of homelessness to be a one-off occurrence: increasing access to settled homes**

Organisations across the city all have a contribution to make and a role to play towards these aims in order to reduce homelessness. Our work with other Greater Manchester Authorities; private, public and voluntary organisations; and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority will be mutually supporting - working towards a shared vision with a common approach.

### **Aim 1: Making homelessness a rare occurrence: increasing prevention**

Partnership action groups have said that more advice and information should be available in doctors' surgeries, libraries and Sure Start centres, especially information about private-rented sector tenancies and tenancy rights.

We can increase prevention by:

- Involving people who have had experience of homelessness in designing services to make sure they are accessible
- Getting services across all sectors to work better together, not as individual organisations
- Making sure people are not discharged from one service, for example prisons, mental-health services or hospitals, directly onto the street.
- Making sure we are good corporate parents to care leavers, helping them access the correct services and pathways so they do not become homeless when they leave care.
- Encouraging all organisations to recognise and respond to the additional vulnerabilities and support needs of young adults who have had a local authority care history
- Working with the private-rented sector and social landlords to establish new approaches to reduce evictions.
- Ensuring ease of access across the community to specialist advice where there is a risk of homelessness, and that day centres can support people who arrive at a point of crisis.

Ultimately, to prevent homelessness, we need to address inequalities that may exist in accessing employment, education, training, housing and health services across the city. We need services to be more aware of homelessness and what they can do to work together to prevent it.

**Making homelessness a rare occurrence:** the Partnership will increase homelessness prevention through:

#### **Supporting people to maintain their home:**

- Create links to local services; offer opportunities to improve physical and mental health, education, leisure and cultural activities; and provide access to training, volunteering and employment

- Provide advice and information to support people to access services that could prevent them becoming homeless. Raise awareness about realistic housing options and homelessness in the city
- Identify earlier where households might be at risk of homelessness. Raise awareness with front-line staff across public services to recognise at-risk families or individuals to then reduce the likelihood of homelessness and when needed refer them for specialist support early; this includes assistance with housing, as well as advice on employment, mental-health services and family mediation, as part of the Duty to Collaborate
- Work across services and organisations to proactively prevent and reduce homelessness
- Develop joint-working arrangements to target situations where a household might be at risk of falling through the gaps in services, in particular tenants living in the private-rented sector
- Engage with private-rented sector and social landlords and develop new approaches that reduce the number of people and families becoming homeless in the city
- Where antisocial behaviour might put someone at risk of homelessness, restorative approaches are taken to resolve the situation, bringing in other support services that might be needed
- Raise awareness of the potential impact of short custodial sentences in causing the loss of a stable home and promote the use of diversion methods during court proceedings in such circumstances, ensuring other support is linked into this.

Support people to move in a managed way:

- Create opportunities for accessing housing of the right kind and quality, to prevent people from becoming homeless in the private-rented and social-rented sector
- Reduce recurring homelessness, identifying influencing factors such as mental health, learning disability, substance misuse, entrenched poverty and by connecting people to local services, education, cultural and leisure activities, training, volunteering and employment opportunities
- Enable people and families to move and feel at home in their new home, through working with their strengths and interests
- No one is discharged from hospital, in-patient mental-health services, or drug and alcohol detox treatment or leaving care if they are homeless. to street homelessness or unsuitable temporary accommodation. And all discharges are planned, with continuity of treatment and support where needed.

**Aim 2: Making homelessness as brief as possible: improving temporary and supported accommodation to be a positive experience**

Feedback from Partnership events has highlighted how long it can take to move on from temporary accommodation and the difficulties of finding suitable, affordable accommodation in the city. It is also becoming increasingly difficult to find affordable homes in the private-rented sector that are large enough for families to use as temporary accommodation. Increasingly, families can be placed out of the city. Families have reported difficulties in getting their children to school on time and some have reported poor conditions in these properties. However, timescales can vary, and households can be living in temporary accommodation for over two years while they wait to move in to a suitable home.

Staff working in supported accommodation schemes or temporary accommodation schemes have said there is an increasing demand for these services and an increase in the complexity of the people

they are working with. In particular, increases in young people and women accessing support services have been seen in Housing Related Support. Better links into wider support services and raising awareness of what is available in the city would support staff in these settings.

People who currently live in unsupported temporary accommodation (B&Bs) can face very poor living conditions, as reported by Justlife. This can impact significantly on a person's mental health and wellbeing.

**Make experiences of homelessness as brief as possible:**

The Partnership will make the experience of temporary and supported accommodation as positive as possible by:

- Reducing inequalities and disruptions to accessing physical and mental health services, education, advice, community resources or other support that might be needed for people living in temporary and support accommodation inside and outside the city. Ensure that people in temporary and supported accommodation participate fully in their community and that they aren't isolated or disadvantaged through being placed in temporary or supported accommodation.
- Focusing on the strengths and interests of people and families living in temporary and supported accommodation, connecting them to the education, training, volunteering, housing, cultural, leisure and employment opportunities in the city
- Understanding the current demand and unmet need for supported accommodation to influence the future commissioning of services, and improving access to supported accommodation
- Minimising the need for temporary accommodation over time by preventing people becoming homeless
- Working with the unsupported temporary accommodation sector to improve standards
- Working with single people and families who have lived in temporary and supported accommodation, to design, commission and deliver future services, and ensure they are accessible.

**Aim 3: Experience of homelessness to be a one-off occurrence: increasing access to settled homes**

Feedback from Partnership engagement events and staff engagement has highlighted that more support following moving out of temporary or supported accommodation would help more people to move on, particularly to connect to a local area. This could include involving more people who have been through a similar experience, to support people through this process.

Housing options for people on low incomes, or in receipt of welfare benefits after moving out of temporary accommodation, are becoming limited. Average rents of private-rented accommodation in the city have increased over the past ten years, and there are now only a handful of wards affordable on LHA rate. The rate of homeless households accessing social housing does not match the increasing demand, which means families and single people have to wait for suitable accommodation across the city. It also means more people are vulnerable to becoming homeless as this part of the market becomes smaller. Therefore, a wider approach to accessing homes across Greater Manchester will need to be adopted – specifically within the private rented sector – and consideration will need to be given to other types of housing that could be developed.

**Making homelessness a one-off, not repeated, experience: accessing settled homes**

The Partnership will reduce recurring homelessness, making any experience of homelessness a singular experience:

- Ensuring that people can access affordable, good-quality homes in the right places in the private-rented sector, working with private and social landlords to develop different options
- Reviewing the impact of the Allocation Scheme on people who are at risk of homelessness, including single people who may face barriers to accessing social housing, and adjusting our approach to best meet this demand
- Connecting people to local services, physical and mental-health services, education, cultural and leisure activities, training, volunteering and employment opportunities. Enabling people and families to move and feel at home in their new home, by addressing any basic needs and working with their strengths and interests
- Offering people who have experienced long-term repeated rough sleeping access to whatever treatment, care or support is needed in their local community. Ensuring this support is delivered in a flexible and person-centred way to help reduce the risk of another period of homelessness.
- Ensuring that people have access to ongoing support when they move on to their own tenancies, through appropriate resettlement services, day centre provision or other support to ensure that they don't end up being homeless again
- Understanding more about the demand for housing for people who are or may become homeless, and working with landlords, accommodation providers and housing developers to review what the demand is and what the gaps are to shape our building profile.
- Involving people who have experienced homelessness to identify barriers, and designing future services and approaches to support resettlement and connect people to their new communities.